

Bratz, BFFs, Princesses and Popstars: Femininity and Celebrity in Tween Popular Culture

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ABSTRACT

The last decade has seen a dramatic increase in media output aimed at “tweens” (preadolescent girls), and the expansion more broadly of tween popular culture. This exclusively female preadolescent consumer demographic is seen to emerge alongside a heightened visibility of girls within popular culture since the mid-1990s, and continuing anxieties about girlhood in this intensely mediated environment. However, this burgeoning field has yet to be matched in academic attention. This thesis offers a timely examination of mainstream tween films, television programmes, celebrities and extra-texts from 2004 onwards, including “princess” narratives *The Prince & Me* (2004, 2006, 2008, 2010) and *A Cinderella Story* (2004, 2008, 2011), and Disney Channel programming and Original Movies, *Hannah Montana* (2006-2011) and *Camp Rock* (2008, 2010). It forges a dialogue between postfeminism, film and television, celebrity, and the figure of the tween, in order to examine how the tween is both constructed and addressed by the films and television programmes that make up tween popular culture.

Tweenhood is a discursive construction emerging in the mid-1990s and coming to cultural prominence in the early twenty-first century. The tween is understood to be defined by her transitional status, her “becoming”-woman; as such, the texts that make up tween popular culture can be seen to guide the tween in her development of an “appropriately” feminine and (post)feminist identity through a rhetoric of “choice”. Such identities are predicated on revealing and maintaining an “authentic” self. The need to develop an “appropriately” feminine and (post)feminist identity whilst remaining “authentic” requires the tween to be the ideal self-surveilling, transforming subject of neoliberalism. Celebrity plays a central role in tween popular culture, articulating the parallels between “becoming”-woman and “becoming”-celebrity.

Through a combination of textual analysis, and broader discursive and contextual analysis, this thesis highlights the centrality of femininity and celebrity to the tween as a figure constructed by the texts that make up tween popular culture. It analyses the ideal tween consumer as projected by the texts. This thesis draws attention to the culturally and academically devalued subject of the construction of tweenhood within a gendered, age-specific popular culture.

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INTRODUCTION

What is a Tween?

To someone who is unfamiliar with the term “tween”, it is useful to refer to the *Urban Dictionary*, an online dictionary featuring largely slang and colloquial terms, the definitions of which are submitted by users and regulated by volunteer editors. Once a definition is published, visitors of the site may then vote for or against it, allowing users to view entries in order of popularity. The most popular definition offered for “tween” is:

a girl ages [sic] about 9-14...too old for toys, but too young for boys.

Very easy to market to, will usually follow any fashion trend set for them, will most likely go through the phase of “finding themselves” as they “grow up”.

1. Mary-Kate & Ashley Olsen’s main fanbase are all tweens.
2. tween 1: LyK oMg, I aM jUsT gOiNg ThRu TeH hArDeSt TiMe Of My LyF...i RaN oUt Of EyEsHaDoW!!!!
tween 2: OMG!!!! DO YOU NEED ME TO COME OVER FOR SUPPORT?!?!?!?!?¹

This definition highlights a number of points central to the contemporary cultural construction of the tween: the tween is understood to be in a *transitional* stage in their lifetime; tweenhood is seen to be a *consumer demographic*; the tween is assumed to be in the process of developing a sense of *self*; consumption of *celebrity* is claimed to be an essential part of tween culture; and most significantly, tweenhood is recognised as *female*. The *Urban Dictionary* user’s claim that tweens will passively follow marketers’ trends, and their sarcastic example conversation between two tweens centring on the “frivolous” subject of make-up, in which correct written English is not used, emphasises tweenhood’s inherently *gendered* construction and its culturally derided status.

Media output aimed at tweens has increased dramatically over the past decade, within an expansion more broadly of tween popular culture; however, such expansion has yet to be matched in academic attention. This thesis offers a timely examination of mainstream tween films and television programmes from 2004 onwards, examining

¹ Laurelz! w/ no help from JENCO, “tween”, *Urban Dictionary*, 13 March 2005, <<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=tween>> [accessed 10 November 2012]

multi-media constructions of tweenhood within a gendered, age-specific popular culture. It understands the tween as a discursive construction emerging in the mid-1990s and coming to cultural prominence in the early twenty-first century. Through analysis of a number of films, television programmes, celebrities and extra-texts aimed at the tween, this thesis forges a dialogue between postfeminism, film and television, celebrity, and the figure of the tween, in order to examine how the tween is both constructed and addressed by the films and television programmes that make up tween popular culture. The contemporary understanding of the tween takes its meaning from a range of fields, including the popular press, marketing discourses, childhood advocacy, academic childhood studies, consumer studies and girlhood studies. Tweenhood, then, is a discursively constructed category; as such what follows is a discursive exploration of the tween's emergence in particular examples of contemporary culture.

One of three primary fields in which the subject of tweenhood has attracted attention is that of childhood advocacy (in popular newspapers and magazines), and in childhood advocacy books (such as parenting guides). An early example of this is Kay S. Hymowitz's 1998 article appearing in *City Journal*. The article epitomises discussions of the tween within this field by lamenting the disappearance of childhood – that is, traditional formulations of childhood innocence – echoing such claims made in the 1980s by Neil Postman and David Elkind.² Hymowitz understands the tween to be either a boy or a girl, aged between 8 to 12, emerging from “a complicated mixture of biology, demography, and the predictable assortment of Bad Ideas.”³ She states that tweens are distinct from previous preadolescent consumer demographics such as the teenybopper, in their “troubling” display of teenage styles, attitudes and behaviour. Hymowitz claims that “the tweening of childhood” has dangerous social consequences that require action and concern. Without examining the tween popular culture texts that she criticises, drawing upon isolated cases of tween behaviour in schools, and relying upon other conservative cultural and social commentators, Hymowitz directs blame for “the tweening of youth” towards marketers, producers of tween media, parents and feminism (the empowerment claimed by the Spice Girls is

² Neil Postman, *The Disappearance of Childhood*, (New York, NY: Delacorte Press, 1982); David Elkind, *The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast Too Soon*, (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 25th Anniversary Edition, 2001)

³ Kay S. Hymowitz, “Tweens: Ten Going on Sixteen”, *City Journal* 8.4 (1998), <http://www.city-journal.org/html/8_4_a1.html> [accessed 15 May 2009]

“a greedy principle”). She argues that tweens do not yet have the sophistication needed to make the right choices or to understand what the fashion and media they consume means.

In their 1999 *Newsweek* article Barbara Kantrowitz and Pat Wingert similarly construct the loss of childhood narrative, blaming parents – that is, blaming the breakdown of the traditional, nuclear model of the family – and claiming that tweens are vulnerable to social and psychological consequences as a result of their “fearsome hurry to grow up”.⁴ Whilst neither of these articles examines the media texts they denounce and both lack evidence for the broad subjective claims they make, they do make clear that tweenhood is a phenomenon of the current generation of youth (at the time of their writing), distinct from earlier preadolescent consumer demographics.

Whilst these early examples of childhood advocates’ writing on tweenhood understand the tween to be both male and female (although more concern is directed towards girls), the growing attention paid to tweenhood in childhood advocacy literature and parenting guides after this time began to understand the tween as a female category, demonstrated by the vast expansion of girlhood advocacy guides in the wake of increased cultural visibility of girlhood and psychosocial concerns towards girls from the mid-1990s. Mary Pipher’s 1994 self-help guide/psychological study *Reviving Ophelia* and Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan’s 1992 empirical psychological study *Meeting at the Crossroads*,⁵ can be seen to initiate the intense attention paid to girls and girlhood in later girlhood advocacy books and parenting guides,⁶ a field of publishing which continues to grow. Such books focus on what is perceived to be the recent emergence of tweenhood. Like the articles appearing in mainstream newspapers and magazines, these books speak on behalf of the girls themselves, calling for them to be protected from such a harmful popular culture that

⁴ Barbara Kantrowitz and Pat Wingert, “The Truth About Tweens”, *Newsweek*, 18 October 1999, <<http://www.newsweek.com/id/89843>> [accessed 17 March 2009]

⁵ Mary Pipher, *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls*, (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1994); Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan, *Meeting at the Crossroads: Women’s Psychology and Girls’ Development*, (New York, NY: Ballantine, 1992)

⁶ Rosalind Wiseman, *Queen Bees & Wannabes: Helping Your Daughter Survive Cliques, Gossip, Boyfriends & Other Realities of Adolescence*, (London: Piatkus, 2002); Sharon Lamb and Lyn Mikel Brown, *Packaging Girlhood: Rescuing Our Daughters from Marketers’ Schemes*, (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Griffin, 2006); Maggie Hamilton, *What’s Happening to Our Girls?: Too Much Too Soon: How Our Kids are Overstimulated, Oversold and Oversexed*, (London: Penguin Viking, 2008); Diane E. Levin and Jean Kilbourne, *So Sexy So Soon: The New Sexualized Childhood and What Parents Can Do to Protect Their Kids*, (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 2008); Melinda Tankard Reist, ed., *Getting Real: Challenging the Sexualisation of Girls*, (North Melbourne, Victoria: Spinifex, 2009); and Tanith Carey, *Where Has My Little Girl Gone?: How to Protect Your Daughter From Growing Up Too Soon*, (Oxford: Lion, 2011)

they are seemingly unable to actively negotiate or resist – without examination of the condemned texts and brands. Taken as a whole, this field of literature constructs an “invention” narrative of tweenhood – that marketers “created” tweenhood as consumer demographic to which they could direct tween-centred products and brands.

During this same period – from the late-1990s onwards – in which the field of girlhood advocacy literature grew, a number of marketing guide books and articles were published offering advice for commercial businesses on how best to target the tween demographic; in effect, this field represents the group being blamed for the “creation” of tweenhood, by the childhood and girlhood advocates. This is the second primary area in which the tween is constructed. James U. McNeal’s 1992 book *Kids as Consumers*, in which McNeal recognised the change in childhood and children as a consumer demographic in the 1980s,⁷ can be understood as the precursor to the expansion of tween marketing guides including Martin Lindstrom’s *BRANDchild*, Anne Sutherland and Beth Thompson’s *Kidfluence*, David L. Siegel et al.’s *The Great Tween Buying Machine*, and Kit Yarrow and Jayne O’Donnell’s *Gen Buy*.⁸ Paralleling the childhood and girlhood advocates’ “creation” narrative, marketing guides construct a “discovery” narrative of tweens – “meet the new kids” states Lindstrom.⁹ As well as tying tweenhood to the contemporary multi-media context in which advancements in technology and expansion of the internet have “changed” the nature of childhood, marketers draw upon theories of childhood developmental psychology in order to naturalise the construction of tweenhood as an emerging *biological* category.¹⁰

Such “discovery” narratives which claim the “naturalness” of tweenhood are not unlike journalists’ and cultural commentators’ claims that children – girls in particular – are being *unnaturally* rushed through childhood, and that girls do not yet have the psychological ability to cope with this lost “natural” innocent time of childhood. Thus, whilst diametrically opposed to one another in their aims and their

⁷ James U. McNeal, *Kids as Customers: A Handbook of Marketing to Children*, (New York, NY: Lexington Books, 1992)

⁸ Martin Lindstrom, *BRANDchild: Remarkable Insights into the Minds of Today’s Global Kids and their Relationships with Brands*, (London: Kogan Page, 2003); Anne Sutherland and Beth Thompson, *Kidfluence: The Marketer’s Guide to Understanding and Reaching Generation Y – Kids, Tweens, and Teens*, (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2003); David L. Siegel, Timothy J. Coffey and Gregory Livingston, *The Great Tween Buying Machine: Capturing Your Share of the Multibillion Dollar Tween Market*, (Chicago, IL: Dearborn, 2004); and Kit Yarrow and Jayne O’Donnell, *Gen Buy: How Tweens, Teens, and Twenty-Somethings are Revolutionizing Retail*, (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009)

⁹ Lindstrom, *BRANDchild*, p. 1

¹⁰ See for example Siegel et al., *The Great Tween Buying Machine*, pp. 6-13.

position in relation to tweenhood, both childhood advocates and marketers are effectively constructing the tween in much the same way, drawing upon the same narratives and myths: competing against each other for the definition of the tween, each claim the “creation” and “discovery” narrative, whilst asserting its biological status in order to validate its existence.

What these narratives of the emergence of tweenhood fail to do is to consider earlier forms of this gendered, age-defined consumer demographic. It is here that academic studies of tweenhood (although there are few) – the third primary field in which the tween attracts attention – prove useful in conceptualising the tween within a longer history of gendered social roles and consumer culture. Claudia Mitchell and Jacqueline Reid-Walsh argue that the contemporary tween, as a gendered social demographic, can be seen to have a predecessor in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – the “damosel”¹¹ There is evidence which places the tween as a consumer demographic within a longer history of consumer culture. Daniel Thomas Cook notes that until the late 1920s, unlike boys, girls aged up to 6, and aged roughly 6 to 14 were provided with a separate clothing departments within department stores.¹² He reveals that in 1926 the trade journal *Earnshaw's* reported on a “Twixt-and-Tween” department store section which was aimed at girls aged 12 to 16.¹³ Cook notes that following the emergence of the teenager as a fully recognised consumer demographic from the 1930s, a “subteen” or “preteen” category emerged, also fully acknowledged by retailers by the 1950s addressing the large numbers of baby boomers.¹⁴ Cook and Susan B. Kaiser note the appearance of the term “Tween” in a 1987 article in *Marketing and Media Decisions* (now *Mediaweek*), specifically referencing a market made up of young people aged 9 to 15.¹⁵ Thus, as noted by Cook and Kaiser, “the contemporary figure of the tween cannot be understood apart from its inception in, and articulation with, the market exigencies of childhood – specifically girlhood – as

¹¹ Claudia Mitchell and Jacqueline Reid-Walsh, “Theorizing Tween Culture Within Girlhood Studies”, in Claudia Mitchell and Jacqueline Reid-Walsh, eds, *Seven Going on Seventeen: Tween Studies in the Culture of Girlhood*, (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2005), p. 12

¹² Daniel Thomas Cook, “Spatial Biographies of Children's Consumption: Market Places and Spaces of Childhood in the 1930s and Beyond”, *Journal of Consumer Culture* 3.2 (2003), pp. 156-6

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 156

¹⁴ Cook, *The Commodification of Childhood: The Children's Clothing Industry and the Rise of the Child Consumer*, (London: Duke University Press, 2004), pp. 137-143

¹⁵ Cook and Susan B. Kaiser, “Betwixt and be Tween: Age Ambiguity and the Sexualization of the Female Consuming Subject”, *Journal of Consumer Culture* 4.2 (2004), p. 217

they have emerged since the Second World War”¹⁶ (or indeed before, as demonstrated by Cook), something which is too often overlooked in the “discovery”, or “creation” narrative. One of the main differences, however, between previous consumer categories of pre-teens and today’s tween, is that “the Tween does not present itself as a diminutive category or as a weigh station on the way to some other desirable status, but as an identity in itself.”¹⁷

However, whilst this confirms that earlier forms of the tween existed as a discursive category, such histories of consumer culture do not address the hyper-gendered nature of contemporary tweenhood. Feminist cultural commentators have noted the phenomenal increase in the use of the colour pink and the intense investment in princesshood within tween popular culture (and in popular culture for younger girls) – both markers of a postfeminist popular culture;¹⁸ it is this hyper-feminine nature of tweenhood that in part distinguishes the contemporary tween from its predecessors. The period during which the tween gains visibility and attracts attention begins in the late 1980s, and comes to prominence in the mid- to late-1990s, expanding phenomenally after the turn of the twenty-first century. This coincides with the broad socio-cultural recognition of postfeminism (defined later in this Introduction) following, or rather continuing, a “backlash” against feminism in the 1980s.¹⁹ A broader understanding of the gendered nature of tweenhood, then, cannot be achieved without a consideration of the postfeminist cultural context in which it appears to emerge. Joe B. Paoletti recognises the rapid shift towards gendered clothing for babies and young children occurring from around 1985, following more gender-neutral babies’ and children’s fashion from around 1965.²⁰ This coincides with the emergence and advancements in ultrasound technology from the 1970s onwards,²¹ resulting in 68 per cent of expectant parents in the US choosing to find out the sex of

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 204

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 218

¹⁸ See for example Natasha Walter, *Living Dolls: The Return of Sexism*, (London: Virago, 2010); and Peggy Orenstein, *Cinderella Ate My Daughter*, (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2011).

¹⁹ Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*, (New York, NY: Three Rivers Press, 15th Anniversary Edition, 2006)

²⁰ Jo B. Paoletti, *Pink and Blue: Telling the Boys From the Girls in America*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012), p. 117, p. 100

²¹ Ibid., pp. 122-6

their unborn child.²² Such developments occur alongside an apparent socio-cultural reinvestment in biological determinism.²³

Paoletti suggests that the gender-neutral clothing of 1965-1985 was influenced by second-wave feminism and broader liberal social movements towards equality;²⁴ she then turns to demographics to help explain the dramatic shift to an emphasis on gender binaries, proposing that the shift from Baby Boomers to Generation X as first-time parents from the 1980s onwards saw parents rebelling against their own gender-neutral childhoods of the 1960s and 1970s, preferring gendered clothing for their own children.²⁵ Not only can the emergence of hyper-gendered tweenhood be seen to emerge as a result of generational rebellion, but it must be understood within feminism's history: Penny Sparke argues that at moments of feminist achievement, female consumer culture displays more aesthetically masculine products, while at moments of feminist inactivity, consumer products tend to be extremely feminine.²⁶ The gender-neutral babies' and children's fashion of the 1960s and 1970s, then, can be seen as a cultural effect of the active and visible second-wave of feminism, whilst the turn towards hyper-gendered fashions of the mid-1980s onwards can be seen as part of the "backlash" against the gains of feminism and the general cultural shift towards postfeminism. Indeed, as recognised by Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra, postfeminist popular culture more broadly displays an investment in girls and girlhood, using the "fantasy character of girlhood" to centralise the complex fusing of femininity and empowerment²⁷ – arguably epitomised in the figure of the tween.

The tween, then, is a discursive construction emerging in the mid-1990s and coming to prominence in the early twenty-first century. As a preadolescent, gendered consumer demographic, the increased cultural visibility of tweenhood is encouraged by its intense discussion within the field of childhood and girlhood advocacy and by its appeal to marketers, and finally by its more recent emergence as a subject of academic study. Whilst the tween cannot be divorced from its earlier predecessors as

²² Lise Eliot, *Pink Brain Blue Brain: How Small Differences Grow into Troublesome Gaps – and What We Can Do About It*, (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009), p. 1

²³ See for example Eliot, *Pink Brain Blue Brain*; and Cordelia Fine, *Delusions of Gender: The Real Science Behind Sex Differences*, (London: Icon Books, 2010).

²⁴ Paoletti, *Pink and Blue*, pp. 100-2

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 112-5

²⁶ Penny Sparke, *As Long As It's Pink: The Sexual Politics of Taste*, (London: Pandora, 1995), p. 9

²⁷ Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra, "Introduction: Feminist Politics and Postfeminist Culture", in Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra, eds, *Interrogating Postfeminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture*, (London: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 18

a consumer demographic from the 1920s, what makes the contemporary incarnation distinct is the emergence from, and reliance on, the postfeminist cultural context, the socio-cultural discourse of neoliberalism (defined later in this Introduction), and the pervasive investment in – and embedment in – contemporary celebrity culture.

This thesis explores the tween and tween popular culture in their own right, rather than as an extension to or subcategory of children's or teen media. It aims to move beyond arguably reductive debates regarding “too much too soon” and “kids getting older younger”, and avoids repeating the “creation” or “discovery” narratives which are now well-worn and ignore the range of discourses in which the tween is constructed. The following chapters connect film and television studies, postfeminist media studies, girlhood studies and celebrity studies to provide an overdue examination of contemporary US tween films, television programmes, celebrities and multi-media texts, in order to allow for an understanding of the cultural construction of the tween. This is carried out through a combination of textual analysis, and broader discursive and contextual analysis, highlighting the centrality of femininity and celebrity in the construction of, and address to, the tween. What follows is an outline of the key concepts used in the thesis.

Becoming

The culturally constructed tween is in part defined by her *transitional* and gendered status; the journey of transformation from young girl to young woman epitomises tweenhood. As such, it is useful to draw upon the notion of “becoming” as it has been conceptualised in girlhood studies, and developed from Deleuzian theory.²⁸ Rebecca Coleman states that “Central to the notion becoming is a process of transformation, not of forms transforming into another or different form but of constantly processual, constantly transforming relations.”²⁹ This argument extends the view established fifty years earlier by Simone de Beauvoir who famously states that “One is not born, but

²⁸ See for example Ian Buchanan and Claire Colebrook, eds, *Deleuze and Feminist Theory*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000); Rosi Braidotti, “Becoming Woman: Or Sexual Difference Revisited”, *Theory, Culture & Society* 20.3 (2003) and *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002) and *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, Second Edition, 2011).

²⁹ Rebecca Coleman, *The Becoming of Bodies: Girls, Images, Experience*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), p. 20

rather becomes, a woman".³⁰ With this understanding, then, Coleman argues that rather than a linear causal relationship between girl and woman, in this never-ending process of becoming, the woman *is* in fact the girl.³¹ Catherine Driscoll similarly conceptualises the adolescent girl as in transition; in contrast to the male, "her historical identity is [...] not ordered in terms of duration."³² Such conceptualisations of "becoming" from within girlhood studies are useful in understanding the cultural construction of tweenhood. Central to this thesis is the notion that the tween's gendered self is in a *process* of development; this is fundamental in the tween popular culture's construction of tween femininity.

The Self

The understanding that tweenhood is a time in which the young girl "finds herself" is repeated in childhood advocacy literature, parenting guides and media coverage.³³ This highly pervasive rhetoric can be found in tween popular culture in the predominant message of "staying true to yourself" or "keeping it real". Although widely regarded by many as clichéd and simplistic,³⁴ this motif is central in the cultural construction of tweenhood, and therefore requires exploration. The context in which the tween is seen to emerge is postmodern. This is key in making sense of the tween's apparent quest to "find herself". Douglas Kellner argues that in pre-modern societies one's identity was fixed, solid and stable, and unproblematically tied to one's clan or tribe; in modernity, one's identity – whilst remaining relatively fixed and bound with social relations – becomes more mobile, personal, self-reflexive and open to more possibilities, which in turn creates anxiety over choosing one's "true" identity.³⁵ In postmodernity, by contrast, identity becomes increasingly unstable,

³⁰ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 2009 Edition), p. 295

³¹ Coleman, *The Becoming of Bodies*, p. 22, emphasis in original.

³² Catherine Driscoll, *Girls: Feminine Adolescence in Popular Culture and Cultural Theory*, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 6, p. 57

³³ See for example Julie A. Ross, *How To Hug a Porcupine: Negotiating the Prickly Points of the Tween Years*, (New York, NY: McGraw Hill, 2008), p. 9; and Nancy Rue, *Mom's Ultimate Guide to the Tween Girl World*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), p. 30.

³⁴ See for example Ruthann Mayes-Elma, "From Miley Merchandising to Pop Princess Peddling: The Hannah Montana Phenomenon", in Shirley R. Steinberg, ed., *Kinderculture: The Corporate Construction of Childhood*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, Third Edition, 2011); and Valerie Wee, *Teen Media: Hollywood and the Youth Market in the Digital Age*, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010), pp. 166-191.

³⁵ Douglas Kellner, "Popular Culture and the Construction of Postmodern Identities", in Scott Lash and Jonathan Friedman, eds, *Modernity & Identity*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 141-2

fragmented and fragile; one's identity, Kellner argues, is formed publicly and centres on image and consumption, and one is reflexively aware of the ways identity is chosen and constructed.³⁶

In this context then, Anthony Giddens proposes, “the self [...] has to be reflexively made. Yet this task has to be accomplished amid a puzzling diversity of options and possibilities.”³⁷ Tweenhood, then, should be understood as existing within this postmodern (or “late modern” according to Giddens) context in which identity is something which needs to be reflexively constructed from an array of options. As such, tweenhood can be seen to reflect broader *neoliberal* selfhood (defined later in this Introduction). Yet as the following chapters will demonstrate, whilst the tween is certainly addressed as a self-aware choosing subject, the boundaries of tween popular culture clearly limit the range of possible options on offer. To the late modern self, argues Giddens, choice is fundamental: “we have no choice but to choose.”³⁸ Choice is central in popular culture’s construction of the tween identity, and as such plays a prominent narrative and ideological role in tween popular culture.

Authenticity

In this process of choosing, a notion of *authenticity* is central. Nikolas Rose argues that in the contemporary context, the choices one makes in the quest to ensure one's existence is meaningful, the self is increasingly tied to personal authenticity.³⁹ Rose believes that the ethic of authenticity is predicated on evaluation: authenticity is judged in comparison to hypocrisy.⁴⁰ Giddens similarly argues that in order to act authentically, one must separate the “true” self from the “false” self; being true to oneself must be informed by goals of becoming free from dependencies and achieving fulfilment.⁴¹ For the tween, as this thesis will argue, authenticity is incredibly problematic and contradictory: the narratives of tween popular culture claim

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 143-4, p. 155

³⁷ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in Late Modern Age*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 3

³⁸ Ibid., p. 81

³⁹ Nikolas Rose, *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self*, (London: Free Association Books, Second Edition, 1999), p. 272

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 267

⁴¹ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, p. 79

“authenticity” to be of central importance, whilst it is simultaneously predetermined by these texts from a limited range of “options”.

The understanding of authenticity in the following chapters, as it is employed in tween popular culture, is diametrically opposed to falsity – that is, “authenticity” is to be “*real*”. As such, tween popular culture can be situated within the wider contemporary media context investing in the “authenticity” of the self, particularly in the wake of reality television, and the broader rhetoric of confessional culture.⁴² This thesis draws upon Lionel Trilling’s articulation of authenticity and sincerity, in which one’s being true to oneself in order to avoid being false ironically requires a great deal of effort.⁴³ That is, authenticity cannot exist inherently or biologically, but is rather a cultural construct at odds with the very concept it purports to embody. Authenticity is not something which is inherently present within a person or media text, but rather is a value judgement used to express taste, and something considered authentic or inauthentic can and will change over time and space, and so is context-specific.⁴⁴ Furthermore, as Trilling rightly asks: “If one is true to one’s own self for the purpose of avoiding falsehood to others, is one being truly true to one’s own self?”⁴⁵ That is, the authenticity of the self is judged by others;⁴⁶ the achievement or success of authenticity lies not within the self, but rather in the consumption of authenticity – proof of authenticity is situated with the viewer/listener of the authentic self or text.⁴⁷ Regardless of its impossibility in reality, “authenticity” is presented as an inherent quality of the “true” self within tween popular culture, and as the following chapters will argue, is central to articulations of femininity, feminism and celebrity of

⁴² See for example John Corner, “Performing the Real: Documentary Diversions”, *Television & New Media* 3.3 (2002); Annette Hill, “*Big Brother*: The Real Audience”, *Television & New Media* 3.3 (2002) and *Reality TV: Audiences and Popular Factual Television*, (London: Routledge, 2005); and Rachel E. Dubrofsky, “Therapeutics of the Self: Surveillance in the Service of the Therapeutic”, in *Television & New Media* 8.4 (2007).

⁴³ Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 5-6

⁴⁴ See also David R. Shumway, “Authenticity: Modernity, Stardom, and Rock & Roll”, *Modernism/Modernity* 14.3 (2007); Michael Pickering, “The Dogma of Authenticity in the Experience of Popular Music”, in Graham McGregor and R. S. White, eds, *The Art of Listening*, (London: Croom Helm, 1986); Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: Evaluating Popular Music*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); and Richard A. Peterson, *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity*, (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1997).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9

⁴⁶ See Andrew J. Weigert who shares this position, “Self Authenticity as Master Motive”, in Phillip Vannini and J. Patrick Williams, eds, *Authenticity in Culture, Self, and Society*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 38-9; this goes against Stan Godlovitch who believes that the success of the pursuit of authenticity lies with the producer of that authenticity, not with the those who observe that authenticity, in “Performance Authenticity: Possible, Practical, Virtuous”, in Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell, eds, *Performance and Authenticity in the Arts*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 156.

⁴⁷ See also Allan Moore, “Authenticity as Authentication”, *Popular Music* 21.2 (2002), p. 210.

tweenhood. Furthermore, following Eric J. Arnould and Linda L. Price's argument, in tween popular culture – and postmodernity more generally – creative consumption (what they term authenticating acts and authoritative performances) provides the basis for the construction of the “authentic” self.⁴⁸ The constructedness of authenticity within tween popular culture, and the contradictions within this construction, highlight the problematic nature of the term “authenticity”.

“Authenticity”, then, is a quality that the texts of tween popular culture insist exists within the self: according to these texts, “authenticity” is seen to be essential if the girl is to successfully achieve ideal tween selfhood (which, it is claimed, she should aim for); it exists “naturally” within the young girl, but requires work in order to prove and bring this “authenticity” to the surface. Therefore, tween popular culture's construction of authenticity is incredibly problematic, yet such contradictions are not commented upon. The sites through which her “authenticity” can be most efficiently articulated are friendship, family, and heterosexual romance; in each, the tween must fulfil her role as “true”. For the tween, “authenticity” is seen to offer security and stability (or at least the feeling of such) in an otherwise highly unstable transitional stage. “Authenticity” provides the security of achieved future womanhood; that is, by proving and maintaining “authenticity”, one will successfully “become” a young woman. The need for “authenticity” ensures the tween is future-looking, considering her gendered identity beyond this transitional stage.

Neoliberalism

The importance of developing a self, and the necessity to work at maintaining authenticity within this self, firmly situates tweenhood within the context of neoliberalism. In using the term neoliberalism here I refer to the widely accepted understanding of the socio-political context of advanced liberalism emerging with the conservative UK and US governments of the 1980s and continuing with the left-wing politics of the mid-1990s. Neoliberalism's wider effect on society and culture has been most succinctly articulated by Rose. This thesis draws upon his argument whereby subjects are understood to be required to self-govern, rather than rely on

⁴⁸ Eric J. Arnould and Linda L. Price, “Authenticating Acts and Authoritative Performances: Questing for Self and Community”, in S. Ratenshwar, David Glen Mick, and Cynthia Huffman, eds, *The Why of Consumption: Contemporary Perspectives on Consumer Motives, Goals, and Desires*, (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 145

traditional institutions for help and regulation with regards to how to behave and order their everyday lives.⁴⁹ The following chapters explore the ways in which the cultural construction of, and tween popular culture's address to, the tween can be seen to claim that she is the ideal subject of neoliberalism. As stated, the rhetoric of choice is central within tween popular culture and an essential part of formulations of the post- or late-modern self,⁵⁰ and it clearly structures the self in neoliberalism. Rose argues that not only is the neoliberal self enabled to choose, they are in fact *obliged* to choose; the narrative and meaning of one's life is the result of the choices made.⁵¹ The following chapters examine the range of choices that the tween is required to make in the development of a gendered identity and the pursuit of the authentic self. Indeed, Elspeth Probyn's notion of the "choiceoisie"⁵² as related to postfeminist popular culture more broadly, is both pertinent and valuable here. This thesis makes a key connection between neoliberalism and postfeminism, a relationship which Rosalind Gill and Christina Scharff believe has been underexplored.⁵³ Indeed, they argue that postfeminism should not be seen simply as a response to feminism, but that it is "also a sensibility that is at least partly constituted through the pervasiveness of neoliberal ideas."⁵⁴ The analysis in this thesis demonstrates the deeply intertwined nature of neoliberalism to postfeminism, epitomised in the construction of the tween.

Postfeminism

The tween is a construct of the postfeminist cultural context. Negra notes the way in which "Postfeminism has accelerated the consumerist maturity of girls, carving out

⁴⁹ Rose, *Inventing Our Selves: Psychology, Power, and Personhood*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 166; this is thoroughly explored in Rose, *Governing the Soul*; see also Matthew Adams, *Self and Social Change*, (London: SAGE, 2007), pp. 75-104.

⁵⁰ See Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, p. 81; whilst Giddens never specifically makes reference to neoliberalism, his conceptualisation of the late-modern self exemplifies Rose's articulation of the self in neoliberalism.

⁵¹ Rose, *Governing the Sole*, p. 231

⁵² Elspeth Probyn, "Choosing Choice: Images of Sexuality and 'Choiceoisie' in Popular Culture", in Sue Fisher and Kathy Davis, eds, *Negotiating at the Margins: The Gendered Discourses of Power and Resistance*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1993) and "New Traditionalism and Post-feminism: TV Does the Home", *Screen* 31.2 (1990)

⁵³ Rosalind Gill and Christina Scharff, "Introduction", in Rosalind Gill and Christina Scharff, eds, *New Femininities: Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 7; Hilary Radner brings the two together in *Neo-Feminist Cinema: Girly Films, Chick Flicks and Consumer Culture*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011).

⁵⁴ Gill and Scharff, "Introduction", p. 7

new demographic categories such as that of the ‘tween’”,⁵⁵ but postfeminism’s “carving out” of the tween goes much further than this: the very narratives, themes and ideologies of postfeminism are present and indeed embedded within the texts of tween popular culture. The chapters that follow argue that tween popular culture can be seen as a downshifting of adult female media, in effect preparing the young girl for her future role as an adult female consumer of postfeminist media.

It has been difficult to settle upon an agreed definition of postfeminism amongst both academics and cultural critics. Some feminist academics of popular culture argue that postfeminism exists as several nuances and as such offer several conceptualisations of the term, even within one piece of work.⁵⁶ Others argue that whilst the notion of a postfeminist era exists within popular culture, no definition exists, or that it is not useful to feminism’s history.⁵⁷ Some popular texts claiming to belong to the third-wave feminist movement display a number of characteristics which feminist academics would suggest are postfeminist.⁵⁸ Arguably, such ambiguities regarding the meaning of the term are indeed part of the very notion of postfeminism.

For the research here, one of the most constructive understandings of postfeminism is offered by Gill, in her notion of a “postfeminist sensibility”.⁵⁹ Gill argues against understanding postfeminism as either an epistemological or historical shift or as a backlash, instead conceptualising the postfeminist sensibility as “a response to feminism”.⁶⁰ The postfeminist sensibility is defined by “the entanglement of feminist and anti-feminist discourses”,⁶¹ an observation which is useful in making sense of tween popular culture’s construction of femininity and feminism. However, rather than reject the idea of postfeminism as an epistemological shift or backlash against (second-wave) feminism altogether, this provides a fruitful way of

⁵⁵ Negra, *What a Girl Wants?: Fantasizing the Reclamation of Self in Postfeminism*, (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 47

⁵⁶ See Sarah Projansky, *Watching Rape: Film and Television in Postfeminist Culture*, (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2001), pp. 66-67, p. 88; Gill and Scharff, “Introduction”, pp. 3-4; and Walters, Suzanna Danuta, *Material Girls: Making Sense of Feminist Cultural Theory*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), p. 117.

⁵⁷ See Elaine J. Hall and Marnie Salupo Rodriguez, “The Myth of Postfeminism”, *Gender and Society* 17.6 (2003); and Charlotte Brunsdon, *Screen Tastes: Soap Opera to Satellite Dishes*, (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 83, p. 102.

⁵⁸ See for example Walter, *The New Feminism*, (London: Virago, 1999) and Ellie Levenson, *The Noughtie Girl’s Guide to Feminism*, (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009).

⁵⁹ Rosalind Gill, “Postfeminist Media Culture: Elements of a Sensibility”, *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 10.2 (2007)

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 163

⁶¹ *Ibid.*; see also Tasker and Negra, “Introduction”.

understanding tween popular culture's treatment of feminism's complicated history, and the texts' construction of a postfeminist identity. In this way, it is useful to draw upon Angela McRobbie's argument that postfeminism takes feminism into account, only to suggest that it has achieved its goals and is no longer needed.⁶² Thus, a *postfeminist sensibility* best describes tween media taken as a whole and the *context* in which tween popular culture exists; the idea of *postfeminism as coming after the second-wave* within feminism's linear narrative (as it is culturally depicted) is useful in reading the individual texts' construction of various feminine identities.

In addition, whilst a number of both academics and journalists and cultural commentators reveal a slippage between popular conceptions of postfeminism and third-wave feminism, this thesis takes the understanding that third-wave feminism is an *actively political movement*, as its predecessors of the first- and second-waves can be understood to have been. Postfeminism, on the other hand, does *not* have an active socio-political goal in this respect, but rather is understood to be – as stated above – a *sensibility* and *cultural context* coming after feminism's second wave.

Celebrity

Celebrity plays an integral, highly visible role in tween popular culture. Journalists, cultural commentators and childhood advocates all note the prominence of celebrity as the narrative focus of many tween films and television programmes, and the media saturation of young, female celebrities directed towards tween consumption.⁶³ Not unlike postfeminism, celebrity is a taken-for-granted part of contemporary culture and subject of academic study, and is often discussed without explanation or consideration of its definition. The following chapters examine both narratives and constructions of celebrity within tween popular culture, and actual tween celebrities. As will become evident, however, I also employ the term “star” in my analyses, which might suggest that a distinction needs to be made between the two. However, it seems that attempts at distinguishing between stardom and celebrity often lead to unproductive assessments of film versus television (or other media or genres for that matter), and

⁶² Angela McRobbie, “Post-feminism and Popular Culture”, in *Feminist Media Studies* 4.3 (2004), p. 255

⁶³ See for example Hamilton, *What's Happening to Our Girls*, pp. 57-8; and Emma Brockes, “I Want to be Famous”, *The Guardian*, 17 April 2010, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2010/apr/17/i-want-to-be-famous>> [accessed 6 December 2012].

subjective expressions of taste and quality.⁶⁴ Even in such cases, authors use the terms interchangeably without explanation. I acknowledge that the terms “star” and “celebrity” are both ideologically loaded and communicate unspoken cultural hierarchies of value centred on media, genre, class, and gender (amongst other factors); however, I do not feel my interchangeable use of these terms complicates my analysis or argument, and a lengthy reasoning and justification would not sit comfortably with what I aim to demonstrate and argue in the following chapters.⁶⁵

Furthermore, “stardom” and “celebrity” cannot be separated into two, distinct categories. Writing in 2000, Christine Geraghty offers a reconceptualisation of stardom within the context of contemporary mass popular culture and mass media, building upon traditional notions of stars’ duality and their inter- and extra-textual construction.⁶⁶ She suggests that “The term celebrity indicates someone whose fame rests overwhelmingly on what happens outside the sphere of their work and who is famous for having a lifestyle.”⁶⁷ This definition, which echoes Daniel J. Boorstin’s oft-cited 1961 conceptualisation of celebrity,⁶⁸ arguably has relevance in the study of stardom and celebrity. However, Geraghty’s three new categories of stardom, “star-as-celebrity”, “star-as-professional” and “star-as-performer” simply cannot work in the contemporary popular culture context; that is, a star always encompasses these three roles simultaneously within their constructed and mediated personae – they cannot be disentangled as discrete types.⁶⁹ Traditional separations of stardom and celebrity simply cannot work (and arguably never have) in the contemporary context in which claims are made about fame becoming democratised,⁷⁰ and in which the

⁶⁴ John Langer, “Television’s Personality System”, *Media, Culture and Society* 3.4 (1981); John Ellis, “Stars as a Cinematic Phenomenon”, in Sean Redmond and Su Holmes, eds, *Stardom and Celebrity: A Reader*, (London: SAGE, 2007); P. David Marshall, *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997)

⁶⁵ For a brief discussion and consideration of the use of such terms in stardom and celebrities, see Sean Redmond and Su Holmes, “Introduction: What’s in a Reader?”, in Redmond and Holmes, eds, *Stardom and Celebrity*, pp. 8-9; see also James Bennett and Holmes, ““The ‘Place’ of Television in Celebrity Studies”, *Celebrity Studies* 1.1 (2010); and Holmes, ““Starring...Dyer?": Revisiting Star Studies and Contemporary Celebrity Culture”, *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, 2.2 (2005).

⁶⁶ Christine Geraghty, “Re-examining Stardom: Questions of Texts, Bodies and Performance”, in Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams, eds, *Reinventing Film Studies*, (London: Arnold, 2000).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 187

⁶⁸ Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 25th Anniversary Edition, 1987)

⁶⁹ Geraghty, “Re-examining Stardom”, pp. 188-196

⁷⁰ Graeme Turner, *Ordinary People and the Media: The Demotic Turn*, (London: SAGE, 2009).

process of celebrification is seen to be part of everyday culture,⁷¹ and in which technological advancements, the internet and social media allow for DIY celebrity.⁷² Rather than struggling to distinguish between stardom and celebrity, it is more productive to understand celebrity in tween popular culture as a discursive category and as a label which can be applied to individuals, a view shared by Graeme Turner.⁷³ Chris Rojek's breaking down of celebrity into the categories of "ascribed", "achieved" and "attributed" provides a useful framework through which to explore celebrity in tween popular culture.⁷⁴ As will become evident, however, the model requires updating with the addition of an extra category to conceptualise tween celebrity. Furthermore, that celebrity in tween popular culture is an inherently gendered – and aged – construction (that is, young female), highlights the need to reframe Rojek's model in terms of this *gendered* dynamic – something Rojek ignores.

With regard to the study of celebrity in tween popular culture, Richard Dyer's seminal work on stardom remains integral. In particular, his argument that "Stars articulate what it is to be a human being in contemporary society"⁷⁵ is central: that is, celebrity and celebrities in tween popular culture articulate how society constructs the concept of the tween. Further, his conceptualisation of the private/public dichotomy (articulated more succinctly by Ellis)⁷⁶ is essential in understanding tween popular culture's employment of celebrity as a narrative, and the construction of tween stars. In this model, Dyer argues that the construction of stars encourages consumers to ask what stars are *really* like;⁷⁷ it is this suggestion, indeed promise, of the "real" that plays a fundamental role in my understanding of celebrity in tween popular culture. More recent contributions to celebrity studies that address this importance of the "real" provide a valuable framework for conceptualising a model of contemporary tween celebrity, including work by Joshua Gamson and his articulation of "the

⁷¹ Chris Rojek, *Celebrity*, (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), pp. 181-199; Joshua Gamson, *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 186-196

⁷² Bennett, *Television Personalities: Stardom and the Small Screen*, (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 168-189

⁷³ Turner, *Understanding Celebrity*, (London: SAGE, 2004), p. 9; see also Christopher E. Bell who conceptualises celebrity as a human being and celebrity as a system, in *American Idolatry: Celebrity, Commodity and Reality Television*, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010), pp. 5-6.

⁷⁴ Rojek, *Celebrity*, pp. 17-20

⁷⁵ Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society*, (New York, NY: Routledge, Second Edition 2004), p. 7

⁷⁶ Ellis, "Stars as a Cinematic Phenomenon"

⁷⁷ Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies*

rhetoric of authenticity” and the “game” played by consumers searching for the real.⁷⁸ Further explorations of the “real” in reality television offer useful conceptualisations which place tween celebrity within the broader pop cultural context invested in the real and celebrity.⁷⁹

Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into three sections: The Tween Subject, The Tween Generation and Tween Culture. Due to the discursive nature of the tween’s construction, it is necessary to examine the tween, tweenhood and tween popular culture from a variety of methodological approaches and draw upon a range of interdisciplinary frameworks; as such, these three sections allow for a more complete view of the tween and help to avoid delimiting its exploration. By no means, of course, are the analyses exhaustive; the continuing phenomenal expansion of tween media and cultural exposure attests to this.

Section One explores the discursively constructed tween as an individual gendered self, with Chapter 1 analysing onscreen depictions of femininities and Chapter 2 analysing onscreen constructions of feminisms. Whilst the separation of femininity and feminism in Chapters 1 and 2 may seem questionable, there are conceptual reasons for making this distinction. First, the subjects of femininity and feminism are vast in their own right, each with a broad academic and popular body of writing. Thus for size and manageability, examining onscreen representations of femininities and feminisms in individual chapters proved useful. Second, and more significantly, is the longstanding cultural assumption of the incompatibility of femininity and feminism, indeed feminism’s rejection of feminine identities.⁸⁰ However, many feminist academics and activists argue that the emergence of postfeminism (or for some, third-wave or “girlie” feminism) allowed for the coming together of femininity and feminism.⁸¹ Whilst I agree that a postfeminist sensibility,

⁷⁸ Gamson, *Claims to Fame*

⁷⁹ See for example Corner, “Performing the Real”; Hill, “Big Brother”; Dubrofsky, “Therapeutics of the Self”; and Mark Andrejevic, *Reality TV: The Work of Being Watched*, (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004).

⁸⁰ See Joanne Hollows, *Feminism, Femininity and Popular Culture*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 10; and Beverley Skeggs, *Formations of Class & Gender: Becoming Respectable*, (London: SAGE, 1997), p. 156, p. 147.

⁸¹ Projansky, *Watching Rape*, p. 80; Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, “Feminism and Femininity: Or How We Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Thong”, in Anita Harris, ed., *All*

and the cultural construction of the postfeminist girl/woman, claim and demonstrate the compatibility of femininity and feminism, it seems that for the purpose of this thesis the two need to be discussed separately. Second-wave feminism's critique of and apparent public disavowal of femininity is now part of feminism's linear history and therefore part of postfeminism, which itself is part of second-wave feminism's legacy. I argue that this critique and rejection of femininity cannot be unproblematically replaced with a new era in feminism in which the two sit comfortably together. Tween popular culture however – and popular culture more broadly – claims such compatibility is indeed the case. As such, Chapters 1 and 2 are to be read as a pair in a dialogue with one another.

Chapter 1 views femininity as a discursive construction, and argues that the tween learns the process of “becoming” “appropriately” feminine through the texts of tween popular culture. Exploring tween popular culture's scripts of femininity, the chapter analyses a number of tween film and television programmes that centre on same-sex friendship, including *bratz* (2007), *Aquamarine* (2006), *The Clique* (2008) and *Wild Child* (2008). The girl's role as a friend is central to the development of a gendered and authentic self. The representations of femininities are examined textually and ideologically, building upon the wealth of film, television and media studies, and cultural studies literature on women's representation in popular culture. The types of femininity deemed “appropriate” versus “inappropriate” by the texts are explored, and their apparent implications for the tween's sense of self are examined. Key concepts including the “real” and the neoliberal self and recurring tween motifs including the makeover are introduced here, and will be returned to in the following chapters.

Chapter 2 addresses the cultural ambiguity surrounding feminism's existence, a cultural context within which tween media is seen to expand. This chapter examines what tween popular culture claims to be the status of feminism today and its relevance to young girls. It argues that alongside her feminine identity, the tween learns her “appropriately” feminist identity from the texts of tween popular culture. It takes as its focus a number of films and television programmes, primarily “princess” or fairy-tale narratives, including *The Prince & Me* films (2004, 2006, 2008, 2010), *A Cinderella*

About the Girl: Culture, Power, and Identity, (London: Routledge, 2004); Hollows, “Can I Go Home Yet? Feminism, Postfeminism and Domesticity”, in Joanne Hollows and Rachel Moseley, eds, *Feminism in Popular Culture*, (Oxford: Berg, 2006), p. 102; Brunsdon, *Screen Tastes*, p. 86

Story films (2004, 2008, 2011), *Ice Princess* (2005) and *Princess Protection Programme* (2009). Drawing upon a framework of feminist theory and postfeminist media studies, the analysis helps to make sense of the various feminisms depicted and allows for an understanding of those deemed “appropriate” or “inappropriate” according to the texts. The chapter reveals the ways in which tween popular culture participates in the mediated construction of feminism’s history. Importantly, by examining the range of feminisms onscreen, this chapter interrogates the dialogues between the different generations of feminisms, and places tween popular culture within a postfeminist cultural context.

Section Two considers the tween as a whole generation. In discussing generations I draw upon social historians William Strauss and Neil Howe’s definition (for which they build upon Karl Mannheim’s conceptualisation of generations):⁸² “a cohort-group whose length approximates the span of a phase of life and whose boundaries are fixed by peer personality.”⁸³ The study of generations has been neglected in film, television and media studies (an exception is in the subject of teen film and youth counter-culture, yet much of which fits into more popular fields rather than academic). Exploring the construction of and address to the tween in terms of generations allows for a fuller understanding of the predominant values of tweenhood, and the possible reasons behind such values. As stated in this Introduction, the tween appears to emerge in the mid-1990s; following Strauss and Howe’s theory, then, the tween consumer of the media texts in this thesis (2004 to today) belongs to the Millennial generation, born between 1982 and 2003.⁸⁴ Of course, a proportion of today’s tween demographic would also belong to the succeeding generation – this demographic bracket should not be adhered to precisely. Considering the tween as a member of the Millennial generation proves useful in recognising the common socio-cultural values and placing them within the broader socio-historical discourse. Whilst Strauss and Howe’s conceptualisation of generations has a beneficial application to this thesis, their rather rigid and literal acceptance of age-locations, personalities and cycles is unconvincing and does not sit comfortably within film, television and media

⁸² Karl Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, edited by Paul Kecskemeti, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1952), pp. 276-320

⁸³ William Strauss and Neil Howe, *Generations: The History of America’s Future, 1584 to 2069*, (New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 1991), p. 60; for an overview of theories of generations, see June Edmunds and Bryan S. Turner, *Generations, Culture and Society*, (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2002), pp. 1-23.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 428

studies, which recognises such structures as generations to be not naturally occurring and fixed, but complexly constructed and context-specific. It must be recognised that a generation, as with categories such as gender and class, is discursively constructed and highly mediated.⁸⁵ Indeed, it is in part through media texts' representations that a particular generation's collective identity and common personality (to draw upon Strauss and Howe's terminology) become known. June Edmunds and Bryan S. Turner similarly argue that "Generations are [...] constructed through the institutionalization of memory through collective rituals and narratives"⁸⁶.

Chapter 3 addresses the centrality of celebrity within tween popular culture, and the accompanying socio-cultural concerns regarding the value placed on fame by seemingly vulnerable young girls. Such anxieties tend to be directed towards the value of apparently "unachieved" fame of many young female celebrities. The chapter examines the value accorded to contemporary fame for the tween, by looking at a number of films, television programmes, and wider multi-media texts with narratives centred on celebrity. These include tween "princess" films discussed in the previous chapter, *Camp Rock* (2008, 2010), *Sonny with a Chance* (Disney Channel, 2009-2011) and *StarStruck* (2010). Just as tween popular culture claims to offer a range of femininities and feminisms as "choices" from which the tween may construct her own sense of self, this chapter explores the types of celebrity on offer within a hierarchy of choices by building upon key theories of stardom, and adding to the more recent – and expanding – field of celebrity studies. Crucially, this chapter argues that tween popular culture employs celebrity as an allegory for growing up female as a way of guiding the tween in her "becoming"-woman; I call this process the *celebrification of tween selfhood*.

Chapter 4 explores the onscreen generational differences between tween popular culture's Generation X parents and Millennial children.⁸⁷ In particular, it takes as its focus the onscreen father-daughter relationship which features prominently across the films and television programmes. The chapter looks at father-daughter narratives *The Game Plan* (2007), *Dadnapped* (2009), *College Road Trip* (2008) and *Picture This* (2008). The analysis draws upon the socio-cultural constructions of Generation X and the Millennial generation in order to make sense of

⁸⁵ See Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, p. 289, p. 291.

⁸⁶ Edmunds and Turner, *Generations, Culture and Society*, p. 11, p. 13

⁸⁷ Mannheim argues that generational conflict is constant and inevitable, in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, p. 301.

the parent-child relationships, whilst also situating the narratives within a backlash context in which a cultural investment in (indeed, a valorisation of) parenthood, and formulations of the “new man”, are prominent. The notion of “becoming”, “authenticity” and transformation which are explored in the preceding chapters come together in a striking way with the discussion of the father figure in this chapter; tween popular culture’s centralising the father in the tween’s “becoming”-woman is revealed and examined.

Section Three brings together the concepts, themes and arguments of the preceding chapters in two case studies. The focus on two Disney multi-media franchises (and the predominance of Disney media texts more broadly within the thesis) is an acknowledgement of Disney’s dominant role in the production of tween popular culture. This is a fact claimed by Disney itself,⁸⁸ recognised by the press and cultural commentators,⁸⁹ and is discussed by academics largely in the fields of childhood studies and youth and the media.⁹⁰ Disney can be seen to dominate the construction of tweendom economically, industrially, narratively and ideologically; its presence is incredibly visible in tween popular culture. The phenomenal commercial success and broader media visibility of *Hannah Montana* (Disney Channel, 2006-2011) and the Jonas Brothers emerges in the aftermath of the Disney Channel’s global multi-media tween hit *High School Musical* (2006, 2007, 2008), the first two Disney Channel Original Movies of which had been watched by an estimated global audience of 455 million viewers in 2008 (ahead of the theatrically-released third and final film).⁹¹ Thus 2006 signalled Disney’s leading role in tween popular culture, following the corporation’s re-branding in the late-1990s to focus on being a provider of entertainment for the tween market, and an increased availability of the

⁸⁸ “Tweens”, https://www.disneyconsumerproducts.com/Home/display.jsp?contentId=dcp_home_ourfranchises_disney_tween_uk&forPrint=false&language=en&preview=false&imageShow=0&pressRoom=UK&translationOf=null®ion=0&first=0&last=0 [accessed 2 March 2012].

⁸⁹ See for example Belinda Luscombe, “Making New Miley’s: Disney’s Teen-Star Factory”, *Time*, 22 October 2009, <<http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,1930657,00.html>> [accessed 26 May 2011]; and Jeanne McDowell, “A Disney Star Is Born”, *Time*, 30 November 2006, <<http://www.time.com/time/arts/article/0,8599,1564394,00.html>> [accessed 3 June 2010].

⁹⁰ See for example Henry A. Giroux and Grace Pollock, “Is Disney Good for Your Kids?: How Corporate Media Shape Youth Identity in the Digital Age”, in Steinberg, ed., *Kinderculture*; Mayes-Elma, “From Miley Merchandising to Pop Princess Peddling”, in Steinberg, ed., *Kinderculture*.

⁹¹ Simon Dumenco, “Could 455 Million ‘High School Musical’ Viewers Be Wrong?”, *Advertising Age* 79.39 (2008), p. 20; for an industrial analysis of the *High School Musical* global success, see Anna Potter, “It’s a Small World After All: New Media Constellations and Disney’s Rising Star – the Global Success of *High School Musical*”, *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 15.2 (2001).

Disney Channel on cable television since 2000.⁹² *High School Musical*, *Hannah Montana* and the Jonas Brother are often cited in the press as iconic examples of Disney's domination of the tween market, and yet have not garnered academic attention or been discussed beyond their industrial statistics. The focus on *Hannah Montana* and the Jonas Brothers allows for a thorough exploration of the ways in which this leading producer of tween popular culture constructs and addresses the tween. Here, the common ideological and narrative structures employed by the brand are examined. At the same time, however, the analysis of a girl-centred and a boy-centred multi-media franchise reveals the gendered disparities in Disney's construction of star personae, and in their address to the tween consumer.

Chapter 5 explores in detail the paralleling of "becoming"-woman and "becoming"-celebrity, established in Chapter 3. The multi-media Disney Channel franchise *Hannah Montana* epitomises this allegory, emphasising an investment in the authentic in its construction and articulation of both "becoming"-woman and "becoming"-celebrity. Recent empirical research into girls and their relationships to celebrity is drawn upon to demonstrate this parallel. The chapter examines the way the franchise's star Miley Cyrus is intimately tied to the onscreen personae Miley Stewart and Hannah Montana; this blurring of on- and off-screen personae is central to the franchise's address to, and guiding of, the tween "becoming"-woman. As such, the chapter is in part a star study, whilst developing a model specific to the gendered (female) and aged (young) nature of contemporary tween popular culture.

Chapter 6 explores the development of sexuality in tweenhood. It examines the ways in which the pop-rock band and multi-media brand the Jonas Brothers addresses the tween in terms of the development of heterosexual desire. The analysis reveals the ways in which the stars are constructed as ideologically safe sites for the acknowledgement and encouragement of the tween's emerging sexual identity. The brand guides the tween in how to be "appropriately" heterosexual, effectively teaching the tween how to be appropriately *desirable*. The analysis is placed within a contextual framework of the increased cultural presence and socio-political role played by the Christian Right in the US since the 1980s, in particular focusing on the purity movement. The analysis draws upon a great deal of media coverage of the Jonas Brothers, and cultural commentary of the purity movement. Whilst building

⁹² See also Hoi F. Cheu, "Disney and Girlhood", in Mitchell and Reid-Walsh, eds, *Girl Culture: An Encyclopedia*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008); and Wee, *Teen Media*, pp. 172-3.

upon the body of work on gender, pop and rock music and stardom, the chapter demonstrates the ways in which the Jonas Brothers problematise these existing theories.

The choice of films, television programmes, celebrities and extra-texts was based on their belonging to a discursively constructed “genre” of tween media. That is, I identified texts that are seen to be distinctly addressing a preadolescent female consumer demographic. This is signalled through the DVDs’ locations in the children’s and family sections of DVD shops, DVDs which displayed a prominent use of the colour pink and feminine fonts, and featuring predominantly teenage girls on the covers. Promotional trailers within the DVDs led me to other related texts, as did the recommended films based on other buyers’ purchasing histories when shopping online and browsing the Internet Movie Database website (www.imdb.com). I chose films and television programmes with certificates no higher than 12A; texts with higher certificates can be assumed not to be directed towards a tween audience (although that is not to say that tweens do not consume them). For Disney, and in particular Disney Channel texts, the trailers and promotional idents between programming on the television channel, and the website, led me to the most “popular” and related films and programmes (according to the brand). Texts belonging to the “mainstream” were chosen; that is, media available to buy at supermarkets and high street DVD shops, produced and distributed by large studios and distribution companies, and starring tween stars with visible, mediated personae and/or starring in other tween media texts. Once a sizeable library of texts had been compiled, they were distributed into chapters by thematic and narrative tropes. Of course, as the following chapters reveal, there are overlaps in these areas, but prominent and striking common themes and narratives are visible and allow for the texts to be loosely categorised, such as the modern-day fairy tale, same-sex friendships, celebrity, and father-daughter relationships.

The films, television programmes, celebrities, and their extra-texts discussed in this thesis date from 2004 onwards. In part, this delimiter was chosen to make the material used for primary research more manageable: a number of earlier films, television programmes, celebrities and multi-media brands would certainly have enriched the analyses in these chapters, however there was not space to include such a vast number of texts here. Tween popular culture’s phenomenal expansion at the beginning of the twenty-first century can be seen to occur in waves: the first wave

comes with Disney's rebranding itself towards a tween audience in 2000 alongside a broader increased visibility of tween stars and media texts including *Lizzie McGuire* (Disney Channel, 2001-2004), *That's So Raven* (Disney Channel, 2003-2007), The Cheetah Girls, and Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen. The second – and larger – wave can be seen occurring around 2006 with Disney's dominance as a tween producer, signalled by the broadcast of *High School Musical* and *Hannah Montana*. Following my period of research, we seem to be in a new wave of tween popular culture, with new stars and multi-media franchises currently replacing the texts discussed in this thesis (due to the relatively brief period of transition that defines the tween, tween popular culture's texts seem to appear in cycles of roughly four years). Looking at films and television programmes from 2004 (between the first and second waves) allows for an understanding of tween media context, in terms of narratives, characters, and themes, that lead to its phenomenal wider cultural presence from 2006.

Furthermore, the focus throughout much of the thesis on texts from the Disney output of tween media leaves out a close examination of other prominent producers of tween popular culture, such as Nickelodeon and its successful multi-media franchises including *iCarly* (2007-2012) and *Victorious* (2010-). However, Sarah Banet-Weiser's thorough multi-disciplinary study effectively and sufficiently addresses that tween brand.⁹³ It seems, however, that Disney as a producer of tween popular culture is largely absent in academic studies that go beyond offering cultural commentary or promoting childhood advocacy.⁹⁴ Moreover, whilst the films, television programmes, celebrities and extra-texts discussed in the following chapters originate from the US, that is not to say that the tween is solely a construct of the US, nor is it to suggest that international texts are unworthy of academic attention. Again, focusing on US texts makes the research project manageable in terms of size; further, bringing in analysis of texts from other national contexts outside of the US would have called for contextual analysis and comparison, for which there is not enough space here. The global success of many of the films and television programmes discussed in the

⁹³ Sarah Banet-Weiser, *Kids Rule!: Nickelodeon and Consumer Citizenship*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007)

⁹⁴ See for example Giroux and Pollock, "Is Disney Good for Your Kids?" and Mayes-Elma, "From Miley Merchandising to Pop Princess Peddling", in Steinberg, ed., *Kinderculture*.

following chapters testifies to the global nature of tweenhood, as does the international academic attention that the tween and tweenhood has garnered.⁹⁵

Whilst, as this Introduction has demonstrated, tween popular culture is a relatively recent phenomenon, it shares similarities with teen popular culture, which has a longer history; as such, a distinction needs to be made in the relation between the two. A number of the character types, narratives, themes and genres discussed in the following chapters can also be identified in the films, television programmes and wider multi-media texts aimed at a teenage and young adult demographic, including an emphasis on same-sex friendship, the reassurance of heterosexuality, and being “true” to oneself. However, what marks tween popular culture as separate to teen popular culture is the distinct coming together of the rhetoric of “choice” and “authenticity”, with the themes of the makeover, princesshood and celebrity, within a specifically neoliberal and postfeminist culture. It is precisely the entanglement of these elements that makes tween popular culture a distinct phenomenon. There is evidence to suggest a further downshifting of this popular culture to a “pre-tween” demographic, addressed by texts within the Disney Princesses franchise (a “precursor” to the tween princess narratives discussed here), with official costumes available to buy from ages 2-3 upwards⁹⁶.

Tweens, Myself and I

This research project has been a personal journey for me in making sense of my own feminist identity. I had not considered myself a “feminist” until my first academic encounter with feminism on my Masters degree when I took a film studies module called Gender and Genre. Before then, in retrospect, I had fallen into the “I’m not a feminist but...” category of young women. Until that point in my postgraduate degree, I had assumed feminism and feminists to be intimidating. I’d also assumed that feminism had little relevance to the research I’d thought I would be pursuing in

⁹⁵ Much of the work drawn upon in this thesis comes from British and Australian institutions. Further, the expanding field of girlhood studies sees fascinating and important research (much of which addresses the preadolescent girl) from diverse international contexts, see for example the essays in Mitchell and Reid-Walsh, eds, *Seven Going on Seventeen*; Mary Celeste Kearney, ed., *Mediated Girlhoods: New Explorations of Girls’ Media Culture*, (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2011); and *Girlhood Studies* journal.

⁹⁶ <<http://www.disneystore.co.uk/disney-princess/clothing-accessories/mn/1000016+1000204/>> [accessed 19 April 2013]

my proposed Doctoral research project. A contributing factor to my realisation of the centrality of gender and feminism to my project was the repeated standard reaction I received (and still receive) when summarising my Doctoral research. At conferences and personal social gatherings I would briefly (and admittedly rather simplistically) explain that I primarily analyse recent films and television programmes aimed at preadolescent girls in terms of gender, feminism and celebrity; to clarify the sort of texts I was dealing with, I would state *Hannah Montana* as an example. Responses were consistent across fellow academics and non-academic friends and family: surprised laughter, displaying a mixture of confusion (doing a PhD is supposed to entail “serious” work), envy (sitting around watching these kids’ films and TV shows all day must be fun) and pity (sitting around watching these kids’ films and TV shows must be torture). Receiving such a response from non-academics or academics from outside of the arts and humanities is perhaps understandable; however, this was a response I also received from film, television and media studies academics – those working on apparently more “legitimate” subjects.

As a young female researcher still trying to find her place within the academy, I would laugh along and joke about how many times I’d had to listen to “The Best of Both Worlds”, the song which features in the opening montage of *Hannah Montana*. However, each time this happened I would feel anger for not being taken seriously as an academic, and protective over my research area: by laughing at the idea of studying a text such as *Hannah Montana*, not only do such responses support the delegitimisation of young, female popular culture as a subject of academic study; such responses add to a delegitimisation of *young girls* within culture and society. I wanted to defend my research as being worthy of its place in film, television and media studies, and by extension defend girls’ place within culture and thus *their* role in society.

I am not suggesting that the texts analysed in this thesis are complex narratives, or that they deal with taboo subject matter, or that they should be seen as innovative works of art, but this does not diminish their value for academic attention. Rather, the fact that they play a central role in the lives of young girls making the transition into young womanhood, pervading their multi-media terrain of consumption and making up the popular culture that surrounds them, means that they warrant academic attention. As young feminine subjects in a process of developing an identity, tweens turn to these very texts to guide them in building and understanding

their sense of self. The girl is a highly visible figure in contemporary popular culture, and a site through which social and cultural anxieties are articulated. In order to understand the social and cultural significance of the figure of the tween and the discursive construction of tweenhood, we need to turn to the popular culture that constructs and addresses them.

CHAPTER 1:

THE MULTIPLE FEMININITIES OF TWEEN POPULAR CULTURE

bratz opens with a montage of four teenage girls waking and getting ready for their first day at high school. Part of the franchise emerging in the early 2000s centring on 10-inch dolls with large heads, small bodies, and oversized eyes and lips made-up with heavy eyeshadow, mascara and lipstick, the 2007 live-action film portrays the four best friends, based on each of the dolls' styles and personalities. In this opening sequence we are introduced to four different types of femininity: Yasmin (Nathalia Ramos) (the shy loner, close to her Latina roots), in her rustic, cosy, ethnic bedroom; Jade (Janel Parrish) (whose strengths are science and fashion design) in her prim, safe, calm bedroom; Cloe (Skyler Shaye) (who excels at football) in her colourful, sport-inspired, clumsy bedroom; and Sasha (Logan Browning) (the confident cheerleader), in her luxurious, indulgent diva-style bedroom. Through a number of shots, we watch as each of the girls help one another via webcam to decide what to wear.



Figure 1: Four “types” of femininity, in *bratz*.

This opening sequence can be seen to exemplify Driscoll's argument that “The girl market is not organized by an ideal girl or by one set of parameters for ideal girleness, but has different shifting boundaries for the embodied assemblage of different girls and girl markets.”⁹⁷

As *bratz* demonstrates, early twenty-first century tween popular culture appears to offer a range of girl-types for its young female consumers, not only across media texts, but within a single film. This highlights two significant characteristics of

⁹⁷ Driscoll, *Girls*, p. 286

mainstream femininity in popular culture from the mid-1990s onwards: first, with the immense popularity of the Spice Girls and the success of their “Girl Power” motto, there has been a cultural assumption that girls are now presented with a wider range of consumer options regarding their consumption of girl-centred popular culture. Kathleen Sweeney notes that “the mid-1990s marked a time when pop cultural depictions of teenage girls shifted forever in America, breaking open possibilities for definitions of the words Female, Femininity, and even the ‘F’ word, Feminism”. Sweeney offers her own labels for the range of female types available in the visual media, including: ‘Lipstick Lolitas [...] Amazon Athletes, Demon Slayers, Brainiacs and Superheroines.’⁹⁸

Second, whilst there is claimed to be an apparent increased range of available “choices” of girl-types, such “options” exist within a socio-cultural context of anxieties centred on the state of adolescent girlhood.⁹⁹ In particular, girlhood advocacy literature since the mid-1990s argues that teenage girls have a lost or fragmented sense of self. Pipher’s 1994 self-help book, *Reviving Ophelia* epitomises this discourse; she believes that in early adolescence, girls lose their sense of selves.¹⁰⁰

She states that:

Girls know they are losing themselves. [...] Wholeness is shattered by the chaos of adolescence. Girls become fragmented, their selves split into mysterious contradictions. They are sensitive and tenderhearted, mean and competitive, superficial and idealistic.¹⁰¹

This chapter – and the thesis as a whole – suggests that rather than conceptualising adolescent girlhood as a period in which a gendered sense of self is lost or broken down, tween femininity (as claimed in the depictions of teen femininity across tween popular culture) should be understood as a time in which the complete self is *not yet* developed – the complete gendered self is in a *process* of development. In this understanding of tween femininity, I draw upon the notion of “becoming” as it has been conceptualised in girlhood studies, outlined in the Introduction.

⁹⁸ Kathleen Sweeney, *Maiden USA: Girl Icons Come of Age*, (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2008), p. 1; see also Susan Hopkins, *Girl Heroes: The New Force in Popular Culture*, (Annandale, New South Wales: Pluto Press Australia, 2002), p. 214.

⁹⁹ Marnina Gonick similarly recognises these two simultaneously emerging discourses organising girlhood in the 1990s; see “Between ‘Girl Power’ and ‘Reviving Ophelia’: Constituting the Neoliberal Girl Subject”, *NWSA Journal* 18.2 (2006).

¹⁰⁰ Pipher, *Reviving Ophelia*, p. 19

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 20

This chapter argues that the tween is addressed by the texts that make up tween popular culture in terms of her transitional status, as being in a process of developing her gendered identity – more specifically a *feminine* self. It argues that femininity is a discursive construction, and that the tween girl learns the process of “becoming”-woman through the constructions of femininity within tween popular culture. It thus follows Dorothy E. Smith’s argument that “‘Femininity’ [...] is a distinctively textual phenomenon”¹⁰² and that “Young women learn both the arts and doctrines of femininity from such texts, each providing the standards and practices of a femininity diversified by age, class, race and ‘style of life’.”¹⁰³ This argument, and the analysis in this chapter, fit in with work on selfhood and postmodernity (outlined in the Introduction), which argues that the media and popular culture are central in formulating contemporary identity.¹⁰⁴ This chapter therefore explores tween popular culture’s scripts of femininity, and examines what is claimed to be the “appropriate” way(s) – versus the “inappropriate” way(s) – for the tween girl to “become”-woman.

The analysis in this chapter demonstrates the “appropriate” femininity in tween popular culture is defined by multiple branches: these predominantly include heterosexuality; same-sex friendship; daughterhood and sisterhood; and *not* being a “mean girl”. In each case the girl must fulfil her role as “true”. Tween popular culture displays a heavy investment in *authenticity* in its construction of feminine selfhood, and therefore can be seen to belong to the broader pervasive discourses on the self in the contemporary media landscape – a key site for which is reality TV. Analysing the hierarchies of femininities seemingly available as “choices” demonstrates that the tween must learn how to become “appropriately” feminine whilst retaining a sense of “true” self. As such the argument supports Driscoll’s recognition that “the difficulties with which girls negotiate adolescence have mostly been interpreted as the struggle for proper femininity, or the struggle to retain a sense of self in the face of expected femininity.”¹⁰⁵ This process of learning “appropriate” femininity whilst retaining a “true” self is largely carried out through the common motif of the makeover, which appears time and time again across tween popular culture. This chapter demonstrates

¹⁰² Dorothy E. Smith, “Femininity as Discourse”, in Leslie G. Roman, Linda K. Christian-Smith and Elizabeth Ellsworth, eds, *Becoming Feminine: The Politics of Popular Culture*, (London: The Falmer Press, 1988), p. 38

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 46; see also Hopkins, *Girl Heroes*, p. 4.

¹⁰⁴ Kellner, “Popular Culture and the Construction of Postmodern Identities”, p. 148

¹⁰⁵ Driscoll, *Girls*, p. 58; this extends Efrat Tseëlon’s conceptualisation of femininity more broadly, in *The Masque of Femininity*, (London: SAGE, 1995), p. 34.

the significance of the makeover trope to cultural constructions and understandings of tweenhood, revealing the ways in which it prepares the tween for her future consumption of teen, and later adult women's media in the context of postfeminist popular culture and neoliberal articulations of selfhood. What will become evident, however, are the contradictory scripts of "appropriate" femininity and authentic selfhood, and the problematic claims of choice.

As the discursive overview of contemporary tweenhood in the Introduction to the thesis demonstrates, the emergence of the tween as she is currently understood today occurs from the mid-1990s alongside the broader increased cultural visibility of girlhood; tween femininity, then, cannot be historicised without a consideration of the 1990s context of Girl Power. Without undertaking a detailed feminist overview of Girl Power's origins, meanings and course through to today, it is important to recognise that, according to Marnina Gonick, "Girl Power represents a 'new girl': assertive, dynamic, and unbound from the constraints of passive femininity."¹⁰⁶ Dawn H. Currie, Deirdre M. Kelly and Shauna Pomerantz similarly note that "What cannot be ignored is the way in which 'girl power', as an everyday expression, has become a shorthand way to explain dramatic changes that characterize the state of girlhood today."¹⁰⁷ They, like a number of feminist academics studying girls' media and popular culture, state that within the popular discourse of Girl Power girls are represented as both youthfully feminine, and independent and ambitious.¹⁰⁸ Whilst I do not deny that the mid- to late-1990s saw a girl-centred pop cultural landscape offering progressive versions of femininity baring the imprint of Girl Power (regardless of whether or not they contained "authentic" feminist politics), I would suggest that many of these writers are rather optimistic in their proclamations that such empowered constructions of girlhood continue to make up a significant

¹⁰⁶ Gonick, "Between 'Girl Power' and 'Reviving Ophelia'", p. 2, for a discursive summary of Girl Power, see p. 6; for a feminist critique of the politics of Girl Power, see Rebecca Munford, "'Wake Up and Smell the Lipgloss': Gender, Generation and the (A)politics of Girl Power", in Stacy Gillis, Gillian Howie and Rebecca Munford, eds, *Third Wave Feminism: A Critical Exploration*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, Expanded Second Edition, 2007); see also Dafna Lemish, "Spice World: Constructing Femininity the Popular Way", *Popular Music and Society* 26.1 (2003).

¹⁰⁷ Dawn H. Currie, Deirdre M. Kelly and Shauna Pomerantz, "Girl Power": Girls Reinventing Girlhood, (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2009), p. 29

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.; see also Hopkins's reading of contemporary girl popular culture and the female icons of this new landscape. She argues that such girls/women "have successfully challenged norms of femininity" and have had more choices and control over their lives than previous generations of women; as a result they are energetic, ambitious and assertive, in *Girl Heroes*, p. 2; see also Rebecca Hains who shares this view, in *Growing Up With Girl Power: Girlhood on Screen and in Everyday Life*, (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2012), p. 82.

proportion of girls' pop culture landscape today. Contemporary tween popular culture does not necessarily reflect this apparently girl-powered pop culture, and instead reveals some ambivalence towards the "cute but powerful girl-woman" stereotype that Hopkins is so heavily invested in.¹⁰⁹

Rachel Moseley states that teen films of the 1980s, as well as making over female characters, "were also concerned with allowing space for *difference* to exist". That is, whilst such narratives worked towards transforming the girls that did not fit the ideal of conventionally pretty, middle class femininity, they also allowed for stereotypes to be deconstructed and differences of class and status to be interrogated.¹¹⁰ By looking to contemporary constructions of tween femininity at an aesthetic level, one can see that this space for difference – perhaps baring the imprint of Girl Power's versions of femininity made available in the decade leading up to tween popular culture's phenomenal expansion – can be found in tween media's secondary best friend characters, and in several of its leading protagonists. Such characters are claimed by the texts to be conventionally "unfeminine", largely falling into the categories of tomboys, studious, sporty, or musical. *Hannah Montana*'s Lilly (Emily Osment), the best friend of Miley Stewart/Hannah Montana (Miley Cyrus), can be seen to visually embody Kelly, Pomerantz and Currie's conceptualisation of "Skater girlhood", part of the larger category "alternative girlhood" – that is, girls who consciously position themselves against conventional forms of femininity, in particular skater girls who appropriate traditionally masculine traits and style.¹¹¹ Particularly in the first and second series of the sitcom, Lilly is often seen riding her skateboard, and wearing beanie hats, layered t-shirts in green, orange and brown, and combat trousers. Aesthetically, she is a tomboy in comparison to the more conventionally girly Miley, whom we see wearing the colour pink, fitted, boot-cut jeans and her hair often styled into glossy curls.

¹⁰⁹ Hopkins, *Girl Heroes*, p. 1

¹¹⁰ Rachel Moseley, "Glamorous Witchcraft: Gender and Magic in Teen Film and Television", *Screen* 43.4 (2002), p. 405, emphasis in original.

¹¹¹ Kelly, Pomerantz and Currie, "Skater Girlhood and Emphasized Femininity: 'You Can't Land an Ollie Properly in Heels'", *Gender and Education* 17.3 (2005), p. 230



Figure 2: Lilly and Miley in *Hannah Montana*.

Whilst Lilly does not explicitly articulate an active distancing from conventional femininity, Lilly's tomboy style in comparison to Miley can be seen to represent an unconventional, even "inappropriate" form of femininity.

In series 2, episode 3,¹¹² Miley makes it her mission to transform Lilly into a more culturally "appropriate" version of femininity. During lunch in the school cafeteria, Lilly eats her meal messily with no manners, then in the style of American football, catches and throws food to one of the boys, being referred to as "macho" as a result by the school's "mean girls". At this point, Miley says, "we're in the 9th grade, you've got to start acting more like, urh, I don't know – *a girl?!*"¹¹³ To reinforce the point, the eco-friendly "geek" Sarah, who does not conform to the cultural ideals of beauty, reveals that she has a date for an upcoming dance and pities Miley and Lilly for not having dates, at which point Lilly states "I'm a failure as a girl!" and allows Miley to "take [her] from skate chick to date chick", telling her "I'm through being one of the guys – girl me up, baby." As soon as she takes off her woolly hat and corrects her slumped posture, a boy asks to take her to the dance.

This scenario supports Susan Brownmiller's argument, and wider cultural understandings of femininity, and its compulsory compatibility with heterosexuality:

To fail at the feminine difference is to appear not to care about men, and to risk the loss of their attention and approval. To be insufficiently feminine is viewed as a failure in core sexual identity, or as a failure to care about oneself, for a woman found wanting will be appraised (and will appraise herself) as mannish or neutered or simply unattractive, as men have defined these terms.¹¹⁴

¹¹² "You Are So Sue-able to Me", *Hannah Montana*, (Disney Channel 25 April 2007)

¹¹³ Emphasis in original dialogue.

¹¹⁴ Susan Brownmiller, *Femininity*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984), p. 15

Lilly arrives at school following her shopping trip and makeover given by Miley, resembling a Paris Hilton-style celebrity, wearing a bright pink top, gold jewellery, large sunglasses and make-up, and uncomfortable with her new look, states that “I look like Amber and Ashley [the school’s “mean girls” (Sanika Knowles and Anna Maria Perez de Tagle)] threw up on me”. Whilst a number of her male school friends now seem attracted to her (of which she takes advantage by letting them carry her books) her date, Matt (Bubba Lewis), is intimidated by this new Lilly and stands her up before the dance. Matt later admits that “I asked out this cool skater girl, and the next day she’s all girly and frilly and *weird*. [...] She just wasn’t the girl I had a crush on.”¹¹⁵ Lilly, blaming Miley for this “inappropriate” display of femininity, is happy to return to her previous tomboy style. Again, this is in keeping with the findings of Kelly et al.’s empirical research: “Another way that skater girls defined an alternative femininity was against other girls and women whom they perceived as embodying emphasized femininity.”¹¹⁶ Following her brief experience of the “mean girl”-style femininity (diametrically opposed to her previous style of femininity demonstrated in the cafeteria), Lilly distances herself from that “inappropriate” type. Therefore, according to this episode, ideal femininity is necessary for heterosexual attraction, and is in fact measured by male attraction; whilst masculine displays such as eating like a “pig” or joining in with male camaraderie, “high-fiving” and throwing things to one another, is not approved of, neither are overt displays of high-maintenance glamour.

Hannah Montana’s Lilly is one of several conventionally unfeminine characters whose “inappropriate” lack of femininity is not only altered slightly, but is negotiated through the *reassurance of heterosexuality*. As this episode makes clear, Lilly is very much interested in heterosexual romance, thus her lack of femininity need not be read as a sign of lesbianism – a space not yet represented across mainstream tween popular culture.¹¹⁷ Similarly, *She’s The Man*’s (2006) Viola (Amanda Bynes) is introduced during the film’s opening montage as a skilled and passionate football (soccer) player. The aesthetic style of this montage suggests the lead character’s conventionally unfeminine style, with the use of the colours red,

¹¹⁵ Emphasis in original dialogue.

¹¹⁶ Kelly et al., “Skater Girlhood and Emphasized Femininity”, p. 236

¹¹⁷ In this respect, tween media reflects the continuing broader cultural assumption that lesbianism poses a threat to femininity and ultimately a threat to patriarchy – that is, the lesbian suggests the possibility that women do not need men.

orange, blue and black. Footage of Viola playing football is intercut with stills, titles and credits in a “masculine” aggressive and chaotic style, accompanied by a frenetic rock soundtrack. However, within this opening scene she is shown to be reassuringly heterosexual, as she greets and kisses her boyfriend. Furthermore, whilst she is skilled in and enthusiastic about a traditionally “masculine” sport, her femininity is negotiated (and claimed to be heterosexual) by the fact that she is playing whilst wearing a bikini and short shorts, thus reducing the risk of her look being read as androgynous.

Her Best Move (2007) uses the same strategy for negotiating the lead character Sara’s (Leah Pipes) “lack” of femininity: like Viola, she is a skilled football player trying to make it onto the national team. Her conventionally unfeminine style is highlighted in the opening sequence, in which we enter her bedroom decorated in orange and green and adorned with football medals, trophies and muddy football boots. However, during this opening sequence, we are reassured of Sara’s heterosexuality as she gazes at a photograph hidden in her bathroom cabinet of a topless male teenager. Whilst she wears layered t-shirts, jogging bottoms and flip-flops in dark green, grey and navy colours to school, telling her more conventionally feminine best friend Tutti (Lalaine) that “Boys: they’re not everything”, she looks over romantically at a male student on whom she has a crush.¹¹⁸ Whilst *Her Best Move*’s narrative claims to be centred on Sara’s journey towards gaining a place on the national football team, the real focus is on Sara securing heterosexual coupling with Josh (Drew Tyler Bell): at the narrative’s close, she gives up her chance of making it onto the team, allowing a team mate to take her place instead, and decides to take a break from football. The credit montage features photographs of Sara and Josh’s developing romance.

She’s The Man’s narrative centres on Viola’s lack of conventional femininity; she is a talented football player, but her school’s girls’ football team practice space is taken away because not enough girls have signed up. In order to play football seriously, Viola decides to take the place of her rebellious twin brother Sebastian (James Kirk) at an elite boys’ boarding school. Through a number of lies to her

¹¹⁸ The film’s poster and DVD cover feature Sara wearing a short denim skirt, a red tight-fitting sun top, and red strappy wedges, clearly wearing lipgloss and her hair styled into loose curls. At no point in the film does she appear in this outfit, or in any similar outfits. Whilst she is carrying her football boots and is kicking a football into the air, her femininity is reassured through this “emphasized femininity”. One version of the poster features a pink top and wedges, with purple and pink titles and background, fitting in to the typical style of many tween films’ posters and DVD packaging.

parents and a disguise (demonstrated through a make-*under* montage in which she bandages her breasts, hides her long hair with a short wig, wears sideburns and learns the speech and mannerisms of a “boy”), Viola makes it onto the boarding school’s football team. Even before this gender makeover, it is suggested that Viola lacks femininity: whilst walking home from her school wearing a baggy hoodie and carrying a football, Sebastian’s hyper-feminine girlfriend Monique mistakes her for Sebastian, blaming the mistaken identity on Viola’s “total lack of curves.” Monique (Alexandra Breckenridge) fills the role of “emphasized femininity” as defined by R. W. Connell; by this he refers to “femininity [...] defined at ‘the level of mass social relations’, that is based on women’s ‘compliance’ with their subordination to men and ‘oriented to accommodating the interests and desires of men’.”¹¹⁹ Monique, like Lilly in her “after” state of Miley’s makeover, wears large sunglasses, her blonde hair styled into large curls, and a tight-fitting, low-cut pink top, revealing her bra. Throughout the narrative she is frantically trying to track down Sebastian, and is depicted as clingy and “high-maintenance”. Like the “mean girls” Amber and Ashley in *Hannah Montana*, Monique’s apparently excessive femininity works to both highlight Viola’s lack of “appropriate” femininity, and to provide an example of the type of femininity to *avoid*. Viola’s mother also provides a space for “inappropriate” *excessive* femininity: she longs for her daughter to be a debutante at her country club, and is very upset when Viola reveals that she has broken up with her boyfriend Justin (Robert Hoffman) after he arrogantly patronises Viola, dismissing her football skills. Viola’s mother (Julie Hagarty) is heavily invested in heterosexual romance, and in particular traditional notions of masculinity, describing Justin as “so handsome, and rugged, and chiselled, and great”, regardless of his behaviour towards her daughter. Viola’s mother wears pastel coloured tweed skirt suits, pearls, high heels, and her hair carefully styled; she states, “How could I end up with a daughter who only wants to kick a muddy ball around in a field all day?”

Whilst Viola risks failing at conventional femininity, when performing the role of Sebastian she is also at risk of failing at conventional masculinity: she threatens her masculine façade when showing an interest in a female student’s shoes (this investment in conspicuous consumption and fashion further reassures us of her femininity), when discussing feelings and emotions amongst male friends, and is

¹¹⁹ R. W. Connell, quoted in Kelly et al., “Skater Girlhood and Emphasized Femininity”, p. 229

called a “Nancy boy” by the football coach (Vinnie Jones). This reveals that *masculinity*, too, is a construct and that “appropriate” masculinity can only ever be heterosexual; however, interrogating the façade of masculinity is not of concern in film’s narrative, or of other tween narratives for that matter. Ultimately, any possible lack or failing of femininity is negotiated by the constant reassurance of heterosexuality throughout the narrative; after breaking up with Justin and attending her brother’s school under the disguise of Sebastian, she develops romantic feelings towards her roommate, Duke (Channing Tatum). Furthermore, once the news emerges that Viola has been attending the school pretending to be Sebastian during a crucial football game in which she is playing, she is forced to “prove” her gender. To prove Sebastian (who is present at the game) is himself, he pulls his shorts and underwear down in front of the teams, coach and referee, and crowds of spectators. To prove Viola is herself, she lifts up her top. This seems to be all the evidence required to prove one’s masculinity or femininity, and the issue is laid to rest. Viola’s femininity is solidified in the film’s closing scene, as she attends the debutante ball (despite her initial refusal because “It’s totally archaic”), wearing a gown, and escorted by Duke. Her “coming out” at the film’s end reassures us of her femininity. As the examples thus far demonstrate, then, tween femininity is in part defined by its heterosexuality.

Another common strategy for negotiating characters’ apparently “inappropriate” femininity is the investment in same-sex friendship. It is suggested by such narratives that being a “true friend”¹²⁰ ensures one’s femininity, even if such femininity is “lacking” in terms of one’s aesthetic look. Best friend Hailey (Joanna “JoJo” Levesque) in *Aquamarine* (2006) wears khaki combat style shorts and baggy t-shirts, no make up and hair pulled back in a pony-tail. Through this aesthetic style, the film claims she is a “tomboy”, that she is distanced from “emphasized femininity”. Hailey is mocked by the popular “mean girl” Cecilia (Arielle Kebbel) on the beach for her “unfeminine” appearance, as she tells her “you’re never going to get a tan wearing all those clothes” whilst wearing large sunglasses and untying her sequinned kaftan to reveal a skimpy bikini and golden tanned skin. Cecilia, like the other “mean girls” found across tween popular culture, fills the role of “emphasized femininity”, highlighting Hailey’s “tomboy” look whilst providing an example of

¹²⁰ The song “True Friend”, featured on the *Hannah Montana* series two album soundtrack, and is directed towards Lilly; Hannah Montana; see “True Friend”, *Hannah Montana 2/Meet Miley Cyrus*, (Walt Disney Records and Hollywood Records, 5099950146321, 2007) [on CD].

how *not* to be feminine. Hailey replies to this insult with “or skin cancer”, to which the mean girls state “we don’t even smoke”. This instance fits in with the broad cultural assumption that divides femininity into beauty without intelligence and vice versa.¹²¹ Whilst this pairing can be seen in Hailey versus Cecilia, this film, and wider tween popular culture, does not uphold this age-old paradigm. First, whilst Hailey and her best friend Claire (Emma Roberts) are presented as “plain” (in comparison to the mean girls, at least), and Hailey in particular is a tomboy, the actresses playing these characters still fit into the Western ideal of femininity, as slim, white, with straight white teeth and carefully shaped eyebrows (Hailey is played by the popstar JoJo, and Claire is played by Emma Roberts, who shares a resemblance to her aunt, Julia Roberts). Furthermore, the tween is encouraged to side with Hailey during this interaction with Cecilia, and is invited to laugh at Cecilia’s lack of knowledge about cancer, and assume that her over-investment in “emphasized femininity” has come at the price of ignorance of “important” issues. The tween is invited to admire Hailey’s keen interest in sealife and science, a topic in which she has been immersed by her marine biologist mother.

Through meeting the mermaid Aquamarine (Sara Paxton) (who embodies the ideal blonde version of femininity, yet is distanced from the “mean girl”-type through her childlike naïvety and her kindness), they gain confidence as she teaches them to be more sure of themselves, at one point asking them “why go through life unnoticed?” At the end of the narrative, Aquamarine gives Claire and Hailey starfish to wear as earrings, and the starfish speak into the girls’ ears, showering them with compliments: “Hailey’s so beautiful, inside and out. She’s the *best friend* you could ever have”, and “Claire is so courageous. Claire has a *true heart*. [...] She will never let you down. She glows from the inside.”¹²² Therefore, rather than receiving a makeover, the girls are told that feminine beauty is predicated on “true” same-sex friendship, and there is no need to alter their style of femininity. The film closes with an emphasis on same-sex friendship rather than heterosexual romance. This supports Mary Celeste Kearney’s argument that since the early 1990s heterosexual romance no longer provides the central ideology of onscreen representations of teenage girlhood. Instead, she argues many narratives foreground the development of self-identity and

¹²¹ See for example Naomi Wolf who recognises this phenomenon, in *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women*, (London: Vintage, 1990), p. 59.

¹²² My emphases.

same-sex friendships.¹²³ Whilst this is by no means the predominant message across tween popular culture (as the films above have demonstrated, the reassurance of heterosexuality is still very much required in a number of tween texts), there does appear to be a large space made available for the emphasis on same-sex friendships across tween films and television programmes.¹²⁴ Claire and Hailey do not achieve heterosexual unions, but instead focus on the strength of their friendship together, and Aquamarine, although gaining the romantic attention of Raymond (Jake McDorman), abandons the possibility of developing the relationship with him and instead returns to her home in the ocean. Of course this is not unique to tween films and television programmes; indeed, the same has been argued of the soap opera, in studies such as that by Geraghty: she recognises the “sense of female solidarity” onscreen within the genre, and the emphasis placed on friendships which are seen to be more stable and secure than marriages and heterosexual coupling, which are hard work.¹²⁵ Such emphasis on the value of same-sex friendships in tween popular culture can be seen as preparation for its continued significance in adult women’s media, establishing here the importance of female solidarity when heterosexual coupling is not available, steady or reliable.

A further strategy employed in a number of tween narratives to validate the “unfeminine” girl’s “true” femininity is to demonstrate her role as a “good” daughter and/or sibling. According to such films and television shows, then, “appropriate” femininity is predicated on investing in “family values”; “true” femininity is centred on daughterhood and sisterhood. *Alice Upside Down* (2007) features yet another “tomboy”, Alice (Alyson Stoner); the film claims she lacks the conventional feminine “look” because her mother died, leaving her without the necessary guidance to teach her the scripts of femininity. The film fits into the broader tween popular culture landscape in which narratives regularly remove the mother, leaving the single father to raise the tween or teen daughter (this family model is discussed in Chapter 4).

¹²³ Kearney, “Girlfriends and Girl Power: Female Adolescence in Contemporary U.S. Cinema”, in Frances Gateward and Murray Pomerance, eds, *Sugar, Spice, and Everything Nice: Cinemas of Girlhood*, (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2002), p. 130; see also Hopkins, *Girl Heroes*, p. 187; and McRobbie, *Feminism and Youth Culture: From “Jackie” to “Just Seventeen”*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 135-186.

¹²⁴ See also the Disney Channel Original Movie *Frenemies* (2012) which relies on “true” same-sex friendship for its articulation of “appropriate” femininity, as does *The Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants* (2005, 2008).

¹²⁵ Geraghty, *Women and Soap Opera: A Study of Prime Time Soaps*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), pp. 48-9

Living with her widowed father and her brother, Alice has picked up “masculine” habits such as a lack of housekeeping skills, and a tendency to embarrass herself in social situations. For example, she is taken shopping for school clothes by her brother Lester (Lucas Grabeel), who accidentally leads her to the boys’ section of a shop. Alice’s inadequate feminine knowledge has left her lacking in confidence; to overcome this undeveloped femininity, Alice fantasises about being glamorous and therefore confident. For example, upon moving into a new house, Alice meets her new neighbour, a girl of the same age. The girl wears pink nail varnish, a preppy pink checked skirt, and her hair is neatly tied back. In contrast, Alice wears a brown striped jumper, dull messy hair, and her hands and face are visibly dirty. During a fantasy sequence, she imagines herself instead wearing a floral top, smart pink jacket, jewellery and lipgloss. Her hair styled into glossy, curled pigtails, and she displays friendly body language and a wide smile. The shots of her in reality are dull and high angled, making her appear small, unhappy and vulnerable, whilst her fantasy sequence is golden-hued and accompanied by a pop music soundtrack, to accompany the confidence she exudes. During these fantasy sequences, Alice can be seen to use glamour in the way argued by Beverley Skeggs, whereby it “is a way of transcending the banalities of femininity” and “enables a projection of desire”.¹²⁶

In addition to her fantasies, Alice looks to Miss Cole (Ashley Drane), the young, blonde teacher in whose class she desperately wants to be: “I mean look at her, she’s beautiful and smart and confident. She even dresses the way I wish I could. There’s no way I’d be such a loser if I could just learn from her.” Alice even attempts to set up Miss Cole with her father (Luke Perry), imagining them becoming a family; this fantasy sequence provides confirmation that it is indeed a mother figure to teach her how to become “appropriately” feminine, that Alice yearns for in Miss Cole. However, following an incident in which Alice temporarily ruins the school play by accidentally knocking down the scenery, she receives an unkind telling-off from Miss Cole; Alice turns to her own teacher, the older Mrs Plotkin (Penny Marshall), whose age, overweight figure, unkempt hair, and stern demeanour places her outside the feminine ideal (even her name has unfeminine connotations). However, Mrs Plotkin in fact understands Alice’s confused and emotionally turbulent stage in young femininity, comparing her to Tom Sawyer and offering her valuable advice. Alice

¹²⁶ Skeggs, *Formations of Class & Gender*, p. 111

tells the audience, direct to camera, “Isn’t it funny how I’d been trying to get close to Miss Cole just so she could be my role model, when my real role model was standing right before me?” Instead of learning how to look glamorous and display confidence, she learns through Mrs Plotkin that friends and family are “enough for me”. Throughout the narrative Alice and her father strengthen their relationship, together dealing with and moving on from her mother’s death. She does not need Miss Cole to fill the role vacated by her own mother; instead she validates her femininity through her investment in her role as a daughter and a sister.¹²⁷ It is worth noting, however, that in the closing scene of the film during a party Alice is romantically coupled with a male classmate, to further avoid the risk of her tomboy style deeming her androgynous.

Thus far, this chapter has demonstrated the range of “alternative” girl-types claimed to be on offer to the tween across tween popular culture; such depictions can be seen as a refreshing broadening of the cultural definitions of femininity in the wake of Girl Power. As the analysis has demonstrated however, the same reassurances of femininity appear across the texts. As stated, the use of the “mean girl”-type works to show how *not* to be feminine, and this role is not always relegated to secondary, “enemy” characters. Several tween narratives centre on a girl who belongs to the “mean girl” category of femininity at the beginning of the narrative, and must learn how to be “appropriately” feminine and successfully move away from her current “wrong” type; such films include *Wild Child* and *Geek Charming* (2011). A number of narratives also follow an “appropriately” feminine girl succumb to the allure of the “emphasized femininity” of the “mean girl” type, and must then learn to return to her previous “appropriately” feminine way. This narrative is epitomised by *The Clique*, *Mean Girls 2* (2011), and *Monte Carlo* (2011).

I use the term “mean girls” in reference to the 2004 film, *Mean Girls* (and its 2011 sequel discussed here), which was adapted from Wiseman’s 2002 parental guide *Queen Bees & Wannabes*. In the book she states that “Our culture teaches girls a very dangerous and confusing code of behaviour about what constitutes ‘appropriate’ feminine behaviour (i.e., you should be sexy, but not slutty; you should be

¹²⁷ See also *Ramona and Beezus* (2010), and Disney Channel Original Movie *Wizards of Waverly Place: The Movie* (2009) which also foreground the girl’s role as sibling and daughter within her femininity.

independent, but you're no one without a boyfriend)".¹²⁸ She believes that girls have strict hierarchies of femininity based on cultural ideals, and it is the girls themselves that ensure these hierarchies are enforced through peer policing and surveillance.¹²⁹ Wiseman states that through such social hierarchies and surveillance, "Girls are often their own and other girls' worst enemies".¹³⁰ *Wild Child* and *Geek Charming* depict "queen bees" who enforce this surveillance of femininity, and hold a place at the top of their social hierarchy. The narratives claim that this type of femininity is "bad" and even potentially dangerous and destructive not only to the girls themselves, but also to the people around them. *Wild Child*, as the title suggests, centres on the "out of control" Poppy (Emma Roberts), who lives an extravagant lifestyle in Malibu in a decadent large beach-side house with her wealthy widowed father and her sister. She indulges in celebrity-style parties with her friends, and seems to be on a path of self-destruction; on the day that her father's girlfriend moves into the house, she invites her friends to take and/or damage her future stepmother's belongings, and finally jumps off the edge of a cliff into the sea, to the cheers of her friends. The tween is invited to condemn Poppy's "diva" behaviour; these events are the final straw for Poppy's father, who sends her to a strict all-girls boarding school in England.¹³¹

Across tween popular culture, a "mean girl" equates to "emphasized femininity". According to such texts, not only is it the "mean girl's" role to enforce feminine surveillance, but also to use her excessive display of femininity to uphold the strict scripts of femininity and retain their social position of power. In this way, "mean girls" uphold the cultural model of women as competitive and fearful of one another, particularly with regards to beauty¹³². Poppy's "inappropriate" display of "emphasized femininity" is highlighted upon her arrival at Abbey Mount boarding school: she steps out of a limousine wearing large sunglasses, a number of necklaces and accessories, high heels, and a large Louis Vuitton handbag. Her blonde hair is styled into large curls, and her eyes are heavily made up with dark eye shadow. It is claimed that her celebrity-style of femininity does not fit with the large abbey, grand

¹²⁸ Wiseman, *Queen Bees & Wannabes*, p. 13

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 10

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 20

¹³¹ The role of England as a place that allows for an authentic transformation demonstrates the significance of place and region in formulations of authenticity, discussed in Chapter 5. The implementing of the transformation by the *father* highlights the weight given to the father figure in tween popular culture's narratives of transformations of the self; this is discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

¹³² See Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, p. 284.

country grounds, and overcast weather (and shortly after, heavy rain); whilst she insists on wearing tight-fitting clothes and high heels, she becomes cold without a jumper, and struggles to walk in the English countryside in her high heels. Her “emphasized femininity” is further juxtaposed with the onlooking female students upon her arrival. They wear oversized grey wool blazers and tartan skirts, grey knee-length thick socks and flat shoes. Whilst neither type of femininity is presented to be “ideal” (they represent both extremes of femininity), the tween viewer is nevertheless invited to laugh at and disapprove of Poppy’s “emphasized femininity”. Although English girls are shown to “lack” some of the markers of conventional femininity, through their shapeless and dull uniforms, lack of make-up, and frequent consumption of chocolate, their femininity is nevertheless reassured: they show an awareness of, and investment in, shopping and the consumption and production of beauty practices (although not to the extent of Poppy),¹³³ including scouring local charity shops for stylish clothing and accessories, and carrying out their own eyebrow tinting; furthermore, they display an interest in heterosexuality through their (rather naïve) discussions of sex.

Poppy, like the other “mean girls” of tween popular culture, can be seen to exemplify a young form of Alexander Doty’s conceptualisation of the diva: such “mean girls” “are about troubling and breaking out of their “proper” culturally assigned sex, gender, sexuality, class, national, ethnic, and racial spaces.”¹³⁴ Poppy’s “inappropriate” display of “emphasized femininity” is reinforced when she refuses to share bedroom space and is disgusted by her roommates’ choice of food (she follows an extravagant diet that strictly does not include carbohydrates or sugar) – both markers of her “wrong” type of femininity. Furthermore, she makes no attempt to build friendships with her roommates, showing her disdain towards their tastes in clothing, beauty and food. Instead, she continues a long-distance friendship with her friend, Ruby (Shelby Young), in Malibu. However, her choice of Ruby as a friend further signals her “inappropriate” femininity, as Ruby is shown *not* to be a “true friend”: whilst packing for England, Ruby is more interested acquiring Poppy’s designer shoes that she must leave behind, and when she receives video messages from Poppy who misses her, she is disgusted by Poppy’s apparent lack of beauty

¹³³ Louise Wilks makes a similar observation. See “‘Boys Don’t Like Girls for Funniness’: Raunch Culture and the British Tween Film”, *Networking Knowledge* 5.1 (2012), pp. 110-1.

¹³⁴ Alexander Doty, “Introduction: There’s Something About Mary”, *Camera Obscura* 65 22.2 (2007), p. 4

maintenance; instead Ruby is more concerned with her own “inappropriate” sexual activities with a boy with whom she is currently sharing a hot tub.

Thus, as in *Aquamarine*, “appropriate” femininity is intimately tied to same-sex friendship. This is reinforced during a meeting with the head-teacher, Mrs Kingsley (Natasha Richardson), when she confronts Poppy about her “wrong” femininity. Mrs Kingsley tells her:

If your aim is to make the pages of *Us Weekly*, then this isn’t the place for you. What we do produce is [sic] smart, independent, free-thinking, good-hearted girls, who *remain friends for life*. The kind of girl that – behind all your wise cracks – I know you are.¹³⁵

This advice puts into motion Poppy’s transformation of femininity (which has, of course, already been initiated by her father’s sending her to England). At an aesthetic level, Poppy undergoes a makeover, or rather a makeunder: whilst shopping in a nearby village with her roommates, she decides to have her hair restyled in the local hair salon. She transforms from blonde to brunette, and the tween viewer is encouraged to believe that her femininity is improved through this change – the blonde signified her “inappropriate” femininity; the makeover scene highlights that her previous blonde hair was not natural, it was dyed and therefore *fake* and required high maintenance – signifiers of her diva behaviour. Indeed, the hair dresser tells her she now looks “natural [...] the *real* you”.¹³⁶



Figure 3: Poppy’s arrival at Abbey Mount in *Wild Child*.

¹³⁵ My emphasis.

¹³⁶ My emphasis.



Figure 4: Poppy's "natural" makeover.

As she brings to the surface her "true" self, Poppy gains the attraction of Freddie (Alex Pettyfer), Mrs Kingsley's son and only point of heterosexual romantic attraction for the girls at Abbey Mount. Previously, Poppy deterred romantic attraction from Freddie, through her excessive display of sexual knowingness (which is later revealed to be a façade) and her performance of "emphasized femininity". After her makeover, however, romance develops as she explores the English countryside with him, and eats "chip butties". She tells Freddie that "you are good and honest and *true*, and well I'm the opposite; but I'm learning."¹³⁷ *Wild Child*, like so many media texts across tween popular culture, employs the message of "staying true to oneself"; this prevalent phrase is synonymous with "authenticity" and cultural conceptualisations of the "real", which, as outlined in the Introduction, are central to the construction of tween femininity. As demonstrated in the narratives discussed here, being "true" or "real" is often centred on being a "true" friend, daughter and/or sibling. As conceptualised in the Introduction, to be authentic means to be true – that is, *not* false. As such, these narratives' promotion of realness in "appropriate" tween femininity reflects the broader contemporary media investment in the authenticity of the self, particularly in the wake of reality television.¹³⁸

The task of performing "appropriate" femininity *and* (or rather, *through*) maintaining "authenticity" is a difficult balancing act that the tween must learn, as demonstrated by the teenage characters discussed in this chapter – a number of whom even acknowledge this complex undertaking required of them. Tween narratives claim that rather than something which can be developed or gained, "authenticity" is an

¹³⁷ My emphasis.

¹³⁸ See for example Corner, "Performing the Real"; Hill, "Big Brother"; and Dubrofsky, "Therapeutics of the Self".

inherent quality of every girl, but must be brought (back) to the surface. Of course, authenticity is itself a cultural construction and is context-specific;¹³⁹ nevertheless, according to tween culture authenticity is presented to be a “natural” part of one’s femininity, and the girl just needs to be reminded of this and taught to allow her “true” self to re-emerge. Tween popular culture claims that by maintaining one’s “true self”, one will “become” “appropriately” feminine and thus develop one’s complete self.

In this particular form of authenticity (located in being a “true” friend), the girl is required to prioritise her relationships with same-sex friends over an investment in “selfish”, surface level aspects of her self, such as excessive clothing and jewellery, and artificial (or rather, *obviously* artificial) beauty. That is, to be a “true” friend, the girl must put the emotional wellbeing of her friends above her own, particularly if her own emotional fulfilment to this point has come as a result of such “wrong” investments as designer clothing and make-up. Here, Corey Anton’s conceptualisation of authenticity and selfhood is useful; he argues that at the level of selfhood, authenticity is not a radical autonomy or complete freedom to do as one pleases, nor is it an egotistical or ambitious drive towards selfishness, or submissive conformity to one’s environmental or situational context. Rather, it is somewhere in the middle, and one must be accepting of this paradox of authenticity.¹⁴⁰ More importantly, and central to his argument, Anton proposes that “authenticity refers to the quality of the concern which characterizes our being-in-the-world-with-others.”¹⁴¹ This can be applied to the form of tween authenticity here: the girl’s authenticity is located in and demonstrated through her role as “true” friend, in the care and value placed upon her emotional ties with other girl friends.

Upon her arrival at Abbey Mount, Poppy is false, her “true” self has been covered up and forgotten about, and (because of this) she is performing the “wrong” type of femininity. Through her falsity and her “inappropriate” display of “emphasized femininity”, she is at risk, if one is to follow Jane M. Ussher’s argument:

¹³⁹ Jane M. Ussher similarly notes the impossibility of capturing the “truth” of femininity, in *Fantasies of Femininity: Reframing the Boundaries of Sex*, (London: Penguin, 1997), p. 462; see also Skeggs, *Formations of Class & Gender*, p. 102.

¹⁴⁰ Corey Anton, *Selfhood and Authenticity*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001), p. 160

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 159, my emphasis.

Perhaps the biggest risk to the woman doing girl is that her duplicity will be exposed. She will then be punished for not really *being* girl. She has wandered towards the edges of the boundaries of acceptable femininity, by mocking or only mimicking the feminine ideal. [...] This is why concealment [...] is always central to this performance.¹⁴²

Until her transformation to bring back to the surface her “true” self, Poppy is merely “mocking” and “mimicking” femininity. As Ussher states, however, “Duplicitous femininity rarely remains unchallenged or unchecked.”¹⁴³ Under surveillance by her fellow female peers at Abbey Mount, including Mrs Kingsley, her “duplicitous femininity” is uncovered, and she is required to reveal her “real” self.

Poppy’s transformation is complete when she discovers that her mother attended Abbey Mount, and that like Poppy, was the captain of the lacrosse team. She finds a photograph featuring her mother at the same age as Poppy, hanging in one of the school corridors, and there is a strong resemblance between the mother and daughter (Emma Roberts plays both Poppy, and her mother in the photograph). Upon his arrival at the school to take her home, Poppy’s father (Adrian Quinn) is visibly emotional when he sees her playing lacrosse – looking identical to her late mother. She feels a connection to her mother; the more she altered her femininity for the “better”, the more she became like her mother. She admits to her fellow school students and head-teacher that “I’ve had a hole in my heart for five years, and somehow, being here, it’s slowly started to heal”. Thus, her transformation of femininity is complete, and her “true” self is whole. However, the “authenticity” of this self is questionable, as it is a copy of her mother’s feminine self; nevertheless, it is to be read as “true”, and an “appropriate” way to be feminine. At the narrative’s close, Poppy agrees her father’s decision to send her to Abbey Mount was a necessary one. This instance supports Linda Duits and Pauline van Romondt Vis’s research findings when discussing with actual tween girls the functions of celebrities as identity tools. This excerpt is key in understanding constructions of “appropriate” tween femininity and authentic selfhood:

At this age, girls are trying to find their position in society. The development from child to young adult is accompanied by exploring and experimenting with different identities. [...] However, although this age allows for some

¹⁴² Ussher, *Fantasies of Femininity*, p. 453, emphasis in original.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 454

experimentation, they must keep up a veil of “trueness”. *Thus the need for authenticity limits the available range of identities.*¹⁴⁴

Thus, whilst experimenting with the different “types” of femininity on offer to her, Poppy finally settles on an “appropriate” girl-type, whilst bringing back to the surface her “true” self; however, this “true” self *isn’t* entirely authentic, as she is copying the “true” self that her mother claimed before her. This reveals the paradoxical nature of authenticity and tween selfhood, and indeed the paradoxical nature of authenticity more broadly. Tween popular culture claims that the authentic self requires uniqueness and originality, signified most clearly at the level of style (clothing, make-up); however, it simultaneously reveals (although not explicitly) that this is an impossible feat. This impossibility of originality, highlighted in Duits and van Romondt Vis’s argument cited above, is not interrogated by the texts, instead it is disguised by the narratives’ denouements in which the leading girl is claimed to have successfully achieved an authentic self, proven by her state of emotional fulfilment and “true” relationships with others. Anton equates authenticity with originality; whilst his argument is highly problematic from a media and cultural studies view (his work is within the field of philosophy), his suggestion that every person is already inevitably original and that the measure of authenticity is located in how passionately one lives and carries out the project of selfhood with their innate originality,¹⁴⁵ can be seen to parallel the claims made by tween popular culture.

Dylan (Sarah Hyland), of Disney Channel Original Movie’s *Geek Charming*, holds the position of “queen bee” at her high school; her ranking on the school social hierarchy is visibly signified in the school cafeteria, where she has the privilege of eating her lunch on “the ramp” with “the populars”, overlooking the rest of the students. The film’s opening sequence establishes Dylan’s “wrong” type of femininity: we are shown her fantasy of being crowned “Blossom Queen” at her school’s Spring Formal, on a stage, being admired by the camera and crowds of onlooking students. The voice announcing her crowning states that it is “the most important crown that *any* girl can *ever* wear”.¹⁴⁶ Dylan’s priority is to be awarded Blossom Queen, thus securing her position as “the most popular girl at Woodlands

¹⁴⁴ Linda Duits and Pauline van Romondt Vis, “Girls Make Sense: Girls, Celebrities and Identities”, *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 12.1 (2009), p. 54, my emphasis.

¹⁴⁵ Anton, *Selfhood and Authenticity*, pp. 154-6

¹⁴⁶ Emphases in original dialogue.

Academy ever”¹⁴⁷. She aims to achieve this feat through an “excessive” maintenance of the beauty ideal and sustaining her friendships with “false” friends; Dylan is aware of the contradictory paradigm of the “mean girl”-type, stating: “being popular is so *not* easy. It’s like royalty, or being the First Lady: you have to live up to impossible standards of beauty, *and* you’re expected to be a good influence”.¹⁴⁸ Like *Wild Child*’s Poppy, Dylan’s “wrong” choice of femininity has had negative consequences: she has no plans for her life after high school (her life so far has been directed towards the end goal crowned Blossom Queen), she has lost a “true” friend, and she is in an emotionally abusive romantic relationship.

Dylan’s transformation in femininity begins when Josh (Mat Prokop), a fellow student and “film geek”, decides to use Dylan as the subject for a documentary film exploring high school popularity. She immediately agrees to take part, assuming such “celebrity” will help her chances of winning the title Blossom Queen, and refers to his project as “my movie”. As his documentary filming gets underway, Josh is dissatisfied with the footage, which largely consists of Dylan undergoing beauty treatments, shopping, ensuring Josh is filming her from flattering angles, and responding to his questions with ignorant answers in the hope that it will benefit her “queen bee” status. Josh’s mother advises him to try and find the “real Dylan”. Eventually, he captures footage of the “real” Dylan who wears glasses, eats ice cream and burps. Dylan’s “true” self fully emerges when she opens up to Josh (unaware that the camera is recording her) about her deceased mother. Like *Wild Child*’s Poppy, she feels connected to her mother’s femininity, and whilst hugging her mother’s dress, reveals that she was crowned Blossom Queen in 1985. Thus through her own development of a feminine self, Dylan is copying that of her mother.

It is useful here to draw upon work on the “real” in reality TV, in particular studies that explore the emphasis that reality TV programming places on authenticity in the selves of the real or “ordinary” people featured. Such moments as this in *Geek Charming* and *Wild Child*, which occur frequently across tween narratives, can be seen as examples of John Corner’s notion of “selving”; with regards to popular factual television, Corner argues that “selving” is “the central process whereby ‘true selves’ are seen to emerge (and develop) from underneath and, indeed, through, the

¹⁴⁷ Emphasis in original dialogue.

¹⁴⁸ Emphases in original dialogue.

‘performed selves’ projected for us’.¹⁴⁹ Dylan’s “true self” is revealed not only for Josh and his camera, but for the tween viewer, who is invited to “discover” it. The tween is invited here to judge the “really” in Dylan, just as Annette Hill argues of contemporary audiences of reality television; Hill suggests that since the emergence and ensuing popularity of factual television programmes such as *Big Brother*, there has been a development of “a particular viewing practice: audiences look for the moment of authenticity when real people are ‘really’ themselves in an unreal environment”.¹⁵⁰ This is a necessary task in the consumption of tween films and television programmes, a skill required of the tween viewer.

These moments revealing the “real” Dylan are used in Josh’s documentary, which angers and humiliates Dylan upon watching it in an auditorium filled with her fellow school students. After leaving during the film, she tells Josh that “The *entire movie* is [...] wrong!”, to which he replies: “I was trying to show the *real you*”.¹⁵¹ However, Dylan feels that “the real me *is* humiliating. I spent all of middle school and high school trying to get rid of the real me, and perfect the new Dylan”. Unbeknownst to her, however, the documentary receives a huge round of applause, and Dylan’s popularity at school is increased (she later watches the entire documentary and is pleased with the way she was portrayed). She admits that what is important is “having *real friends* who like you for you, not faux ones”.¹⁵² Again, “authentic” femininity is located in being a “true” friend. However, as in so many of the narratives found across tween popular culture, Dylan’s “appropriate” femininity is also validated (and articulated) through her heterosexual coupling with Josh.

The Clique and *Monte Carlo* feature “good” girls who make the “wrong” decision in choosing to take on “bad” feminine identities. After Claire (Ellen Marlow) and her family temporarily move in with wealthy friends, and having to attend an elite all-girls school, Claire feels the pressure to alter her femininity. The tween is invited to approve of her current femininity; she dresses “practically” and is keen to make new friends. Her femininity is reassured through her interest in shopping and her heterosexuality, and she fits the ideal of feminine beauty already, with her long, blonde hair. However, the friends’ daughter, Massie (Elizabeth McLaughlin), with whom she now shares a house and attends school, is the “queen bee” and excessively

¹⁴⁹ Corner, “Performing the Real”, p. 261

¹⁵⁰ Hill, “*Big Brother*”, p. 324

¹⁵¹ Emphases in original dialogue.

¹⁵² My emphasis.

displays “emphasized femininity”, and this influences Claire to alter her own femininity. This instance can be seen to add fuel to the long held cultural assumption (particularly within the field of girlhood advocacy) that girls are easily influenced – indeed passive dupes – with regards to peer pressure and pop cultural (particularly media) messages. Claire succumbs to the allure of Massie’s glamorous lifestyle and high social status amongst the girls at school. Despite her mother’s advice to Claire that “she’s going to like you because you’re *you*, not because of what you wear”,¹⁵³ Claire gradually takes on markers of “bad” femininity: excessive shopping and paying constant attention to what she wears, meddling with Massie’s friendship with her three fellow “mean girls” and eventually turning them against Massie, saying nasty things about other girls at school, and developing a “diva” attitude towards her own mother (Elizabeth Keifer). Her mother advises her again to “Be yourself, Claire, not who people want you to be”; after Claire’s new “bad” femininity causes destruction, ruining girls’ friendships, she admits that her mother is right and decides to return to her “real” self.

Monte Carlo’s Grace (Selena Gomez) is a casual, quiet “good” Texan¹⁵⁴ who goes on holiday to Paris with her best friend Emma (Katie Cassidy) and step-sister Meg (Leighton Meester), to celebrate her graduation from high school. She hopes Paris will have a transformative effect on the way she feels about herself, yet her mother tells her “Honey, it’s not magic. It’s not going to turn you into a whole different person – thank goodness. I’m kind of partial to the one I’ve got.” Thus, signalled through her mother’s approval of her current self, the tween is encouraged to view Grace as an already “appropriate” girl-type. When in Paris, she is mistaken for a British aristocratic heiress, Cordelia (Selena Gomez). Since their holiday so far has been disappointing, Emma persuades Grace to go along with the case of mistaken identity, which allows them to indulge in a glamorous and luxurious lifestyle they would otherwise never experience. With both Grace and Cordelia being played by Selena Gomez (the two literally look identical), Cordelia provides the tween viewer with the “alternative” version – the “flip-side” – to Grace’s “appropriate” femininity. Thus Cordelia provides the “mean girl”, “emphasized femininity” role here, showing

¹⁵³ Emphasis in original dialogue.

¹⁵⁴ Like *Wild Child*’s geographic displacement of Poppy to the English countryside, here Texas signals authenticity. The role of Southernness in articulations of authenticity is discussed in Chapter 5.

how *not* to be feminine, and Grace is given the opportunity to experience this role herself.

As in *The Clique*, Grace's performance of this "wrong" type of femininity causes a number of negative effects: the girls are chased by security guards for a misplaced Bulgari necklace, Grace affects Cordelia's relationships with her family and potential suitor, and ultimately Grace suffers from a great deal of guilt for the lie she has been carrying out. In particular, Grace feels guilty for pretending to be Cordelia around Theo (Pierre Boulanger), a French aristocrat who had previously disliked Cordelia for her "diva" behaviour. However, whilst "playing at" being Cordelia, the two develop romantic feelings for one another; this potential heterosexual coupling prompts Grace to stop her "fake" self and allow her "true" self to re-emerge. Grace admits to Emma, "I finally meet a guy that likes me for me, and I'm not even me. But I feel like I am when I'm with him", fearing he will reject her once he discovers the truth. Thus, her "real" self is brought to the surface by the male romantic figure. Finally, Grace reveals her true identity during a prestigious charity auction, to a room full of Cordelia's aristocratic relatives, friends and connections: "I'm just a regular girl from Texas. I'm no-one special, but I had the chance to be. Even if it was only for a minute, and I took it." Although Theo leaves without speaking to Grace, and the girls return to Texas, eventually Grace and Theo are brought back together in a romantic union by "chance", as they each carry out charity work in Romania. Thus, "authenticity" – Grace's "true" femininity – reunites them.

Monte Carlo, like so many films and television programmes across tween popular culture, highlights the contradictory importance of ensuring a consistent, unchanged self (rather than altering oneself), in order to "become" a better, improved self.¹⁵⁵ This narrative can be seen to fit in with the broader context of Rachel E. Dubrofsky's "therapeutics of the self" in reality television programming. Drawing upon such work from television studies helps make sense of tween popular culture's investment in "authenticity" and selfhood, because of the similarities between reality television programming and tween media's emphasis on the "real" self. Dubrofsky builds upon traditional notions of the therapeutic and argues that in contemporary reality television, the programmes' participants demonstrate "a process of affirming a

¹⁵⁵ Dubrofsky, "Therapeutics of the Self", pp. 267-8

consistent (*unchanged*) self across disparate social spaces, verified by surveillance".¹⁵⁶ She believes that:

in the “therapeutics of the self”, the suggestion is not only that we not focus on the social conditions of our existence but that we not change ourselves, as a verified and affirmed consistent and unchanged self brings about a therapeutic transformation.¹⁵⁷

By retaining her “true” self, Grace “becomes” “appropriately” feminine, and gains the heterosexual romantic attention of Theo; when she changed to the “false” version of herself, she lost respect from Theo, Cordelia’s relatives, and ultimately herself. As advised by her mother before she leaves for Paris, Grace ultimately remains *unchanged*, something she must learn paradoxically after *changing* briefly to an “inappropriate”, “false” feminine self.

The tween narratives discussed here all feature a mandatory makeover, whether explicitly (as in *Wild Child*’s hair salon and shopping montage, and *Geek Charming*’s sequence in which Dylan makes over *Josh*), or implicitly. As recognised by Moseley, “At the heart of the teen film and television show [...] is the glamorous makeover of the central female character, a mechanism through which appropriate feminine identities are constructed and reinforced.”¹⁵⁸ The makeover in tween popular culture works to construct and reinforce “appropriate” femininity, but I would add to this that the makeover ensures the *authentic* self – a central facet of “appropriate” femininity – is revealed. It is through the tween makeover that Dubrofsky’s “therapeutics of the self” can take place. Thus, the tween popular culture landscape can be seen to fit in with the broader postfeminist media context, in which according to Negra, “the makeover is a key ritual of female coming into being”, allowing for “a revelation of the self that has ‘been there all along’.”¹⁵⁹ Regarding contemporary chick flicks, she recognises that “Over and over again the postfeminist subject is represented as having lost herself but then (re)achieving stability through romance, de-aging, a makeover, by giving up paid work, or by ‘coming home’”,¹⁶⁰ and as the analyses here demonstrate, the teenage girls of tween popular culture have not yet

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 266, my emphasis.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 278

¹⁵⁸ Moseley, “Glamorous Witchcraft”, p. 405

¹⁵⁹ Negra, *What a Girl Wants?*, pp. 123-4

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 5 similarly, Moseley notes argues that contemporary media culture’s desire for authenticity helps explain the appeal of makeover programming, in “Makeover Takeover on British Television”, *Screen* 41.3 (2000), p. 314.

developed (rather than “lost”) themselves, but ultimately “become” “appropriately” feminine by bringing (back) to the surface their “true” selves, through the tween makeover narrative. However, where tween makeover narratives differ from adult women’s makeover narratives is in their lack of closure; whilst in makeover television programming the narrative works towards the concluding celebrated moment displaying the end-product, the “After body”, in the necessary “reveal”,¹⁶¹ tween makeover narratives display a *never-ending* process of transformation. The makeover here never fully reaches an end point; instead, we see at work a *perpetual makeover*. Brenda R. Weber states that “Because the [makeover TV] viewer has witnessed the entire passage from Before to After, the After-body, narratively speaking, stands as the moment of greatest authenticity”;¹⁶² in tween makeover narratives, however, whilst the girl’s “authentic” self has successfully been brought (back) to the surface, this is by no means the end of her transformation. Rather, she is required to continually maintain that “true” self of “appropriate” femininity, effectively remaining in a perpetual makeover, to ensure she does not forget the importance of her “real” self and allow falsity and thus “inappropriate” femininity return. Whilst Weber notes that in film and novel makeover narratives, the “the makeover often serves as a plot device to further a narrative larger than the scope of the transformation itself”,¹⁶³ the makeover found across tween narratives plays a *central role*; it is required by every girl, and never finds completion.

Again, Dubrofsky’s “therapeutics of the self” can be seen in the perpetual makeover of tween popular culture: “The therapeutic impetus in the ‘therapeutics of the self’ is the process of affirming the self, but the end result is less important”;¹⁶⁴ instead, the emphasis is placed on the *process* of the transformation through bringing (back) to the surface one’s “real”, “true” self.¹⁶⁵ In this sense, then, the perpetual tween makeover narrative fits with Meredith Jones’s reading of makeover culture:

¹⁶¹ See for example Brenda R. Weber., *Makeover TV: Selfhood, Citizenship, and Celebrity*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009); Moseley, “Makeover Takeover on British Television”, p. 304.

¹⁶² Weber, *Makeover TV*, p. 22

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 19

¹⁶⁴ Dubrofsky, “Therapeutics of the Self”, p. 279

¹⁶⁵ See also Sarah Banet-Weiser and Laura Portwood-Stacer, “‘I Just Want to be Me Again’: Beauty Pageants, Reality Television and Post-feminism”, *Feminist Theory* 7.2 (2006), p. 264; Weber, *Makeover TV* and “Imperialist Projections: Manners, Makeovers, and Models of Nationality”, in Melanie Waters, ed., *Women on Screen: Feminism and Femininity in Visual Culture*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

Makeover culture is a state where *becoming* is more desirable than *being*. It valorises the process of development rather than the point of completion. [...] “[M]akeover” – used either as a noun or verb – is in the present tense. Despite appearances then, makeover culture is not about the creation of finished products [...] rather it is about showing subjects, objects and environments being worked upon and improved. [...] Good citizens of makeover culture improve and transform themselves ceaselessly. For individuals the makeover paradigm rewards display of continual redevelopment and growth made via intellectual, emotional or aesthetic means. I argue that in makeover culture success is judged on the display of the never-ending renovation of the self.¹⁶⁶

The perpetual tween makeover (whilst revealing the girl’s inherent “authenticity” that just needed to be brought back to the surface), claims itself to be absolutely necessary: without such a process of transformation, the girl’s “true” self would never have been revealed, and she would still be in the category of “inappropriate” femininity.¹⁶⁷ The never-ending tween makeover, then, supports Weber’s assertion that “In order for the transforming magic of the makeover to work, then, the self must simultaneously be represented as the most important manifestation of existence and as not fully attainable without the aid the makeover provides.”¹⁶⁸

To return to tween popular culture’s “mean girls”, the tween narratives claim to condemn their form of “emphasized femininity”, however they do not reject them altogether. Although the narratives emphasise the “inappropriateness” of such girl-types, revealing the dangerous consequences of choosing to take on such a “bad” type of femininity, the “mean girl” cliques nevertheless remain intact at the close of the narratives. *Mean Girls 2* and *Sleepover* (2004) provide an *alternative* clique to the “plastics”, yet challenging the popular, “mean girls” by setting up new cliques merely demonstrates the strength and significance – indeed, the necessity – of the social hierarchy of femininity.¹⁶⁹ Similarly, *The Clique*’s closing scene takes place at a country club event attended by both the clique and Claire. Claire has since admitted her “wrong” decision to try and fit in with the clique’s “mean girl”-type, and readjusts her femininity to its original “appropriate” style. Claire realises that “queen bee” Massie is about to unknowingly humiliate herself by singing a seductive rendition of

¹⁶⁶ Meredith Jones, *Skintight: An Anatomy of Cosmetic Surgery*, (Oxford: Berg, 2008), p. 12, emphases in original.

¹⁶⁷ This goes against Suzanne Ferris’s argument that the makeover ultimately *doesn’t* make over anything, in “Fashioning Femininity in the Makeover Flick”, in Suzanne Ferriss and Mallory Young, eds, *Chick Flicks: Contemporary Women at the Movies*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008), p. 44.

¹⁶⁸ Weber, *Makeover TV*, p. 14

¹⁶⁹ See also *Prom* (2011) which centres on a shy, hardworking, “appropriately” feminine leading girl, whilst reinforcing the school’s social hierarchy.

“Happy Birthday” to her crush in front of all of the event’s attendees, with connotations the “emphasized femininity” of Marilyn Monroe. Unbeknownst to Massie, it is revealed that her crush is in a long-term relationship, so in order to stop Massie taking the stage Claire improvises a birthday speech instead. Having done the “right” thing, Claire confronts Massie regarding her “inappropriate” femininity, asking her why she is mean and offering her the chance to change. Massie admits that she sees Claire as a threat, and feels she must keep up a mean façade in order to retain her friends. However, she does not decide to alter her femininity; rather, her clique remains intact at the film’s close, and Massie maintains her “queen bee” status. Similarly, although Dylan brings back to the surface her “authentic” self, transforming her femininity to an “appropriate” type in *Geek Charming*, she still receives the Blossom Queen crown, whilst wearing her mother’s Blossom Queen dress. Thus, her “authentic” femininity – like that of *Wild Child*’s Poppy – is limited to a copy of an existing form (their mother’s), and the social hierarchy, dependent on an “inappropriate” form of femininity, is maintained.

Thus, tween popular culture both critiques “mean girl” femininity, whilst actively promoting it, thus carrying on an age-old cultural paradigm of femininity, articulated by Ussher:

the message that women should compare themselves with other women and that other women are often the cause of conflict and strife rather than being allies or a source of support, pervades mass media aimed at women. It invades relationships between women, maintaining envy and competitiveness, ensuring that it is women who are often the main culprits in putting other women down, in identifying imperfections or categorizing other women as slags or whores.¹⁷⁰

Such tween narratives provide the illusion that they are aware and critical of this “bad” type of femininity epitomised by the “mean girl”, whilst preserving this model of femininity in order to teach the tween the importance of female peer surveillance in their learning and performing of femininity. In the broader contemporary media investment in the “authenticity” of the self, particularly in reality television programming, whereby “it is the comprehensive and pervasive character of the round-the-clock surveillance that stands as the guarantee of authentic reality”,¹⁷¹ the tween is

¹⁷⁰ Ussher, *Fantasies of Femininity*, p. 75

¹⁷¹ Andrejevic, *Reality TV*, pp. 124-5

taught the importance – indeed, necessity – of the (self-)surveillance of femininity, through the tween makeover narrative, and the maintenance of the “mean girl” and her clique. Mark Andrejevic states that in reality television, “the gaze of the viewer comes to stand as the litmus test of whether characters are being ‘real’ or not”,¹⁷² and in tween popular culture, the tween viewer is invited to judge the “real” of onscreen girls’ selves. This in turn teaches the tween that she herself is under surveillance by her own peers, and thus must constantly maintain her “true” self if she is to perform “appropriate” femininity. Thus, she learns to become the self-surveilling feminine subject of neoliberalism.

All of the onscreen girls discussed here are icons of postfeminist culture, representing “the self as a project”.¹⁷³ Like them, the tween viewer learns to be “the self-surveilling postfeminist subject”, working towards “the achieved self”.¹⁷⁴ Through her constant self-surveillance and maintenance of her “true” self, the tween becomes the neoliberal subject, to whom “the care of the self” is essential, as argued by Laurie Ouellette and Julie Wilson:

Conceived as a “personal responsibility” and an entrepreneurial investment with payoffs for the individual, self-work is crucial to contemporary discourses of post-welfare citizenship. When citizens are to live their lives as “self-managed projects”, then the self becomes a site of labour as well as governmentality.¹⁷⁵

Tween popular culture’s perpetual makeover narrative cements such neoliberal values in the tween, to aid her in her “becoming” “appropriately” feminine, as according to Weber, “After-bodies who constitute Makeover Nation’s citizen-subjects must be self-aware, self-cultivating, and self-sufficient, able to ascertain the flow of the market and to participate without governmental assistance”.¹⁷⁶ Furthermore, such texts can be seen as preparation for adult female postfeminist media, establishing within the tween demographic the notion that the girl – and later the woman – is in a constant state of development, going through continual processes of transformation. The neoliberal requirement of self-surveillance and work towards an achieved, authentic self is

¹⁷² Ibid., p. 125; see also Dubrofsky, “Therapeutics of the Self”, p. 274

¹⁷³ Tasker and Negra, “Introduction”, p. 21

¹⁷⁴ Negra, *What a Girl Wants?*, p. 119

¹⁷⁵ Laurie Ouellette and Julie Wilson, “Women’s Work: Affective Labour and Convergence Culture”, *Cultural Studies* 25.4-5 (2011), p. 556; see also Ouellette and James Hay, “Makeover Television, Governmentality and the Good Citizen”, *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 22.4 (2008).

¹⁷⁶ Weber, *Makeover TV*, p. 51

ingrained here, ready for the next logical step up to teen girl narratives, and eventually adult woman narratives.

The teaching of “becoming” “appropriately” feminine by tween popular culture is highly contradictory: the scripts of femininity claimed by the texts claim that authenticity is an inherent quality that can be brought to the surface through a makeover-esque transformation that needs to be continually repeated to ensure the authenticity is maintained; that is, authenticity requires work. As noted by Duits and van Romondt Vis, “The repertoire of authenticity and the reflexive nature of the sense-making process especially hinder the notion of the neo-liberal subject”, and “The norm of authenticity restrains experimentation and limits choice”.¹⁷⁷ As the analyses here demonstrate, tween popular culture *claims* to offer choices of girl-types, yet they are copies of existing femininities. Nevertheless, according to Ussher:

Becoming “woman” is something women *do* rather than something women *are*; it is always at least in part a charade or masquerade. In order to “do girl” women have to negotiate the scripts of femininity which are currently in play and then reconcile the contradictions and inconsistencies, if they want to get it “right”.¹⁷⁸

This contradictory investment in an authentic self whilst being required to fit the narrow scripts of “appropriate” femininity determined by tween popular culture can be seen to parallel the process of “choosing a self” carried out by actual girls, evidenced in empirical research with teenage girls articulating the way they develop an identity. Shelley Budgeon’s study in which she interviewed British teenagers in higher education about this process supports this: she found that the girls’ construction of a self-narrative “reveal a self that is a sovereign, self-authoring, independent person who is responsible for making choices that retain a relation of being truthful to oneself”¹⁷⁹ – indeed, authenticity was revealed to act as a central moral thread running through the girls’ self-narratives.¹⁸⁰ However, the notion of an independent self was seen to conflict with technologies and authorities (for example,

¹⁷⁷ Duits and van Romondt Vis, “Girls Make Sense”, p. 55

¹⁷⁸ Ussher, *Fantasies of Femininity*, p. 444, emphases in original.

¹⁷⁹ Shelley Budgeon, *Choosing a Self: Young Women and the Individualization of Identity*, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), p. 75

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 67

school) which seek to construct women in a particular way; thus, the girls were required to negotiate their choices drawing upon a moral of authenticity.¹⁸¹

“Appropriate” tween femininity is constructed via a set of branches (heterosexuality, same-sex friendship, daughterhood and sisterhood), whilst “inappropriate” femininity is signalled in the “mean girl” diva. However, as the analysis has demonstrated, to be “appropriately” feminine and successfully authentic, the girl cannot simply choose a “right” category; she is required to consider and invest in the values of each of these types and arrive somewhere in the middle. The range of “choices” diminishes as the girl is required to maintain an authentic self. It is appropriate here to reiterate Duits and van Romondt Vis’s argument that “the need for authenticity limits the available range of identities.”¹⁸² The negotiation of “choices” and the contradictory balancing of an “appropriately” gendered identity with authentic selfhood not only apply to tween popular culture’s scripts of femininity, but is also at work in its construction of feminisms, presented again through the veil of “choice”. It is here that I now turn in the next chapter.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 75

¹⁸² Duits and Van Romondt Vis, “Girls Make Sense”, p. 54

CHAPTER 2:

THE MULTIPLE FEMINISMS OF TWEEN POPULAR CULTURE

Confusion and contradiction mark understandings of feminism in US popular culture at the turn of the 21st century. Surveying the terrain of both feminist theory and popular discussions of feminism, we seem to have entered an alternate language universe where words can simultaneously connote a meaning and its opposite, where labels are more significant than theory behind the label.¹⁸³

Amanda D. Lotz summarises the ambiguity surrounding feminism's status – even its existence – in contemporary Western culture, an observation widely recognised across both academic and popular discourses.¹⁸⁴ It is within this uncertain context that the tween is seen to “emerge” and tween popular culture expands exponentially. Whilst there is a disagreement on what feminism *is*, there does seem to be a general consensus that, according to Joanne Hollows and Rachel Moseley, women today make sense of and identify with feminist ideas through popular culture.¹⁸⁵ Whilst Hollows and Moseley speak on behalf of the adult generation of women, this dynamic can be applied to the tween generation of girls: the tween gains an awareness and develops a perception of “feminism” through its depiction in tween popular culture. For women and girls today, including tweens, the understanding and experience of feminism and its history and developments (its “waves”) are mediated.¹⁸⁶ This chapter asks what the status of feminism is today, according to tween popular culture, and what its relevance is to young girls. It argues that the tween learns an “appropriate” feminist identity to fit alongside her “appropriately” developing feminine identity, both taken from the texts that make up the tween popular culture landscape. The texts discussed in this chapter address the tween with the taken-for-granted assumption that

¹⁸³ Amanda D. Lotz, “Postfeminist Television Criticism: Rehabilitating Critical Terms and Identifying Postfeminist Attributes”, *Feminist Media Studies* 1.1 (2001), p. 105; see also Lotz, “Communicating Third-Wave Feminism and New Social Movements: Challenges for the Next Century of Feminist Endeavor”, *Women and Language* 26.1 (2003), pp. 2-3.

¹⁸⁴ See for example Stéphanie Genz, *Postfemininities in Popular Culture*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 82-96; Kellie Bean, *Post-Backlash Feminism: Women and the Media Since Reagan-Bush*, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2007), pp. 3-14, pp. 176-185; Hollows, *Feminism, Femininity and Popular Culture*, p. 190; Hollows and Moseley, “Popularity Contests: The Meanings of Popular Feminism”, in Hollows and Moseley, eds, *Feminism in Popular Culture*, p. 3; Skeggs, *Formations of Class & Gender*, pp. 139-159; Karen Boyle, “Feminism Without Men: Feminist Media Studies in a Post-feminist Age”, in Brunsdon and Lynn Spigel, eds, *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader*, (Maidenhead: Open University Press, Second Edition, 2008); Imelda Whelehan, *Overloaded: Popular Culture and the Future of Feminism*, (London: The Women’s Press, 2000), p. 77.

¹⁸⁵ Hollows and Moseley, “Popularity Contests”, p. 2

¹⁸⁶ See also Gill, “Postfeminist Media Culture”, p. 161; and Projansky, *Watching Rape*, p. 70.

she should “choose” a feminist identity of some form, and invite the tween to participate in assessing the “choices” of feminist identities available.

Whereas Chapter 1 focused on narratives which predominantly centred on female friendships, this chapter explores narratives that are conscious modern-day renditions of well-known fairy-tales, and in particular the figure of the princess. As part of the phenomenal expansion of tween popular culture, there has been a significant increase in the mainstream output of teen princess films at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The significant presence of the princess figure can be seen across contemporary mainstream female popular culture more broadly, similarly noted by Negra,¹⁸⁷ dominated by the Disney Princesses franchise launched in 1999 and generating \$4 billion in worldwide retail sales in 2007;¹⁸⁸ for adult women the significance of the princess can be seen in the increased pervasiveness of the lavish wedding in recent years,¹⁸⁹ and culminating in Disney’s Fairy Tale Weddings & Honeymoons service (now including engagements).¹⁹⁰ In tween popular culture, the figure of the princess is foregrounded to articulate the necessity of authenticity in the young feminine self; however, the princess is a highly constructed and artificial figure, complicating its claims to authenticity.

With so many competing and co-existing feminisms in this period, an analysis of tween fairy-tale narratives – in terms of the claimed “feminist” identities of the leading female teenage characters, the cross-generational relationships between the leading girls and their mothers, stepmothers, or grandmother figures – will allow for an analysis of the conflicting and complimentary feminisms at work here. The culturally constructed relationship between postfeminism and second-wave feminism has been articulated in terms of a rebellious daughter and a spoil-sport mother. In this regard, I concur with Stacey Gillis and Rebecca Munford who note that the politics of the fairy-tale, in particular the mother-daughter conflict, are a useful way of

¹⁸⁷ Negra, *What a Girl Wants?*, pp. 48-9

¹⁸⁸

https://www.disneyconsumerproducts.com/Home/display.jsp?contentId=dcp_home_ourfranchises_disney_princess_us&forPrint=false&language=en&preview=false&imageShow=0&pressRoom=US&translationOf=®ion=0 [accessed 26 November 2012]

¹⁸⁹ See for example Cele C. Otnes and Elizabeth H. Pleck, *Cinderella Dreams: The Allure of the Lavish Wedding*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003); Chrys Ingraham, *White Weddings: Romancing Heterosexuality in Popular Culture*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 1999); and Jaclyn Geller, *Here Comes the Bride: Women, Weddings, and the Marriage Mystique*, (New York, NY: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2001).

¹⁹⁰ <<http://disneyweddings.disney.go.com/>> [accessed 26 November 2012]; <<http://www.disneybridal.com/index.html>> [accessed 26 November 2012]

understanding and interrogating feminist history.¹⁹¹ Regarding fairy-tales' use of the young heroine, evil stepmother, and fairy godmother, Elizabeth Bell suggests that "On the Disney cultural and somatic timeline, the young heroines will become their stepmothers; the stepmothers, too, will become the good fairies and godmothers."¹⁹² Thus, an exploration of the onscreen cross-generational – or perhaps even *cyclical* – female conflict between the staple female fairy-tale roles¹⁹³ allows for an examination of the dialogue between the different "waves" of feminism.

Tween fairy-tale narratives offer forms of feminist identity; rather than ignore feminism altogether (if this were possible), the texts choose to include "feminist" politics to some extent. It seems that in part this could be seen as a strategy to ensure success, by incorporating broad socio-cultural shifts from second-wave feminist ideologies to that of postfeminism. Moreover, the inclusion of feminist politics in some form can be read as a negotiation in response to popular discourses on princess culture and Disney – particularly from feminist cultural commentators and girlhood advocates who highlight the potentially problematic gender ideologies of Disney's traditional narratives and representations.

Chapter 1 argues that tween popular culture requires the tween to learn "appropriate" femininity, through heterosexuality, same-sex friendship, and sisterhood and daughterhood, whilst simultaneously retaining an authentic sense of self. Such ways of being feminine are presented as "choices" (although as demonstrated, such "choices" become radically limited through the prescription of authenticity). Similarly, this chapter argues that tween popular culture teaches the tween an "appropriately" feminist identity. Not only are "appropriate" and "inappropriate" feminisms constructed through the leading girls' identities, but also through the depiction of *other* feminisms, the sites of which are found in mothers, step-mothers, and grandmothers (much like the use of the "mean girls" in constructing tween femininity, as discussed in the previous chapter). Tween popular culture participates in the mediated construction of feminism's history, and teaches the tween

¹⁹¹ Stacey Gillis and Rebecca Munford, "Genealogies and Generations: the Politics and Praxis of Third Wave Feminism", *Women's History Review* 13.2 (2004), p. 177

¹⁹² Elizabeth Bell, "Somatexts at the Disney Shop: Constructing the Pentimentos of Women's Animated Bodies", in Elizabeth Bell, Lynda Haas and Laura Sells, eds, *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 121-2

¹⁹³ These familiar characters have been discussed by feminist academics, including Jennifer Waelti-Walters, *Fairy Tales & the Female Imagination*, (Montréal: Eden Press, 1982); and Ussher, *Fantasies of Femininity*.

girl the “right” and “wrong” ways to be feminist. As with the construction of “appropriate” tween femininity discussed in Chapter 1, the teaching of an “appropriate” tween feminist identity is articulated through the notion of “authenticity” and (paradoxically) a focus on the *self*. As this chapter will demonstrate, however, the construction of “authenticity” presented here is structured by contradiction and ambiguity (for a summary of authenticity and tweenhood, see the Introduction). Once again, these films prepare the tween for her future place in adult female culture in their teaching of how to be the neoliberal subject of postfeminism, through the emphasised rhetoric of “choice”.

As outlined above, tween fairy-tale narratives emerge within a complex discursive context for feminism, or rather feminisms. Identifying different feminist types in the girls and women of the tween fairy-tale narratives both usefully deconstructs tween popular culture’s active construction of feminism’s history, whilst simultaneously revealing the incredibly limited number of subject positions; that is, the female characters of tween popular culture can be seen to fit into tight categories of feminist (and feminine) identities.

Across tween popular culture, one finds three common “types” of feminist identities embodied by the “teen princesses” at the beginning of their narratives: first, “feminist” girls who are feisty, explicitly uninterested in heterosexual romance, are (solely) focused on their ambitions and goals, and are knowing of and actively distanced from the conventional trappings of femininity. Second, there are girls that benefit from the advances made by second-wave feminism, yet who do not explicitly align themselves with “feminism” (perhaps therefore they might be labelled “postfeminist”); they yearn for heterosexual romance, yet they are “lacking” in femininity and therefore visibility and confidence; whilst they have goals, such ambitions are not their ultimate priority. This second type is the most common found in tween popular culture, with most of the onscreen girls discussed in Chapter 1 fitting into this category. Third (and least common), there are “anti-” or “pre-feminist” girls, who are naïve in terms of sexuality and the politics of power between the genders; such girls are hyper-feminine, and focus on attaining heterosexual romance and planning their future role as a wife and care-giver, with no other goals or ambitions.

The Prince & Me’s Paige (Julia Stiles) is perhaps one of tween princess films’ most prominent “feminist” girls, fitting into Sinnikka Aapola, Marnina Gonick and Anita Harris’s description of the young feminist (more specifically belonging to DIY

or grrrlpower movements), as “angry, in charge and taking action.”¹⁹⁴ The film centres on hard-working and ambitious university science student Paige from rural Wisconsin, who hopes to attend a prestigious and competitive school of medicine, become a doctor, and travel the world bringing medical help to those in need. Aged approximately 21 (she is in her final year at university), she is single, and claims to be uninterested in seeking romance, instead focusing on her academic and career goals. The audience is introduced to Paige during the film’s opening title sequence: wearing a labcoat, she studiously looks into a telescope, before rushing to get home and changed into a bridesmaid’s dress for a friend’s wedding, to which she drives herself in a large, masculine truck. She clearly prioritises her education and career over an emotional investment in marriage and weddings: by spending time researching at the lab, she does not have time to put on make-up or style her hair for the wedding, and almost hits the bride with her car as she arrives just in time for the ceremony. This opening sequence visually contrasts these two paths, epitomising a technique commonly used across tween popular culture, in which “choices” of femininities and feminisms are straightforwardly split into two opposing categories. This can be seen most clearly in the films’ posters and DVD covers, evidenced here in *Ice Princess*:

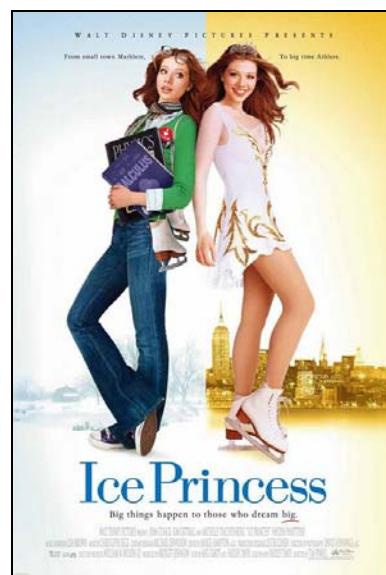


Figure 5: The choice between two paths in *Ice Princess*.

¹⁹⁴ Sinikka Aapola, Marnina Gonick and Anita Harris, *Young Femininity: Girlhood, Power and Social Change*, (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 203

Whilst the juxtaposition of identities and values is a common feature of adult women's postfeminist media, in tween popular culture such "choice" between two paths become heightened, and unambiguously and explicitly visualised.

The tween viewer is invited to read Paige as generically feminist: Paige's short hair, absence of make-up, and non-feminine clothing such as the lab coat, and brown corduroy jeans and black t-shirt mark her as stereotypically feminist. As Shelagh Young observes: "Today, two features of the 'natural' female body – the absence of make-up and the presence of body hair – have become the over-simplifying signifiers of the feminist subject."¹⁹⁵ Julia Stiles's other roles before *The Prince & Me* support Paige's depiction as feisty, career-driven and (initially) uninterested in heterosexual romance, as Kat in *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999) and Joan in *Mona Lisa Smile* (2003). Paige doesn't explicitly align herself with any particular feminist movement or wave, rather she represents a generalised version of feminism, taking on the stereotypical characteristics primarily associated with the second-wave. Paige's image supports Charlotte Brunsdon's reason for opposing the use of postfeminism as a concept, due the way in which "it reduces all feminisms, and their long histories, to that one 1970s movement."¹⁹⁶ This embodiment of a generic (read: second-wave) feminism is achieved through her "lack", or rather rejection, of conventional femininity. As discussed by many feminist critical commentators and academics, for second-wave feminists, femininity – specifically domestic, reproductive femininity – was understood to be central to women's oppression, and therefore rejecting feminine identities was key in developing a coherent feminist identity and consciousness.¹⁹⁷ Of course, Stiles's slimness, blondness and whiteness (and *lack* of apparent body hair) paradoxically reassure us of her "natural" femininity – thus she is not "too" feminist.

The film's leading male, Prince Edvard of Denmark (Luke Mably), is a rebellious, "out of control" young man interested in sexually available young women and racing fast cars (which gain him celebrity tabloid news coverage). He has decided to spend some time at the University of Wisconsin (where Paige is studying) after

¹⁹⁵ Shelagh Young, "Feminism and the Politics of Power: Whose Gaze is it Anyway?", in Lorraine Gamman & Margaret Marshment, eds, *The Female Gaze: Woman as Viewers of Popular Culture*, (London: The Women's Press, 1988), p. 179

¹⁹⁶ Brunsdon, *Screen Tastes*, p. 102

¹⁹⁷ See for example Hollows, *Feminism, Femininity and Popular Culture*, p. 10; Brunsdon similarly notes that "Second-wave feminism is remembered, and demonized, as personally censorious, hairy, and politically correct", in "Feminism, Postfeminism, Martha, Martha, and Nigella", *Cinema Journal* 44.2 (2005), p. 112.

watching an episode of a *Girls Gone Wild*-style (1997-) reality television programme featuring girls from Wisconsin. After a confrontational first meeting in which Eddie insults Paige whilst she works as a barmaid, assuming she will take her top off for him as he saw the girls on television do so, Paige and Eddie are reunited the next day when they are paired together as lab partners, much to Paige's disappointment and frustration. She tells her roommate: "you'd think he'd get the message to stay away." Conversations with her friends and her initial reaction to Eddie's entrance at the bar reveal she is not only uninterested in heterosexual romance, but is actively avoiding it. Through her rejection of heterosexual romance, Paige can be seen to belong to a generalised second- and/or third-wave feminism, considering reductive claims made against feminism circulating within culture, including that of Katharine Viner's who controversially states that a woman choosing to be single and to *not* be with a man is making a consciously political decision.¹⁹⁸ Whilst the stereotype of the man-hater and/or lesbian are employed with force in cultural depictions of feminism,¹⁹⁹ the audience is reassured of Paige's heterosexuality here, as her avoidance of heterosexual romance is presented as a *choice* she has made of career over marriage and motherhood. When Paige and Eddie are paired as lab partners for the duration of the year, she tells him, "I really can't afford to have you screw things up for me." Furthermore, the film implies that Eddie's sexist arrogance is not his fault; his Danish royalty (Denmark, the palace and the royal family are depicted a mythical fairy-tale setting) provides a geographical, and to an extent *temporal*, displacement to a place and time where feminism never reached, and isn't required. Thus whilst Paige is repelled by Eddie's views and behaviour and rejects his advances to begin with, she ultimately helps him learn new things he hasn't yet experienced through "no fault of his own" – after all, he is in Paige's words, "some Shakespearean duke lord guy".

Paige's *choice* not to pursue heterosexual coupling (which hides the fact that she really *does* want and need to be with a man) is emphasised in a conversation with her mother. After becoming friends, Paige takes Eddie back to her parents' home – a rural farm – during a break in the university term, and her mother suggests they

¹⁹⁸ Katharine Viner, "The Personal is Still Political", in Walter, ed., *On the Move: Feminism for a New Generation*, (London: Virago Press, 1999), p. 25

¹⁹⁹ See for example E. Ann Kaplan, "Feminism, Aging, and Changing Paradigms", in Devoney Looser and E. Ann Kaplan, eds, *Generations: Academic Feminists in Dialogue*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 17.

become more than friends.²⁰⁰ Paige stresses: “I really can’t afford any distractions right now” to which her mother (Alberta Watson) replies, “Chemistry isn’t just in a class, kiddo.” Paige’s choice of career over domesticity then becomes clear:

Right, and then what happens? I fool myself into thinking he’s Prince Charming, we get married and live happily ever after? Then all my hard work goes down the drain because I’m too busy shopping for groceries and picking my kids up at soccer.

Paige becomes conscious of the fact that this could offend her mother, who followed the path she has just cynically described. She apologises, to which her mother responds: “but we’re not talking about me. I made my choice. This is about you making the right choice for you.” The explicit “either-or” choice of identities visually depicted in the opening sequence and in wider tween popular culture (see the *Ice Princess* poster) is articulated here in generational terms; Paige is a young woman making choices about her present and her future, whilst her mother’s choices are placed within the past. Here, Elspeth Probyn’s notion of the “choiceoisie” can be seen at work. Probyn reads the contemporary female-centred media landscape as one in which “you can have your post-feminism at the same time as your new traditionalism”, and the ideology of choice is central in articulating this contradictory context.²⁰¹ She argues that, in the simultaneous postfeminism and new traditionalism of popular culture, categories such as “mother” and “love” are constructed as fixed truths, and that the “choiceoisie” works *not* as choice, but as confirmation of women’s “true”, “natural” identities.²⁰² As articulated by her mother, the film claims that Paige has made a *choice* to pursue a demanding career rather than to secure a husband, but that she could at any point change her mind and *choose* a husband and family life over the career – regardless of her class and/or economic status. Effectively, she has “chosen” (at the beginning of the narrative, at least) feminism, as if it is one of a variety of consumer lifestyle options.

Like Paige, Ella (Anne Hathaway) of *Ella Enchanted* (2004) is a feisty young woman, uninterested in finding a heterosexual partner. The narrative is a postmodern, parodic fairy-tale, taking place in a vague medieval European setting thus signalling

²⁰⁰ Paige’s rural Wisconsin family farm provides the authenticating setting for the “retreatist narrative” discussed in Chapter 5.

²⁰¹ Elspeth Probyn, “New Traditionalism and Post-feminism”, pp. 151-2

²⁰² Ibid., p. 152

both the temporal and geographical context of traditional fairy-tales popularised by the Grimm Brothers. As a newborn baby, Ella was given the “gift” (or rather curse) of obedience by her clumsy and troublemaking fairy godmother Lucinda (Vivia A. Fox), who is shown to be ill-suited in her role. Regardless of her curse, Ella fights for political change and equal rights; however, her temporal and geographical dislocation to a pre-feminist setting, and her inability to actively enable social and political change due to her restrictive obedience, traps her within a version of Betty Friedan’s “feminine mystique”.²⁰³ Whilst she can be seen to signify a generic second- and/or third-wave young feminist, the film employs a strategy found across several postfeminist texts whereby degrees of rebellion are indicated, but made safe by contemporary standards through the temporal and/or geographical relocation.

The second – and most common – feminist “type” is the girl who is benefiting from the advancements of second-wave feminism, yet who does not explicitly align herself with a feminist ideology. Perhaps appropriately labelled “postfeminist” (see the Introduction), this type can be seen in *The Princess Diaries* (2001; 2004), *Ice Princess*, *Princess Protection Programme*, *Sydney White* (2007), *A Cinderella Story*, *Another Cinderella Story*, *A Cinderella Story: Once Upon a Song* and *Monte Carlo* (see Chapter 1). This type can also be found across many non-explicitly “princess” tween narratives, as discussed in Chapter 1. These girls are “lacking” in femininity and therefore confidence, rendering them socially invisible; they have goals and ambitions (usually to excel in school and go on to establish a strong career), but they also yearn – usually rather desperately – for heterosexual romance. Ultimately, the girls want to attain a male partner, and achieve a balance of romance and their own aspirations. Many of the girls’ names emphasise their ‘lack’ of femininity and claim a context after feminism, in which gender-neutral names are accepted: *The Prince & Me*’s Paige, *Ice Princess*’s Casey (Michelle Trachtenberg), *Princess Protection Programme*’s Carter (Selena Gomez), *A Cinderella Story*’s Sam (Hilary Duff) and *Sydney White*’s Sydney (Amanda Bynes). This is true of wider tween texts outside of the “princess” category, such as *Wizards of Waverly Place*’s (Disney Channel, 2007-2012) Alex (Selena Gomez), *Camp Rock*’s Mitchie (Demi Lovato), *Mean Girls 2*’s Jo (Meaghan Martin), *Sonny with a Chance*’s Sonny (Demi Lovato), and *The Game Plan*’s Peyton (Madison Pettis). Carol J. Clover similarly recognises the way in which

²⁰³ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, (London: Penguin Classics edition, 2010)

the Final Girl of the slasher film is suggested to be “unfeminine” in part through her name.²⁰⁴ In each case here, as discussed in the previous chapter, the “risk” of androgyny (androgyny would disqualify the girls from achieving “appropriate” femininity) is removed through the reassurance of heterosexual desire.

A Cinderella Story centres on high school student Sam, who lives with her stepmother and two stepsisters; she is very hard working and studious, balancing her schoolwork and application to Princeton University with her job as a waitress in her family’s diner. Like many leading girls across tween popular culture, Sam’s mother died when Sam was young, and her father remarried. Sam’s father died in an earthquake when she was a young girl; until then, she’d considered herself “my dad’s best friend. And he was mine. Although being raised by a man put me behind in the make-up and fashion departments, I never felt like I missed out on anything.” Like Alice of *Alice Upside Down* and *Mean Girls 2*’s Jo, *A Cinderella Story* claims that Sam lacks the knowledge and training required to perform conventional femininity due to the absence of a mother figure to (“naturally”) teach and guide this process. Sam’s “lack” of femininity is signalled through her clothing: a grey jumper, black combat trousers, and later a khaki military jacket and cap, and always a pair of trainers. Rather than the aesthetic “trappings” of femininity, she prioritises her education and is determined to attend Princeton University. Unlike *The Prince & Me*’s Paige, Sam is single due to her lack of confidence, which causes her to go unnoticed in the school social structure – as is the case with *Princess Protection Programme*’s Carter and Sydney of *Sydney White*. Similarly, *The Princess Diaries* features conventionally unfeminine Mia (Anne Hathaway), whose large, frizzy hair, thick-rimmed glasses and chunky boots ironically render her invisible at school, to the extent that she even gets sat on by other students. In both cases, however, it is made clear that the girls have strong heterosexual desires, and they direct this romantic desire towards a fellow male student. In Sam’s case, she has a relationship with an anonymous boy via her mobile phone and in an online chatroom for hopeful future Princeton students (he uses the name “Nomad”, and she refers to herself as “Princeton Girl”); her male best friend, Carter (Dan Byrd), refers to Nomad as Sam’s “true love”, although she worries that “this guy’s too good to be true”.

²⁰⁴ Carol J. Clover, *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 48, pp. 50-63

It is revealed to the film's audience that Nomad is the incredibly popular and sexually desirable Austin (Chad Michael Murray), who attends school with Sam. Through their mobile phone and internet communication, they agree to meet in person at the school's upcoming Halloween dance. However, on the night of the dance, Sam is given extra work to do by her cruel stepmother Fiona (Jennifer Coolidge), who runs the diner left to her by her deceased husband. Sam complies with Fiona's orders, fearful that if she goes against her stepmother she will lose the money left by her father, which she intends on using to fund her university education. This can be seen as a feminist stance, in her choosing her education and future career over heterosexual romance. However, her colleague and point of female support and guidance, Ronda (Regina King), tells her: "Sam, your dad did not leave this Earth wanting you to be unhappy. It's time for you to find your own bliss, starting with this dance." The diner chef, Bobby (Paul Rodriguez), agrees, telling her: "Sam, you need to listen to Ronda: you're always studying, always working – you need to take some time for yourself." Thus, whilst Sam is passionately driven to gain a place at Princeton, according to those closest to her, this ambition does not make her "happy" and is not for "herself"; rather, finally meeting her "true love" would fulfil these "needs". This is articulated by her close friends using the rhetoric of the "self as project", loosely hiding the regressive gender ideology at work.

The third – and least common – type of girl in tween popular culture in terms of feminist politics is the pre- or anti-feminist princess; such girls are hyperfeminine, and are naïve in terms of sexuality, and gender and power. Their priority is securing a male romantic partner and preparing for their future role as wife and care-giver, with no other ambitions outside of this position. This feminist type can be seen across Disney animated feature-length fairy-tale films across the studio's history, from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), through to the recent (phenomenally successful) Disney Princesses franchise,²⁰⁵ to date featuring ten princesses from these classic Disney texts. According to the Disney Princesses website, under the section for "Grown Ups", the brand claims: "Disney Princesses encourage girls to imagine, believe in their own dreams and act out their very own fairy tales. Their magical stories touch *each new generation* of little girls", "From *timeless* and cherished

²⁰⁵ For a feminist discussion of the Disney Princesses multi-media franchise, see Orenstein, *Cinderella Ate My Daughter*, pp. 11-32.

fairy-tale film classics".²⁰⁶ Whilst such girl types belong in a pre-feminist context, before the awakening or advancements of the second-wave were realised, the brand claims that the values of the princesses are applicable to present and future generations of girls, and that their unchanging gender ideology is enduring. "Princesshood" in tween popular culture stands not for actual royalty, for whom service would be provided, but rather the ideal postfeminist, neoliberal female subject who must both selfishly work on her self, managing her priorities and rejecting previous forms of feminism, *and* selflessly learn the roles of caregiver and subservient heterosexual partner.²⁰⁷ Princesshood, then, is central to tween popular culture in its training and preparing the tween for her "upgrade" to teen and later adult women's popular culture. Furthermore, the princess-as-girl is integral to tween popular culture's ability to compact and explain away feminism's complex history, in the form of generational conflict.²⁰⁸

Within tween popular culture, the most prominent example of such a feminist type is *Princess Protection Programme*'s Princess Rosalinda (Demi Lovato). The Disney Channel Original Movie centres on shy, rural Louisiana high school student Carter, who lives with her widowed father. Carter's father runs a bait shack, but also secretly (to everyone but Carter and his colleagues) works at the Princess Protection Programme – the PPP – and it is his duty to take princesses in danger around the world back to safety. He is sent on a mission to rescue Princess Rosalinda from the small, fictional island of Costa Luna, after the country becomes political unstable following an attack by the evil dictator General Kane from a neighbouring country. Rosalinda had been preparing for her coronation to become Queen after the recent death of her father, the King. Much like the geographical and temporal displacement in *Ella Enchanted*, the fictional, vaguely Latin country acts to transport the audience to a exotic and "magical", fairy-tale setting seemingly untouched by feminism; the royal family holds great power and allure in the country – later in the film the

²⁰⁶ <<http://www.disney.co.uk/princess/grown-ups/about-disney-princess/>> [accessed 26 August 2012], my emphasis.

²⁰⁷ Negra similarly notes that "Postfeminism most often demands hyper-engagement with the needs and concerns of others while requiring (at least outwardly) a romanticized emotional passivity in regards to one's own desires" and she goes on to stress the importance of self-care in postfeminism. See *What a Girl Wants?*, pp. 140-1.

²⁰⁸ Tasker and Negra similarly note the centrality of generational metaphors to postfeminism, which focuses on the girl. See Tasker and Negra, "Introduction", in Tasker and Negra, eds, *Interrogating Postfeminism*, p. 18; see also Bean, *Post-Backlash Feminism*, p. 61; and Hollows and Moseley, "Popularity Contests", p. 14.

audience finds that Rosie and her mother are featured in a Spanish-language *Hello!*-style magazine.

After arriving at the PPP and receiving instructions and a new identity, Rosalinda – now Rosie – is brought back to stay with Major Mason (Tom Verica) and his daughter Carter. In contrast to the quiet tomboy, Carter, who fits into the second of the feminist girl types discussed above, Rosalinda epitomises conventional femininity: before her make-*under* at the PPP headquarters she wears a large golden yellow gown (much like that of Belle in *Beauty and the Beast* [1991]), with her long hair styled into large, glossy curls. She carries out delicate body movements and upright, straight posture. Shocked by Carter's abruptness and “lack” of manners, Rosie even uses cutlery to eat her hamburger in the school canteen (she appears to be the only student not using her bare hands). As well as being taken away by Major Mason (Rosalinda has no choice or say in the operation), her transformation at the PPP requires ridding her of her large dress and cutting off a large amount of her long hair; this distresses her, and she orders the hairdresser to stop until she may speak to Major Mason (the only person she trusts at this point in the narrative). He tells her, “Bottom line: if you care about your country and your mum's safety, nobody can know who you really are”, after which Rosie then allows for her hair to be cut. Thus, she willingly agrees to sacrifice her sense of self for the wellbeing of others. Notably in doing so she loses her personal identity and becomes dependent on a man.

Carter is unwelcoming towards Rosie, as she is irritated by Rosie's impeccable femininity and jealous of the time and attention Rosie has received from her father. Shocked at their lack of tidiness, routine, or home-cooked meals (seemingly due to the absence of a mother and wife), and in an attempt to please Carter and her father, Rosie prepares a large dinner, produced by herself from scratch and complete with a set table and hand-made crowns of flowers for them to wear. Revealing that she learnt the family recipes from her mother who was herself a peasant before marrying the late king, Rosie's royal heritage is shown to be a Cinderella-style narrative. When Carter receives a nomination to be a “princess” at the school's upcoming homecoming dance, Rosie teaches her how to “become” a princess; in a montage we watch as Carter offers acts of selflessness such as reading to children, donating clothes to charity and offering free tuition to fellow classmates. Thus Rosie teaches to Carter her values of selflessness, care-giving and (through a “makeover” montage featuring

Carter trying on several dresses at a charity shop, much like that in *Wild Child*), “appropriate” femininity.

Whilst in this case Rosie does not attain heterosexual coupling, the film still upholds the ideology that, as can be seen in *Ice Princess*, her princess lifestyle is dependent on a male: if it wasn’t for Major Mason, Rosie would be in danger, held captive by the evil dictator. She has been able to teach her pre- (or rather anti-) feminist values because Major Mason rescued her and took her to Louisiana; thus she *needs* him for her safety and wellbeing. Furthermore, it seems that as the initial attack on Costa Luna was carried out and the ensuing political unrest occurred *after* the King’s death, without a husband, father and male leader, Rosie and her mother are unable to carry out their roles as leaders of the country and are vulnerably exposed to risk. As Carter sarcastically states, her father “rescues poor, oppressed princesses”.

Whilst I have discussed three “types” of feminism offered to the tween through the texts’ leading teenage “princesses”, there are also three other significant “types” – or perhaps more appropriately labelled “waves” – on display across these narratives, and these depictions work to teach the tween how *not* to be feminist. Second-wave feminism is given space often through the mothers of the leading teen “princesses” (in such narratives where the mother is still alive); second-wave feminism that has been taken “too far” is signalled through the backlash figures of “evil” stepmothers; and pre-feminism is represented by the teen “princesses” grandmothers, who often fill the role of “fairy godmother”. By including this range of feminist positions, and effectively condensing feminism’s history into consumable pop cultural texts, “Women are divided more and more deeply by the images they are forced to live up to”, to draw upon Jennifer Waelti-Walters’ words.²⁰⁹ As with the original fairy-tales that provide the source material for these films, the dichotomies “Witch and princess, hag and virgin are the two images constantly projected onto women”.²¹⁰ Whilst such critiques of fairy-tales highlight the strict standards of sexuality, this is not the focus of tween fairy-tale narratives; rather than providing a pedagogic function for sexual morality, these narratives judge the “appropriateness” and “inappropriateness” of these juxtaposed women and girls in terms of tween popular culture’s standards of femininity and feminism, outlined here and in the previous chapter. It seems that conflicting positions, represented through female

²⁰⁹ Waelti-Walters, *Fairy Tales and the Female Imagination*, p. 88

²¹⁰ Ibid., p. 9; see also Bell, “Somatexts at the Disney Shop”, p. 119.

generational conflict, are necessary in tween “princess” narratives to provide an understanding of feminism’s movements through recent history.

Stacy Gillis and Rebecca Munford state that “The generational divide between second-wave feminism and the new forms of feminism – whether it be a third-wave or not – is one of the defining characteristics of the movement.”²¹¹ The structure of the films’ narratives discussed here lends themselves perfectly to the working through of this generational divide, where Astrid Henry’s conceptualisation of the “matrophor” is clearly displayed onscreen. Henry argues that “the mother-daughter relationship is *the* central trope in depicting the relationship between the so-called second and third waves of US feminism and [...] the employment of this metaphor – or matraphor – has far-reaching implications for contemporary feminism.”²¹² Her articulation of the “matrophor” explains the way feminism, and often feminists, are turned into “mothers”, and the way understandings of the relations between second- and third-wave feminisms are reduced to the mother-daughter relationship.²¹³

As Susan J. Douglas states, “Young women [are] not supposed to identify with feminism; instead they [are] supposed to actively *dis*-identify with it.”²¹⁴ This is the narrative function of the generation of second-wave feminism, represented in the mother figures of tween “princess” narratives. Their voices are most clearly heard at times in which their daughters must decide which feminist path to choose. In each case, it is made clear to the tween that the mother’s opinion on the matter is not to be agreed with – her values are presented as redundant. *Ice Princess* features a mother, Joan (Joan Cusack), who is marked as a second-wave feminist.²¹⁵ This is inscribed at a visual level through Joan’s lack of make-up, unkempt hair, and baggy brown jumpers. Furthermore, her vegan diet and lecturing of feminist literature signals her as “boring” and her chosen lifestyle as “unconventional”, much like Mia’s mother Helen (Caroline Goodall) in *The Princess Diaries*, who creates “alternative” art and pursues

²¹¹ Gillis and Munford, “Genealogies and Generations”, p. 167

²¹² Astrid Henry, *Not My Mother’s Sister: Generational Conflict and Third-Wave Feminism*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), p. 2, emphasis in original.

²¹³ Henry, *Not My Mother’s Sister*, pp. 2-3

²¹⁴ Susan J. Douglas, *Enlightened Sexism: The Seductive Message that Feminism’s Work is Done*, (New York, NY: Times Books, 2010), p. 103, emphasis in original; see also Henry, *Not My Mother’s Sister*, p. 7.

²¹⁵ For a discussion of the relationship between this second-wave feminist single mother and her teenage daughter (and that of *The Princess Diaries*) in terms of the conflict between feminism and femininity, see Louise Fitzgerald, *Negotiating Lone Motherhood: Gender, Politics and Family Values in Contemporary Popular Cinema*, (PhD Thesis, University of East Anglia, 2009), pp. 208-261. Fitzgerald sees this mother-daughter paradigm as central to the ideological work of postfeminism.

rock climbing. When high-achieving and hard working high school student Casey must choose between university or pursuing a career as a figure skater, her mother urges her to take advantage of the gains of second-wave feminism:

Case, there's no shelf-life on your mind, and if I'd learned how to use mine a little sooner, if I'd gone to college when I was your age, maybe we wouldn't be living like this. [...] I have not been able to give you a quarter of the things I've wanted to. [...] you need to give me something now.²¹⁶

However, as with Paige in *The Prince & Me*, Casey is shown as having the *choice* over whether or not to pursue her education, with the assumption that it will not make any considerable difference to her success and financial or social positioning later in life, whereas this choice was not available to earlier generations of women – women like her mother. When Joan watches Casey working on her school physics project, which involves analysing video footage she has filmed of young female competitive figure skaters dressed in their figure-hugging, sparkly leotards, she tells her: “I just can't get past the twinkly little outfits. [...] Sets us back 50 years. If I ever saw you squeezing into one of those, I'd probably start crying.” Having seen the pleasure and enjoyment Casey experiences when she is on the skating rink, the tween (along with Casey), is not meant to identify with this position, and is encouraged to want Casey to choose the figure skating path. Joan is presented as a “spoil sport”, the redundant, dated voice of second-wave feminism, an observation similarly made by Douglas with regards to postfeminist media texts of the 1990s in their depictions of feminist figures; these women are “a threat to women's happiness.”²¹⁷ *Ice Princess* claims that the persistent pressure that Joan places on Casey to work hard at maintaining her school grades and preparing for her Harvard interview threatens Casey's happiness. This is clearly signalled in the film's opening scene, inviting the tween to read her as the “wrong” influence on Casey when choosing a feminist identity: Casey happily skates on a frozen pond outside her house, until Joan interrupts the moment knocking on the window from inside, and holding up and pointing to Casey's maths book, instructing her to come in and study.

²¹⁶ In this conversation Joan can be seen to embody Imogen Tyler's conceptualisation of the “selfish feminist”, discussed later in this chapter. See “The Selfish Feminist: Public Images of Women's Liberation”, *Australian Feminist Studies* 22.53 (2007).

²¹⁷ Douglas, *Enlightened Sexism*, p. 103



Figure 6: Joan, the spoil-sport figure of feminism in *Ice Princess*.

This mother-daughter depiction can be seen to exemplify Henry's argument regarding cultural understandings of the second- and third-wave or mother-daughter relationship (in keeping with Douglas's argument), in which the feminist stands in the way of the daughter's freedom, and has become an easy figure to reject.²¹⁸

Similarly, *The Princess Diaries* signals leading teen girl Mia's single mother, Helen, as belonging to second-wave feminism through visual strategies as above; more significantly, however, it is revealed to Mia by her paternal grandmother Clarisse (Julie Andrews) that her late father, Philippe, was the Prince of Genovia (a small, fictional European country headed by a monarchy), and since his death she is now the heir to the thrown. Mia is shocked to learn about her paternal family's royal heritage and to find out that she is a princess, a fact kept from her by her mother. It is revealed that Helen chose to leave Philippe because she did not want to take on the role of princess; Helen thus took a feminist stance in both rejecting the role of princess – and wife – and furthermore in her refusal to reveal to Mia that she is a princess. *The Princess Diaries* and *Ice Princess* straightforwardly present the mother, and therefore second-wave feminism, as inhibiting the leading girl's happiness and accomplishment of her “true” self, as discussed in Chapter 1. Louise Fitzgerald sees this motif as specific to depictions of single motherhood in postfeminist media, arguing that “feminism is being cast as a position of unjust and unfair maternalism through the body of the lone mother character whose authority is coded as unjust and whose politics deny the daughter her “rightful” place in the social world”.²¹⁹ She goes on to argue that “feminism acts as *the* obstacle in the transformation of [...] female

²¹⁸ Henry, *Not My Mother's Sister*, p. 11

²¹⁹ Fitzgerald, *Negotiating Lone Motherhood*, p. 255

characters”,²²⁰ and I would take this further and suggest that by preventing their daughters from developing and revealing their “*authentic*” selves, whether that be claimed through marrying a prince or becoming a figure skater, the mothers are coded as “*inauthentic*”. Therefore, second-wave feminism is presented to be an *inauthentic* choice of feminist identity. Ideologically, these films work to naturalise this contradictory and culturally constructed set of values.

As outlined in the Introduction, the cultural construction of authenticity is at odds with the notion it claims to assert, and is in reality an impossibility; however, tween popular culture stresses that authenticity *is* a natural part of the girl’s self and this authenticity must be brought to the surface and maintained if she is to be “appropriately” feminine and feminist. The feminist mother’s attempts to encourage her daughter to follow a feminist path and persuade her *not* to choose the more traditionally feminine path (for example competitive figure skating over physics at Harvard) deems her *inauthentic*; the film claims, and the tween is addressed as knowing, that the “true” and “natural” desire of a young girl is to pursue the latter. Therefore, following backlash and postfeminist popular culture’s reinvestment in biological determinism to define gender roles, the feminist mother’s preferred choice is regarded as “unnatural” – that is, opposed to authenticity. Further, the mother’s attempts to push her own choice onto her daughter (until the close of the narrative, that is) presents her as *selfish*,²²¹ in tween popular culture, selfishness is juxtaposed with authenticity. Of course this is contradictory, in that the narratives encourage the tween to work on her self, but this paradox of selfishness and selflessness is covered up through the explicit juxtaposition of the two opposing paths.

Along with the onscreen daughters, the tween viewer is encouraged to *disidentify* with the second-wave feminist voice of the mothers, and by *disidentification* I use Henry’s definition of the term, “An identification *against* something”;²²² nevertheless, the onscreen daughters still respect the love and support that the mother offers, and this subject position is encouraged of the tween viewer. At the close of *Ice Princess*’s narrative, Joan realises how talented a figure skater Casey is, and feels pride and guilt following her disappointment and lack of support over her

²²⁰ Ibid., p. 257, emphasis in original; see also Shelley Cobb, who discusses the way the “good” woman is pitted against the “bad” woman, who resists familial and romantic intimacy in the contemporary postfeminist chick flick. See “I’m Nothing Like You”: Postfeminist Generationalism and Female Stardom in the Contemporary Chick Flick”, in Waters, ed., *Women on Screen*.

²²¹ See Tyler, “The Selfish Feminist”.

²²² Henry, *Not My Mother’s Sister*, p. 7

daughter's decision to choose figure skating; this is made clear through the reaction shot of Joan as she watches Casey perform during the final competition, and tears of happiness are clearly visible. Joan ultimately agrees to support and encourage Casey in her chosen path. Similarly, whilst Mia's mother Helen is largely absent from the narrative in *The Princess Diaries* following Mia's training and ultimate decision to become a princess, she is visible and supportive in the film's sequel, *Royal Engagement*, during Mia's key milestones in growing up female, including her graduation, the preparations for her arranged marriage, the halted event itself, and Mia's coronation as Queen of Genovia. Therefore, whilst these *biological* mothers' feminist views and opinions are dismissed, they are nonetheless significant figures in the girls' lives, providing unconditional emotional support. A suggestion of a natural maternal bond is present in these films, regardless of the mothers' (previous) "wrong" feminist wishes for their daughters.

This is not the case with the stepmothers, who appear in *Ella Enchanted* and the *Cinderella Story* films. Following a long cultural history of stigmatised representations of the step-mother, their function in these narratives is to show the teen "princesses" and the tween audience what could happen if they choose the feminist identity offered by the mother figures discussed above. The stepmothers are evidence of feminism taken "too far"; these women are claimed to have exploited the advantages made by the second-wave, and the result is a monstrous, grotesque woman, *not* to be seen as a role model in the leading girl's choosing of a feminist identity. As with the second-wave feminist mothers, this is signalled at a visual level through the stepmothers' *excessive* femininity; arguably they represent the older generation of "mean girls", who can be correlated with Doty's articulation of the "diva" in popular culture, discussed in Chapter 1.²²³ Through their "emphasized femininity", then, the tween viewer is given the visual cue that these women should not be trusted as mentors in the development of a feminist identity. A *Cinderella Story*'s Fiona wears very tight, shiny, feather-trimmed pink outfits, which barely contain her large chest. The unflattering clothes and her current "salmon" diet signal to the tween Fiona's lack of control, with her "greediness" resulting in "bad" femininity.

²²³ Doty, "Introduction"



Figure 7: Fiona, a grotesque symbol of feminism taken “too far”, in *A Cinderella Story*.

She is representative of the “unruly woman”, to draw upon Kathleen Rowe’s terminology,²²⁴ clearly marked as “grotesque”,²²⁵ as are the other stepmothers of tween princess films including Dominique (Jane Lynch) in *Another Cinderella Story*, and Dame Olga (Joanna Lumley) in *Ella Enchanted* (who are further emphasised as “inappropriately” feminine by their threatening and/or “ugly” names). Further, the tween is invited to judge Fiona as “inauthentic” due to the visibility of the work carried out in her quest to be feminine; her efforts to appear beautiful are obvious and therefore signal falseness (for example, her over-painted lips and heavily bleached hair). Of course this reveals the falseness of *all* beauty practices, but the film claims that such practices should remain invisible. A montage featuring Fiona and Sam’s father’s wedding reveal her wearing dull, plain clothes, thick-rimmed glasses and a lack of make-up (although she is still “too large” to be “appropriately” feminine), explicitly signalling her current image as inauthentic: her “emphasized femininity” was developed *after* the death of Sam’s father.

²²⁴ Kathleen Rowe, *The Unruly Woman: Gender and the Genres of Laughter*, (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1995)

²²⁵ Ibid., p. 33



Figure 8: Fiona's previous drab femininity.

Whilst the films' teaching girls how to become "appropriately" feminine reveal gender's performativity – it is *not* natural – this contradiction is brushed over by only those critiquing girls and women who signal too clearly their femininity as a performance.

The tween is encouraged to view the stepmothers as selfish and narcissistic in their lifestyle choices. *A Cinderella Story: Once Upon a Song*'s Gail (Missi Pyle), stepmother of Katy (Lucy Hale), is the dean of Wellseley Academy of the Arts, attended by Katy and her stepsister Bev (Megan Park). However, rather than view Gail as an empowering feminist role model, she is presented to be *exploiting* the gains of feminism for her own desires. In this way, the stepmothers including Gail (and to a lesser extent, the biological mothers), can be seen to extend the cultural depictions of "the selfish feminist and her narcissistic twin, commercialised images of 'liberated women'", to draw upon Imogen Tyler's words,²²⁶ which began during the second-wave in the "backlash" discussed by Faludi.²²⁷ The selfish feminist is implied through the mother figures but caricatured here in the stepmothers of tween princess films, so that is made absolutely clear to the tween viewer that "feminism is [...] equated with the most superficial of self-esteem practices."²²⁸ Gail is not interested in the education and wellbeing of the school's students; rather she is focused on getting her own "big break" and becoming a celebrity. When a successful record producer, Guy Morgan (Dikran Tulaine), meets with Gail to enrol his son, Luke (Freddie Stroma) (the "prince") in the school and entrust him with the responsibility of producing the school's musical showcase, Gail tries to use the opportunity to transform herself and

²²⁶ Tyler, "The Selfish Feminist", p. 185

²²⁷ Faludi, *Backlash*

²²⁸ Tyler, "The Selfish Feminist", p. 186

finally become the celebrity she believes she “deserves” to be. During a family dinner, Gail openly admits: “I have *got* to impress Guy Morgan, so I can finally stop pretending to care about this insufferable school and move to Hollywood, where no-one pretends to care about *anything*.²²⁹ Gail reveals that she never wants to return to the rural farm on which she grew up, that she wants fame and fortune, frankly admitting that she has no skills and that her role as an educator is laughable. Although in these moments Gail is completely honest in her goals and ambition, the tween is nonetheless prompted to read her as *inauthentic*, in her role as an educator and in her taste in lifestyle choices. Her strong Southern accent and flashbacks of her performing as a country singer earlier in her life render her lifestyle choices to be of “bad taste”, framed using the rhetoric of inauthenticity: she has a self-portrait painted whilst wearing a sari, meditates under the guidance of an Indian guru Ravi (Manu Narayan). Her taste and over-ambition to become a celebrity do not fit with her “real” previous identity. Even her Indian guru is revealed to be “false”: he is in fact Tony, who is half-Italian from New Jersey, and taking advantage of Gail’s narcissism in order to gain acting experience. A contradictory set of values related to selfhood are revealed here: the tween is taught that the gendered self is a performed one which requires reflexivity and work *but* one cannot reveal this process or perform a self that is unfitting with one’s biography, due to the risk of being “found out”. Furthermore, celebrity is shown to be a performance in itself; however, authenticity works to counteract its constructedness, and Gail is proven to lack such authenticity.²³⁰

Unlike the second-wave feminist mothers who ultimately support their daughter’s choice of feminist path and continue loving and encouraging them unconditionally, the stepmothers never support the leading girls’ choices, instead seeing their stepdaughters as a threat to their own (“inappropriate”) success. The lack of biological bond between the stepmothers and the leading girls in tween “princess” narratives allow for this, without damaging the ideology of (“proper”) motherhood. This selfishness is established before the narratives even begin, with the “bad” competition the stepmothers establish with the stepdaughters for their new husbands’ love. After their husbands’ deaths, the stepmothers then use their stepdaughters as “slaves” (following the Cinderella narrative), carrying out housework and chores that *they* “should” be doing as mothers and wives. Thus, they have taken feminism “too

²²⁹ Emphases in original dialogue.

²³⁰ Chapter 3 discusses celebrity and authenticity in detail.

far". Second-wave feminism, and its following of liberated woman, are *inauthentic* paths for the tween to choose in the development of a feminist identity.

To further clarify this, at the narratives' close, this feminism-taken-too-far must be removed or at least disabled to neutralise the threat of this "wrong" feminism and to ridicule the stepmother for her "bad" choice of such feminism, which allows the teen girl to fully and freely achieve her "authentic" feminist identity. It is a further warning to the tween that by choosing the "wrong" feminist path, as these "evil" stepmothers had, they too could face the same ends. The arrest of Fiona in *A Cinderella Story*, the breaking of Dominique's legs leaving her housebound in *Another Cinderella Story*, and the return of Gail to her father's farm to perform as an unsuccessful country singer work to – as Bell notes of Disney animated fairy-tales – "re-establish the control and stability of the cultural and natural order in the destruction of the transgressive feminine",²³¹ in this case the transgressive *feminist*.

Although a less common character found across tween princess narratives, the role of the grandmother, providing the voice of pre-feminism, is to allow the leading girl – and the tween viewer – to understand and appreciate the opportunities they live with following second-wave feminism's advancements, whilst also offering the appeals of pre-feminism. Whilst in factual terms the contemporary tween's grandmother – and the onscreen teen girl's grandmother – cannot belong to a pre-feminist generation, the geographical displacement of the grandmother figure to a foreign, vaguely archaic land (Denmark, Genovia, Costa Luna) acts as temporal displacement to a place seemingly untouched by feminism's advancements. Having the option to trust in her grandmother as a role model in choosing her own feminist path, the teenage "princess" is able to negotiate the pros and cons of both pre-feminism and post-feminism – by "post"-feminism here I refer to the temporal context following the height of the second-wave and the progress made in the way of gender equality. This pre-feminist grandmother (and fairy godmother) figure can be seen in *The Princess Diaries* films, *The Prince & Me* films, and *Princess Protection Programme* in which the role is displaced onto Rosalinda through her impeccable femininity, royal heritage, and training in how to be a princess.

Queen Clarisse's pre-feminism becomes particularly evident in *The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement*. The sequel's narrative follows Mia making the

²³¹ Bell, "Somatexts at the Disney Shop", p. 118

decision to obey the law in Genovia requiring her agree to an arranged marriage in order to take on the role of Queen. It is revealed that this is the path that her grandmother followed. However, just as her extravagant royal wedding is about to take place in the church, Mia changes her mind, and her grandmother offers her advice. Queen Clarisse can be seen to embody “Feminine sacrifice” as described by Bell, imaged in the postmenopausal, nonthreatening grandmother.²³² Clarisse fills the role of the Disney fairy godmother, who according to Bell, appears and produces magic and service at key moments of transition into womanhood.²³³ As the voice of pre-feminism, Clarisse offers her wisdom to Mia at this crucial moment of “becoming” as she prepares for marriage, based on her experience as a woman in the same position as Mia, yet in a time before second-wave feminism. Her pre-feminist identity is further emphasised by Julie Andrews’s previous caring and sacrificial roles in such films as *Mary Poppins* (1964) and *The Sound of Music* (1965), and the use of her voice in contemporary postmodern fairy-tale films *Shrek 2* (2004) and *Enchanted* (2007). Clarisse encourages Mia to take advantage of the gains of second-wave feminism, in effect suggesting that feminism’s goals have been achieved and women are now liberated. She tells her:

I made my choice: duty to my country over love. It’s what I’ve always done it seems, it was drummed into me my whole life. Now I’ve lost the only man I ever *really* loved [her security guard Joe]. Mia, I want you to make *your* choices as a woman. [...] Whatever choice you make, let it come from your heart.²³⁴

Although the rhetoric of “choice” is employed here, the tween is nonetheless encouraged to believe that Clarisse did not have the “genuine” and “free” choice that Mia now has. In a time before the women’s liberation movement, Clarisse used her “head” and rationally went ahead with the arranged marriage to comply with the strict rules and to please those judging her. Now, women are “free” to use their “heart” in such decisions, allowing their “true selves” to be released and revealed. Mia decides not to go ahead with the arranged marriage, and instead gives her grandmother a chance for true love by marrying her loyal bodyguard Joe (Hector Elizondo), a luxury she did not have during her pre-feminist youth. Furthermore, Mia asks parliament to

²³² Bell, “Somatexts at the Disney Shop”, p. 119

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Emphasis in original dialogue.

change the law requiring that women be married in order to take the throne as Queen. This is a consciously feminist move by the narrative, and Mia is shown to have a young feminine identity informed by feminist politics.

Teen girls' negotiation of pre- and post-feminist identities is straightforwardly presented in *The Prince & Me* in the relationship between Paige and her potential mother-in-law, Queen Rosalind (Miranda Richardson), a relationship which is strained and tense due to their conflicting feminist beliefs. After Paige accepts Edvard's marriage proposal, Rosalind finds it difficult to accept Paige as the future Queen of Denmark due to her regressive pre-feminist values. Rosalind reveals to Paige: "I like tradition, and I like consistency and continuity, and I don't like change. But, when that change is for the better, when it helps turn a boy into a man, then I have to reconsider." Whilst this is seemingly a moment of feminist awakening for Rosalind, after witnessing the progressive lifestyle Paige is able to lead following the gains of second-wave feminism, her reasoning for accepting change – to ensure patriarchy is sustained through the maturation of her son and the future King – means that the feminist message is lost. Shortly after this revelation, Paige bonds with Rosalind, when the Queen takes her to see her jewels, and allows her access to them (she lets Paige pick a necklace and matching earrings to wear at the upcoming ball). The camera and lighting during this sequence in the jewellery vault valorise the jewels, proving to both Paige and the tween viewer the "pros" to choosing this identity. This "pro" is centred on surface level markers of femininity, in this case the sparkling jewellery used to adorn the female body. Moseley argues that "The textual sparkle as a marker of glamour" emphasises *appearance*, which, as she states, problematises the gendered power the texts offer.²³⁵ Although until this point in the narrative, Paige has been clearly marked as uninterested in "superficial" aspects of femininity (as the opening wedding scene demonstrates), here, in the company of her pre-feminist mentor, she is able to indulge in the sparkle and glamour of "princess" femininity. Here, Paige is given the opportunity to negotiate the pre-feminist feminine appeals offered by the jewellery, alongside her own feminist values of a career and independence from a man.

In narratives featuring teenage girls whose suitable female mentor for choosing a feminist identity is either absent or unsatisfactory, the "princess" turns to a

²³⁵ Moseley, "Glamorous Witchcraft", p. 409

significant male figure for guidance. This is the case in *Sydney White*, in which only child and university student Sydney takes her widowed father's (John Schneider) advice and ultimately chooses a postfeminist path. Turning to the father in choosing a feminist identity is certainly the case in *The Princess Diaries*. Finding both her second-wave feminist mother and her pre-feminist grandmother to be unsuitable feminist mentors, Mia turns to her *deceased* father to help make her decision of whether or not to become a princess. She is finally persuaded to take on the role of Princess of Genovia after reading a letter left for her by her late father. In a speech addressed to attendees of an official ball, she reveals:

I'm not so afraid anymore. No, my father helped me. Earlier this evening, I had every intention of giving up my claim to the throne. And my mother helped me, by telling me it was OK and by supporting me like she has for me entire life. But then, I wondered how I'd feel after abdicating my role as princess of Genovia [...] probably all I ever do is think about myself.

She then closes her speech telling the people present that "now I *choose* to be forever more, Amelia Mignonette Grimaldi Thermopolis Renaldo, Princess of Genovia",²³⁶ claiming her decision to take on the role was to enable minority voices to be heard and to enable political change. Claiming her freedom to *choose* whichever feminist identity she desires, her final decision can be seen as a negotiation of her second-wave mother's, and her pre-feminist grandmother's, feminist values, with the final guidance coming from her father.

The Prince & Me does not rely on the father for the necessary guidance in choosing a feminist path; rather, Paige relies on Eddie to help her make her choice. Whilst initially rejecting his advances and frustrated when the couple are paired together as lab partners, Paige soon realises that she *needs* Eddie. Although she is clearly very skilled in physics (highlighting her "rationality", a marker of her feminism), her weakness in her Shakespeare class is affecting her grades, signalling her lack of "feminine emotion". She turns to Eddie for help and tuition (his Europeanness and royalty give him the "natural" ability in this subject). When Paige takes Eddie home to Wisconsin, Eddie tells her "I've never met anyone who makes me feel so intimidated", and when she shows a more sensitive, playful side with her

²³⁶ My emphasis.

old soft toy, he says “I like you like this.” From this point, Paige reconsiders her current feminist identity, altering her belief system and adjusting her behaviour.

This change in feminist identity is emphasised during her oral Shakespeare exam, during which she states:

Love doesn’t come around every day, and when it does, you’ve got to grab it and hold on. I mean, they could have lived happily ever after. I know that that’s a corny schoolgirl fantasy, but what if the fantasy actually became true? What if there really is a handsome prince? [...] what if you just know you’re in love? And all those things that you thought were really important don’t matter anymore, because the most important thing is to be with him. Then it’s not some silly fantasy, it’s actually *real*.²³⁷

Paige realises that by disallowing herself heterosexual romance and focusing solely on her career, she was not being her “true” self. The truly “authentic” identity is one in which she allows herself heterosexual coupling (which she apparently *needs* and *wants*), and to loosen the focus on her career. Whilst the male examiner in the room tries to interrupt Paige as she veers away from the topic of the Shakespeare play, the women present become very clearly emotionally involved in Paige’s speech. When Paige asks if they agreed with her, the *women* all passionately say “yes”; they empathise with this “natural” and therefore “authentic” choice. Immediately following this revelation, Paige packs her bags and flies to Denmark to be with Eddie. From this point onwards the narrative arguably becomes focused on Edvard’s achievements and his development into a mature man – the audience witnesses Edvard’s coronation at which Paige is not even present, whilst Paige’s graduation ceremony is not shown (we only see Paige briefly following her graduation, in her gowns with her friends). Thus Eddie’s milestone and rite of passage is given narrative precedence over those of Paige.

In choosing to become a princess (and eventually Queen) *and* a practicing medical doctor, Paige is fulfilling the necessary postfeminist role that her own mother never achieved (her mother instead chose “only” to be a wife and mother).²³⁸ The film (and its three sequels) claims that Paige successfully becomes *postfeminist*, she can – because she has *chosen* to – “have it all”. Whilst this ending could be read as

²³⁷ My emphasis.

²³⁸ Similarly, in her employment of the “matrophor”, and her consideration of Adrienne Rich’s “matrophobia”, Henry notes that in feminist generationalism, the “mothers” are presented as “lacking” so that the ‘daughters’ may succeed where they have failed.” In the case of *The Prince & Me*, Paige succeeds in “having it all”, something her mother failed at. See Henry, *Not My Mother’s Sister*, p. 72.

progressive, in the sense that Paige does not give up her ambition to become a doctor, the film's sequels instead dampen this, with the focus turned to lavish weddings – something which does not fit with Paige's values if one remembers her lack of excitement at her friend's wedding at the beginning of *The Prince & Me*. *The Prince & Me 2: The Royal Wedding* follows preparations for, and the wedding of Paige and Eddie; *The Prince & Me 3: A Royal Honeymoon* follows the couple on their honeymoon; and *The Prince & Me 4: The Elephant Adventure* centres on the couple's attendance at another royal wedding. Furthermore, the change in actress playing Paige to a more conventionally "feminine" type (Kam Heskin), with long, wavy blonde hair, and more feminine clothing, takes away a great deal of the feisty, feminist, qualities of Paige in the original film. Similarly, after Ella finally breaks her curse of obedience using her inner strength, *Ella Enchanted* closes with the royal wedding between Ella and Prince Charmant (Hugh Dancy). Charmant addresses the people: "To a nation of equals", thus achieving the political change fought for by Ella. However, upon marriage she is literally silenced, with no more dialogue. Although the narrator tells us of "A spunky young woman, once under a spell", it is hard to see her spunky feminism anymore, and instead this closing wedding scene "dresses this regressive argument in feminist clothes",²³⁹ to draw upon Kellie Bean's words.

In each case, the teen "princess" is encouraged to focus on *herself* when "choosing" her feminist identity. Thus, paralleling tween popular culture's scripts of femininity, its feminism(s) teaches the tween to focus on the self, ensuring that she fits into the neoliberal context in which tweenhood exists; at the same time, paradoxically she must also learn how to be an "appropriately" feminine caregiver and heterosexual partner. The focus on the self goes against the ideology of the second-wave, which strove for gender equality through the employment of the rhetoric "the personal is political", and working together as a *sisterhood*. The requirement for the tween to work on herself as a way of following the "right" feminist path furthermore renders tween popular culture's depictions of the "evil" liberated stepmother as selfish, redundant. The "appropriate" feminism of tween popular culture, then, can be seen to correspond with the ideology of the broad socio-political context of what Bean refers to as "post-backlash feminism", but which has been referred to with numerous other terms – some complimentary and others

²³⁹ Bean, "Stripping Beauty: Disney's 'Feminist' Seduction", in Brenda Ayres, ed., *The Emperor's Old Groove: Decolonizing Disney's Magic Kingdom*, (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2003), p. 54

contradictory – generally falling under that of third-wave feminism.²⁴⁰ Bean criticises such feminisms, drawing upon Rebecca Walker's book *To Be Real*²⁴¹ as her case in point, for this very rhetoric of selfishness that I have identified:

Myriad ideological problems present themselves, not least of which are notions of how we define “real”. To be “real” in this work seems to serve oneself, one's personal journey; to be real within a movement for social justice, however, demands a larger vision, one directed towards the experiences and needs of other women.²⁴²

Bean even goes so far as to “wish that women who refuse [...] to consider their personal and political choices in terms of other women would stop calling themselves feminists.”²⁴³ Of course, this raises questions over who – or which “wave” – holds the power to define feminism and to decide which feminism is the most “authentic”.²⁴⁴ Regardless, tween popular culture claims that this postfeminist identity, among the range of “options” on offer to the tween, is the preferred “choice” emphasised through a rhetoric of “authenticity”. It is this very contradictory status of contemporary feminism, and its complex cultural history that has allowed for tween popular culture to emerge. The ambivalence surrounding the plurality and multi-faceted nature of feminism today is very much a characteristic of tween popular culture, indeed it is part of it.²⁴⁵ More than this, this ambivalent context of co-existing feminisms can be seen to drive the narratives of tween popular culture.

The texts claim that this “postfeminist” identity is the “natural” choice for the tween, indeed asserting that such a feminist identity exists inherently within the girl, and she merely needs to realise this “true” choice and bring it to the surface. This is articulated explicitly in *Princess Protection Programme* when Carter finds she has been nominated as a princess for the upcoming school homecoming dance. She tells

²⁴⁰ Bean, *Post-Backlash Feminism*, p. 5

²⁴¹ Walker, Rebecca, *To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism*, (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 1995)

²⁴² Bean, *Post-Backlash Feminism*, p. 76

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 109

²⁴⁴ See for example Devoney Looser, “Gen X Feminists?: Youthism, Careerism, and the Third Wave”, in Looser and Kaplan, eds, *Generations*; see also Henry, *Not My Mother's Sister*, p. 40; and Brunsdon, *Screen Tastes*, p. 101.

²⁴⁵ Similarly, Douglas recognises the “The hairpin turns from feminism to antifeminism” of adult women's postfeminist media texts, in *Enlightened Sexism*, p. 107.

Rosie: “This is not good – me being a princess is not normal, [...] Trust me, I am *not* a princess”,²⁴⁶ to which Rosie responds:

Yes, yes you are. It’s just you don’t feel like one yet. When I came here you taught me to act normal, not royal. Now it is my turn to teach you. [...] Come on, Carter, let’s go find your inner princess.

Rosie then teaches Carter how to be a “princess”, which involves both the selfish act of constructing one’s feminine identity (through the required makeover montage), and selfless acts of donating to charity and helping other girls realise their own “inner princesses”. As stated previously, the figure of the princess in tween popular culture represents the ideal postfeminist, neoliberal female subject; she both selfishly works on her self *and* selflessly cares for others. As demonstrated in the dialogue between Carter and Rosie above, the princess (that is, the ideal postfeminist, neoliberal young feminine subject) is an inherent – therefore *authentic* – identity within the girl, articulated with the empowering rhetoric of “choice”; this identity merely needs to be “found” and brought to the surface.

Not only do these films employ the fairy-tale narrative and the figure of the princess to straightforwardly present feminism’s history, but by putting on display the different “waves” through the classic female fairy-tale characters (Shelley Cobb’s term “postfeminist generationalism” is apt here),²⁴⁷ they immerse the tween in postfeminist culture’s rhetoric of *choice*, effectively preparing her for her future consumption of teen and adult women’s culture.²⁴⁸ Selecting postfeminism is presented as another “choice”, alongside “appropriate femininity”, on offer to the contemporary female to ensure the achievement of an “authentic” self. The tween is presented with the illusion of “choice” here in her development of a feminist identity. Of course, the postfeminist identity is the one she is required to take on, rendering any “choice” redundant.

Furthermore, the depiction of pre-feminism, second-wave feminism, and feminism-taken-too-far, work to show the tween how much better off she is living as a girl in today’s postfeminist context. Ideologically the texts work to ensure the tween

²⁴⁶ Emphasis in original dialogue.

²⁴⁷ Cobb, “I’m Nothing Like You!”, p. 42

²⁴⁸ The centrality of “choice” in postfeminism has been discussed by many, including Probyn, “New Traditionalism and Post-feminism”; Negra, *What a Girl Wants?*, p. 2; McRobbie, “Postfeminism and Popular Culture”, p. 261; Projansky, *Watching Rape*, p. 79; Tasker and Negra, “In Focus: Postfeminism and Contemporary Media Studies”, *Cinema Journal* 44.2 (2005), p. 108.

remains satisfied with the status quo, claiming there is no need for questioning of gender politics beyond this. The different waves of feminism – and therefore different generations of women – are separated and pitted against each other, competing for the “best” form of feminism. Whilst each narrative and leading girl-type might differ slightly, each tween fairy-tale film stresses the girl’s “choice” *not* to follow in her mother’s (whether that be biological or stepmother, dead or alive) feminist path, and instead achieve an “authentic” feminist identity that her mother either failed at or left void. In this sense, the texts claim that the leading girl – and the tween – may create a feminism of their own.²⁴⁹ Of course this feminist identity is not of their own creation, rather it is predestined postfeminism articulated by tween popular culture. In rejecting the mother figure as her feminist mentor, the princess is left no option but to turn to either their suitor or their father for guidance in a feminist identity, a message that prepares the tween for her future consumption of postfeminist teen and adult women’s media which unfortunately continues this trope.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁹ Henry argues this of third-wave feminism’s disidentification with second-wave feminism, *Not My Mother’s Sister*, p. 7.

²⁵⁰ See Karlyn, *Unruly Girls, Unrepentant Mothers*, p. 98.

CHAPTER 3:

NARRATIVES OF CELEBRITY

How to choose
 Who to be
 Well let's see
 There's so many choices now
 Play guitar, be a movie star
 In my head, a voice says
 Why not
 Try everything
 Why stop
 Reach for any dream
 I can rock
 'Cause it's my life and now's the time²⁵¹

Within the vast expansion of tween popular culture in the first decade of the twenty-first century is a significant number of films and television programmes (dominated by Disney) that centre on celebrity (for a summary of Disney's output and of the thesis's use of the term celebrity, see the Introduction). The prominent role that celebrity plays within tween culture – and contemporary mainstream culture more broadly – is primarily lamented, particularly by cultural commentators. Journalists regularly use the topic to generate provocative (although increasingly well-worn) discussions.²⁵² The subject features prominently within the field of childhood advocacy, in which claims are made that:

Like most of us, [tween girls] want to be acknowledged, to be loved, to belong. The media-saturated world in which they live shapes their ideas about how they will achieve this. Given their constant exposure to the lives of celebrities, it's no surprise that many *girls* want to be famous.²⁵³

Whilst this is a prominent conception of young people in general, it is most prominently articulated with regards to young *girls*; Hamilton believes that tweens'

²⁵¹ Demi Lovato, "Who Will I Be?", *Camp Rock*, (Walt Disney Records, 5099923421226, 2008) [on CD]

²⁵² Brooks Barnes, "Tween Stars Wanted: Must Be Primed for Pressure", *The New York Times*, 10 May 2011, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/11/arts/television/tween-stars-wanted-must-be-primed-for-pressure.html?pagewanted=all>> [accessed 9 June 2011]; Belinda Luscombe, "Is TV Teaching Kids to Value Fame Above All?", *Time.com*, 8 July 2011, <<http://healthland.time.com/2011/07/08/is-tv-teaching-kids-to-value-fame-above-all/>> [accessed 2 March 2012]

²⁵³ Hamilton, *What's Happening to Our Girls?*, p. 57, my emphasis.

significant amount of investment in and consumption of celebrities “takes precious time away from girls getting to know themselves and the real world.”²⁵⁴ Such concerns are part of the broader cultural lament towards the apparent increased investment in and expansion of celebrity over the past decade, and anxieties about celebrity culture’s “effect” on social life.²⁵⁵ The widespread cultural concerns towards girls’ popular culture largely pivot on their potential “harm” towards vulnerable girls who are seemingly celebrity culture’s most eager consumers.

With much anxiety surrounding the nature of contemporary celebrity, in particular the value of seemingly “unachieved” fame of many *female* celebrities²⁵⁶ – and a great deal of these anxieties directed towards *young* female celebrities (such as Lindsay Lohan, Demi Lovato, and Miley Cyrus) – it seems imperative to look not only at the *gendered* (read “female”) nature of contemporary celebrity culture (as has been done), but also the fact that it is largely *age-defined* (read “young”). Of course, anxieties around female celebrity in terms of talent and “appropriate” routes to fame are not new, indeed they have existed since the emergence of cinema (and earlier forms of mass entertainment); however, such concerns have become concentrated in contemporary celebrity culture, and particularly heightened in tween popular culture.²⁵⁷ This chapter reveals that tween popular culture both responds to and actively participates in constructing and perpetuating the cultural unease regarding young, female celebrity. Although many cultural commentators and academics highlight and show concern for the apparent widespread desire for young girls to *become* famous themselves, this is not the focus of this chapter. Rather, what I am interested in is the way in which celebrity in tween popular culture can be seen as an allegory for growing up female. Regardless of whether or not the tween consumers of these films and television programmes actually want to become famous themselves, this chapter demonstrates that the tween narratives of celebrity draw upon celebrity culture’s investment in discourses of the self, the “real” and “authentic” as a way of

²⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 58

²⁵⁵ See for example Mark Rowlands, *Fame*, (Stocksfield: Acumen, 2008); see also Yalda T. Uhls and Patricia M. Greenfield’s highly flawed academic ethnographic research into the contemporary prevalence of fame on children’s television, “The Rise of Fame: An Historical Content Analysis”, *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace* 5.1 (2011).

²⁵⁶ See for example the “Going Cheap?: Female Celebrity in Reality, Tabloid and Scandal Genres” in special issue of *Genders*, edited by Negra and Holmes, *Genders* 48 (2008).

²⁵⁷ This dialogue between old and new anxieties around female celebrity is explored in Holmes and Negra, eds, *In the Limelight and Under the Microscope: Forms and Functions of Female Celebrity*, (New York, NY: Continuum, 2011).

guiding the tween in the understanding and development of her own young, feminine self.

Chapters 1 and 2 argued that tween popular culture implicitly claims to offer a range of femininities and feminisms as “choices” from which the tween may construct her own sense of self. Here I explore the “types” of celebrity on offer as “choices” – a rhetoric apparent in the lyrics to “Who Will I Be?” cited at the beginning of this chapter. However, as with the “choices” of femininities and feminisms explored in Chapters 1 and 2, a strict hierarchy is firmly held in place, guiding the tween through her discovery and understanding of these options. Thus, the “types” of celebrity offered by tween popular culture can be seen to parallel and support its constructions of femininities and feminisms, allowing the tween to make sense of the complexities and contradictions of young feminine selfhood through the familiar and consumable discourse of celebrity. The tween is prepared for the gendered ideological battlefield of adult women’s postfeminist media culture with which she will become engaged once she has outgrown tween popular culture, in which the paradoxical rhetoric of “choice” plays a central role.

The lyrics to “Who Will I Be?” cited above, which features in the opening scene to Disney Channel Original Movie *Camp Rock* certainly seems to imply that the tween is deeply invested in the potential to be famous. Other prominent examples promoting this rhetoric are Disney Channel sitcoms *Hannah Montana*, *Sonny with a Chance*, *Jonas* (2009-2010), *Shake It Up*, (2010-); Disney Channel Original Movies *High School Musical* and its sequels, *StarStruck*, *Sharpay's Fabulous Adventure* (2011), *Lemonade Mouth* (2011) and *Let it Shine* (2012);²⁵⁸ and “princess” or modern “fairy-tale” films *The Prince & Me* and its sequels and *Another Cinderella Story*. Across these texts, fame is depicted in a range of different forms, from pop and rock music stardom, to television “personality” fame, to royalty. In order to explore the value of celebrity within tween popular culture, and how this is articulated and commented upon, I draw upon Rojek’s now well-known taxonomy of “ascribed”, “achieved” and “attributed celebrity”,²⁵⁹ mapping these categories onto the different “types” depicted across the tween narratives of success and fame. In particular the value of the category of “attributed celebrity” is particularly relevant to the research

²⁵⁸ I will not be including analysis of *Shake It Up* or *Let It Shine* due to their broadcasts being too late into my research period.

²⁵⁹ Rojek, *Celebrity*

here, due to its gendered female nature, and the concerns associated with this type of fame centred on the seemingly “inappropriate” paths to fame (usually seen to be tied to selling of sex and the body). Rojek’s conceptualisation of celebrity is useful here in that it allows me to evaluate the statuses of the different forms of celebrity within the cultural hierarchy of fame according to tween culture and how each type functions in the texts’ construction and teaching of tween selfhood. Doing so, however, reveals the weakness in Rojek’s theorisation of “ascribed” celebrity – that is, primarily royalty – which I believe requires updating not only for the study of tween popular culture, but for broader contemporary celebrity culture. Furthermore, whilst celebrity is a highly gendered form (particularly “attributed” celebrity), this is not something Rojek explores. It seems to me that the narratives of success and fame – and popular culture more broadly – are aware of the gendered nature of this particular type of celebrity, and as this chapter demonstrates, responds by requiring such characters to move out of this category and into that of “achieved”, thereby instructing the tween on the “appropriate” values of celebrity (and femininity). Developing this, I have added a fourth form of celebrity to Rojek’s model of three: that of “potential” or “not-yet-achieved” fame, which features prominently throughout tween popular culture. Moving into “achieved” celebrity requires the girl to prove her *authentic* self; tween popular culture’s articulation of authenticity becomes clearer upon analysing its narratives of celebrity. In the construction of authenticity, the figure of the Latina plays a significant role, also drawing attention to the recent shift towards mixed-race representation across tween popular culture.

According to Rojek, “Ascribed celebrity concerns lineage: status typically follows from bloodline. [...] Individuals may add to or subtract from their ascribed status by virtue of their voluntary actions, but the foundation of their ascribed celebrity is predetermined.”²⁶⁰ Rojek’s examples of “ascribed celebrity” are largely royalty, into which *Princess Protection Programme*’s Princess Rosalinda/Rosie (discussed in the previous chapter) fits. Similarly, *Material Girls* (2006) features “ascribed” celebrities, sisters Tanzie (Hilary Duff) and Ava Marchetta (Haylie Duff), who are famous because their late father established a successful cosmetics

²⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 17

company.²⁶¹ The opening shots of the film emphasises the sisters' glamorous, frivolous and expensive lifestyle, being played out in the public eye. For example, the title sequence presents the sisters within a cosmetics advertisement format (they are the "face" of the cosmetics brand), followed by a scene showing the sisters' journey to a VIP nightclub in an expensive car, during which they are recognised by many people. However, although the iconography of celebrity puts on display the appealing, material aspects of fame, like Rosalinda's ascribed celebrity (to escape being taken hostage, she is rescued by the Princess Protection Programme), Tanzie and Ava's life in the public eye also has risks. A scandal which reveals serious health-related side-effects of some of the cosmetics (which is later revealed to be false) destroys the brand image and pushes the company into bankruptcy. The sisters are then left homeless and the target of bad press in the news and celebrity gossip outlets, and ostracised from celebrity events.

Not only is it shown that "ascribed" celebrity such as this is at risk of physical danger, but also danger through lack of knowledge and understanding of the value of fame, and an inability to live "normally":²⁶² because, like Rosie, the Marchetta sisters were born into their celebrity, they are presented as incapable of being alone in their house; after the scandal breaks, they are unsure how to behave and what to do when they must stay at home alone for the first time rather than go out partying with other celebrities. Further, they are incapable of securing "ordinary" jobs after they become bankrupt and homeless, demonstrated in an embarrassing job interview during which it is revealed that the sisters have no qualifications or practical skills. Finally, they are unable to carry out everyday chores, instead struggling when they are required to wash up dishes and iron clothes. This lack of knowledge about the "real" world, and in particular their lack of "traditionally" *feminine* skills, puts them at further risk and danger: they accidentally burn their house down whilst trying to relax with candles and spa treatments at home after the scandal breaks; later they give their expensive car to a thief assuming he is a valet parking attendant.

Thus, in both films, "ascribed celebrity" is presented to be an unsuitable form of fame, which inherently has with it – although many appealing perks – a number of

²⁶¹ It is interesting to note that it is a *male* who set up this company, which successfully sells a range of cosmetics and make-up, thus supporting the notion that the female beauty ideal is defined by patriarchal subjects.

²⁶² This is particularly the case with Ava, who is more concerned about publicly announcing her engagement to a soap opera star than saving her father's company.

dangers and risks. Therefore, the characters must prove their fame as “achieved” by the end of the narratives. Rojek states of his second category, “In contrast, *achieved* celebrity derives from the perceived accomplishments of the individual in open competition. [...] In the public realm they are recognized as individuals who possess rare talents or skills.”²⁶³ Whilst Rojek primarily gives “achieved celebrity” status to sports stars, both Rosie in *Princess Protection Programme* and Tanzie in *Material Girls* successfully fit into this category by the end of the films’ narratives, proving they deserve their fame and removing the dangers and risks of “ascribed” celebrity.

From the beginning of *Material Girls*, it is suggested that Tanzie has the potential and ambition to “achieve” her fame, and move up the hierarchy of stardom and celebrity. Whilst her sister Ava selfishly thinks about announcing her engagement to her celebrity boyfriend (this relationship turns out to be based on publicity, as her fiancé’s agent breaks up with her on his behalf immediately after the scandal breaks), Tanzie is seen completing university application forms. When asked on the application who her role model is, she writes about her father’s accomplishments as a scientist (rather than purely a businessman), and we see her passion for chemistry, signalling her skill in a traditionally masculine knowledge-driven field. Like Rosie’s determination to uphold her late father’s values in her role as Queen, Tanzie wants to protect her father’s image and continue his legacy. After first struggling in the “real” world with her sister, Tanzie is inspired when watching *Erin Brockovich* (2000) and begins to use her knowledge and skill in chemistry to investigate the claims made against the company regarding serious physical side effects. She discovers the claims are false after looking into the evidence, and saves the company from being sold to a rival brand, instead re-building the brand and re-establishing the company back to its previous powerful status. In the film’s closing scenes, Tanzie is shown to be working as a scientist in the company’s laboratory, developing cosmetics, whilst Ava works in the business side of the company. Therefore, they are now both deserving of their wealth and glamour, because they work hard (and in Tanzie’s case, with skill) within the company.

Whilst “ascribed celebrity” is lower in the hierarchy of fame, and is shown to be an unsuitable path to fame, fame itself is still upheld as being important; in both *Princess Protection Programme* (Rosie proves her humble, peasant heritage) and

²⁶³ Rojek, *Celebrity*, p.18, emphasis in original.

Material Girls, the characters must prove their deservedness of fame and move out of the category of “ascribed celebrity” and into “achieved”, rather than leave behind fame altogether. Narratives of celebrity across tween popular culture tend to blur notions of affluence and celebrity, collapsing material success into fame; it seems that material wealth provides the necessary visual cue for signalling celebrity in tween popular culture. However, the narratives stress the need to prove one’s deservedness of such material success, and stress the importance of *understanding* such deservedness in celebrity culture. In the girls’ transitions from the “wrong” type of celebrity to the “appropriate” type across tween popular culture, the question of “aspiration” is raised. Here, the Marchetta sisters’ previous “aspiration” to be well-known for their well-knownness (to draw upon Daniel Boorstin’s phrasing)²⁶⁴ is deemed to be an unsuitable form of ambition. To distance Tanzie and Ava from this culturally derided feminine category of celebrity and into a more “acceptable” one, the girls prove their deservedness for their celebrity status through their talent and hard work in business and science. However, the narrative ironically makes palatable these traditionally male fields by emphasising their application to the production of women’s cosmetics.

Of course there are several examples across the texts centred on characters who are presented as already clearly having “achieved” their level of fame. *Another Cinderella Story*’s Mary (Selena Gomez) is claimed by the film to be a very talented dancer, yet does not feel she has a chance to pursue dancing as a career; her mother was a dancer for the ageing, “grotesque” pop star Dominique, and after her death Mary is forced to live with Dominique and her two spoilt, nasty and unintelligent daughters (in effect, “ascribed” celebrities), working as their cleaner. Thus, it is clear from the beginning of the narrative that Mary has the potential, with her talent and skill, to “achieve” fame, but lacks the confidence and belief in this dream. Of course, talent is an ideological construction, defined subjectively and dependent on context; nonetheless, according to tween popular culture’s narratives of celebrity, it is a real, “naturally”-occurring phenomenon. With the reference to Cinderella in the film’s title, the audience already know that during the narrative, Mary must wait to be “discovered” – she has the skill and talent, but just needs her “lucky break”. This is in

²⁶⁴ Boorstin, *The Image*

keeping with Dyer's "myth of success": "American society is sufficiently open for anyone to get to the top, regardless of rank."²⁶⁵

Mary's skill at dancing is put on display for the film audience, proving her deservedness for achieving her dream; at a local dance studio, where local pop star Joey Parker (Drew Seeley) (who has returned to high school to take a break from his music career) is giving a dance lesson, Mary sneaks in to an adjoining room and effectively dances with Joey, through a two-way mirror. Whilst the girls in Joey's dance lesson are shown to be "inappropriately" desiring of a chance to dance with Joey and to gain "attributed" fame through him, Mary is clearly shy, shown to enjoy the art of dance itself and have great skill, whilst preferring not to be seen by anyone. It is suggested then that her great talent and skill in dance are wasted unless she can use it to entertain others, and put herself on display. During a masked ball, Mary's talent is finally put on display, when she dances with Joey (who doesn't know who she is, because of the mask covering her eyes), and after leaving in a hurry at midnight, Joey is then desperate to find out who the "mystery girl" was and searches for her at school. Knowing that she is the girl Joey is looking for, Mary doesn't come forward and instead watches on as numerous girls at school try to prove to Joey that *they* are his mystery girl, again showing themselves to be "inappropriately" desiring of "attributed celebrity".

Mary is finally given the chance to put on display her talent and her self during Joey's dance competition, a large-scale celebrity event (Joey will be performing, and the event is covered by the media) at which an admissions director for a dance school will be present in the audience. Although still clearly lacking in confidence and belief in herself, Mary is cheered onto the stage to dance with Joey, and ultimately noticed by the dance school admissions director and awarded a full scholarship. Joey has used *his* fame to arrange for the dance school admissions director to be present, complicating the narrative of "being discovered", and blurring the boundaries between "attributed" and "achieved" celebrity; it is *through* Joey's celebrity that Mary is given the chance to pursue her dream of a career as a dancer, but nonetheless we are encouraged to believe it is because of her own hard work and

²⁶⁵ Dyer, *Stars*, (London: BFI, 1998 Edition), p. 42

deservedness.²⁶⁶ The film claims that if Mary works hard enough at dance training, she will achieve her American Dream.²⁶⁷ The fact that we see very little of Mary practicing dance, and that her audition in front of the dance school admissions director is set up by Joey, is not commented upon. Dyer notes the contradictions within the culturally constructed “success myth” of stardom, which can be seen in the tension between Mary’s achievement of fame and success and Joey’s orchestration of this achievement:

one of the myth’s ambiguities is whether success is possible for anyone, regardless of talent or application. Particularly as developed in the star system, the success myth tries to orchestrate several contradictory elements: that ordinariness is the hallmark of the star; that the system rewards talent and “specialness”; that “lucky breaks”, which may happen to anyone typify the career of the star; and that hard work and professionalism are necessary for stardom.²⁶⁸

This myth is of course central in reality television and has been discussed in television and celebrity studies with regards to reality TV participants.²⁶⁹ In Mary’s case, these ambiguities play out in her “becoming” famous: according to the film she *is* talented, skilled and hard working, yet she still requires her “lucky break”, which she only receives by Joey using *his* fame to set up this “discovery”. Furthermore, whilst Boyd believes that “Teen-dance films [...] represent the chance to physically transcend structural oppression”,²⁷⁰ and arguably Mary *does* transcend the oppression she has been living whilst in Dominique’s custody, she *doesn’t* transcend patriarchal oppression and instead supports the age-old cultural belief that a woman cannot achieve her ambitions without a man. Nonetheless, Boyd’s argument that “Dancing talent becomes the reward and passage to romantic, heterosexual relationships”²⁷¹ is compelling, and is played out in *Another Cinderella Story*: Mary not only gets her

²⁶⁶ For a discussion of dance as an affirmation of the American Dream in the teen dance film, see Jade Boyd, “Dance, Culture, and Popular Film: Considering Representations in *Save the Last Dance*”, *Feminist Media Studies* 4.1 (2004), p. 79.

²⁶⁷ See *Ibid.*

²⁶⁸ Dyer, *Stars*, p. 42

²⁶⁹ See for example Holmes, “It’s a Jungle Out There!: Playing the Game of Fame in Celebrity Reality TV”, in Holmes and Redmond, eds, *Framing Celebrity*; Holmes, “‘Reality Goes Pop!’: Reality TV, Popular Music, and Narrative of Stardom in *Pop Idol*”, *Television New Media* 5.2 (2004); Holmes, “‘The Only Place Where ‘Success’ Comes before ‘Work’ Is in the Dictionary...?’: Conceptualising Fame in Reality TV”, *M/C Journal* 7.5 (2004); Rebecca Williams, “‘Endemol Approved Clones’: Authenticity, *Illusio* and Celebrity”, *Celebrity Studies* 2.2 (2010); Tim Markham, “Neither Playing the Game Nor Keeping it Real: Authenticity and *Big Brother*”, *Celebrity Studies* 2.2 (2010); and Bell, *American Idolatry*.

²⁷⁰ Boyd, “Dance, Culture, and Popular Film”, p. 74

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

“lucky break”, but she simultaneously becomes romantically coupled with Joey, whom she has romantically desired since she was a young girl.

Again, the notion of aspiration needs to be addressed here: whilst concern regarding girls out-achieving boys at school is a regular topic in the news, according to tween popular culture – and popular culture more broadly – academic achievement is not presented to be an “appropriately” feminine form of aspiration. As the examples in Chapters 1 and 2 demonstrate, girls excelling in their education are generally required by the narratives to choose another path, or compromise by altering their femininity to a more conventional standard. Here then, dance (and other performing arts), as they are depicted in tween popular culture, can be read as the feminine equivalent of the traditionally “masculine” form of aspiration, academic achievement. In particular through the gaining of the full scholarship to train at the prestigious dance school, Mary’s aspiration to become a professional dancer is shown to provide the potential life-changing class mobility and economic opportunities that academic achievement would provide for a male counterpart. As Chapter 2 demonstrates, the opportunity for girls to “choose” education as the route to their life’s ambitions has been allowed for by the advancements of second-wave feminism. Performance (that is, dance, singing and/or songwriting, music, acting), on the other hand, belongs within a discourse of femininity. As discussed in the previous chapter, the values and styles associated with second-wave feminism are claimed to be “no fun” by the texts that make up the tween popular culture landscape. By “choosing” an aspiration such as dance rather than academic study, the girl may enjoy the glamorous benefits that come with that career, such as sparkly jewellery, designer clothing, and make-up.²⁷² This is claimed to be more “fun” and ultimately more “appropriately” feminine than an educational path, in which it is claimed the girl would be required to wear “drab”, practical clothing and sacrifice an investment in “fun” elements of femininity such as hair styling and make-up.

The *Prince & Me*’s Paige (discussed in the previous chapter) does not inherit her celebrity, rather she gains celebrity status by her *association* with Prince Edvard. Thus, she is an “attributed” celebrity. Rojek states that:

²⁷² See Chapter 2 for a discussion of this with regards to *The Prince & Me*; see also Moseley, “Glamorous Witchcraft”.

achieved celebrity is not exclusively a matter of special talent or skill. In some cases it is largely the result of the concentrated representation of an individual as noteworthy or exceptional by cultural intermediaries. When this is so, it is *attributed celebrity*.²⁷³

Much like *Princess Protection Programme*'s opening sequence which contrasts Carter's Southern, rural tomboy lifestyle with Rosie's grand palacial surroundings, the *The Prince & Me* opens with a montage contrasting Paige's small-town, rural life, and seriousness with regards to her passion for science and learning, versus Edvard's carefree, reckless and expensive life as Prince, as the analysis in Chapter 2 demonstrates. Edvard's celebrity is clearly "ascribed" due to his royal lineage, and he is shown to be undeserving of his fame, and like the Marchetta sisters, lacking in knowledge of how to survive in the "real" world and understand the value of money. Paige, on the other hand is incredibly hard working, and focussed on becoming a medical doctor; she is wise, cynical and savvy in the "real" world, avoiding advances from men, and supporting herself financially whilst at university. Edvard decides to travel to Wisconsin (in the hope of benefiting from sexual opportunity), to get away from the pressure his family and the press are placing on him regarding his royal responsibilities in Denmark. Paige confronts Eddie regarding the seemingly unfair spread of wealth and success: she thinks Eddie is "affected" and "phoney" (that is, diametrically opposed to "authentic"), telling him "You're just a spoilt little rich kid. [...] Unlike people who are given everything, I have to earn what I get, but that is the beauty of a meritocracy, people rise and fall based on how *hard* they work",²⁷⁴ again supporting and reinforcing Dyer's "success myth". Eddie then runs out of money, and realises he must get a job; therefore, the fairness of hard work and success is restored, and Eddie learns his lesson.

After Paige and Eddie become romantically attracted to each other, it is soon revealed by the paparazzi and tabloid news that Eddie is Prince Edvard of Denmark, and Paige is photographed and becomes the topic of celebrity gossip. Upon her arrival in Denmark, it becomes evident that she is an "attributed celebrity": the people of Denmark recognise her and know her name, due to the celebrity coverage of her relationship with Prince Edvard. As discussed in the previous chapter, Edvard's mother, Queen Rosalind, disapproves of their relationship, believing Paige is "a gold-

²⁷³ Rojek, *Celebrity*, p. 18, emphasis in original.

²⁷⁴ Emphasis in original dialogue.

digging American girl who dreams of becoming the next Princess Di.” After becoming engaged to Prince Edvard, she must prove that she is *not* after the fame and wealth of being Princess and future Queen. During various public appearances alongside the rest of the royal family, Paige receives more public attention than Queen Rosalind. Rosalind confronts Paige, telling her, “Being royal is *not* like being famous, or rich. It is something much, much more. It is a way of being that can only be learned from birth. It is an embodiment that requires you to sacrifice who you are, for who you must be.”²⁷⁵ Thus, the cultural judgement towards “attributed” forms of celebrity is voiced through Queen Rosalind.

Paige begins to yearn for her original ambitions to travel the world and help people as a medical doctor, and decides to call off the engagement and return to Wisconsin to complete her degree and prepare to attend medical school. Therefore to the audience, Paige has proven her hard work and talent, and that she is *not* after fame and the financial wealth that comes from being well-known. However, the film closes at Paige’s graduation from university, where Eddie appears and encourages her to agree to his marriage proposal, telling her he will wait until after she has been to medical school. Thus, Paige continues to be a celebrity, but rather than an “attributed celebrity”, she has proven her talent and hard work and will therefore move successfully into the category of “achieved celebrity”. As stated above, academic achievement in itself is not an appropriate choice of aspiration for girls, according to tween popular culture. *The Prince & Me* handles this dilemma by softening this traditionally “masculine” aspiration by balancing Paige’s continuing education with her role as princess. As observed in Chapter 2, the tween is reassured of Paige’s femininity through her visible enjoyment of and investment in the glamorous benefits of princesshood, in the valorisation of the Queen’s jewels. Furthermore, Paige’s application of her medical knowledge and training to helping people in need can be seen to exemplify Rojek’s notion of “celanthropy”.²⁷⁶ Thus, much like Princess Diana (whom Paige is ironically compared to by her future mother-in-law), Paige’s “masculine” choice of aspiration is balanced through her feminine caregiving and “achieved” celebrity status via “celanthropy”.

²⁷⁵ Emphasis in original dialogue.

²⁷⁶ Rojek, *Fame Attack: The Inflation of Celebrity and Its Consequences*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), pp. 67-70

Whilst tween popular culture provides a slippage between its constructions of public status (royalty in the teen princess narratives) and celebrity (music, dance and television stars and personalities across the broadly defined “talent” narratives), it is worth considering here the distinction between these two types of well-knownness, and the way in which tween media brings the two together – indeed the way in which such texts define and present princesshood and celebrity interchangeably. As outlined in Chapter 2, tween popular culture’s “princesshood” does not signify actual monarchy, even in the narratives that depict the teenage girl belonging to or becoming a member of a royal family. Rather, “princesshood” equates to ideal neoliberal feminine selfhood. Rojek points to major social historical shifts that allowed for the emergence and expansion of modern celebrity, including the decline of monarchy as the focal point of worship.²⁷⁷ This suggests therefore that monarchs and celebrities require distinction, that their fame does not function in the same way, a view held by Boorstin and Rowlands, both of whom mourn the rise of the democratic nature of modern celebrity and the decline of “heroes”.²⁷⁸ James Bennett highlights Rojek’s argument, and suggests that “the British Royal wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton [...] went some way towards re-establishing the connection between celebrity and Royalty.”²⁷⁹ The royal weddings of *The Prince & Me* and *The Princess Diaries 2* could be said to function in this way. However, whilst cultural and academic understandings and articulations of monarchy and celebrity acknowledge and accept that royalty is claimed only by birth or by marriage (Rojek’s “ascribed” celebrity, predetermined by lineage),²⁸⁰ tween popular culture unproblematically presents princesshood as a status that can be “achieved” – like other mediated forms of celebrity – through hard work, discovery, and importantly, maintaining an “authentic” self. The *authenticity* required of the girl in order to successfully “achieve” princesshood is arguably predetermined (it exists *inherently* within the girl), but the ultimate status of princesshood is not – it can be gained by anyone (as long as talent is demonstrated, hard work is carried out, authenticity is maintained, and the girl fits “appropriate” femininity, thus limiting the category of “anyone”).

Modern celebrity is understood, and indeed defined as being a product of the mass media, and it is here that we see the interchangeability of princesshood and other

²⁷⁷ Rojek, *Celebrity*, p. 14

²⁷⁸ Boorstin, *The Image*; Rowlands, *Fame*

²⁷⁹ Bennett, “Celebrity Forum Introduction: The Royal Wedding”, *Celebrity Studies* 2.3 (2011), p. 353

²⁸⁰ Rojek, *Celebrity*, p. 17

forms of celebrity in tween popular culture: Paige, Rosalinda and Mia all become well-known to the public through the celebrity and tabloid media in *The Prince & Me*, *Princess Protection Programme* and *The Princess Diaries*, respectively. Thus, the princesses' well-knownness – although stressed in the narratives as being successfully “achieved” – is of course necessarily *mediated*; indeed without the mass media, their statuses as princesses (in the tween popular culture sense of the term) would not be enabled. I would extend this equation of princesshood and celebrity to the real world. In the contemporary highly mediated cultural context, royalty and celebrity *cannot* be separated; both require the mass media for their functioning within society and culture. This is a view shared by Nick Couldry, who states that “all elements in the monarchy [...] are primarily mediated”.²⁸¹ Kate and Pippa Middleton’s phenomenal rise to celebrity following the Royal wedding of Kate Middleton to Prince William in 2011 proves this argument; Janet McCabe argues, with regards to Pippa’s ascension to the status of celebrity (albeit “attributed” celebrity), that “We like to ‘discover’ our celebrities.” That is, whilst William had “chosen” Kate, Pippa was seemingly “chosen” or “discovered” by the public.²⁸² Just as Pippa *appeared* to be “discovered” by “real”, “ordinary” consumers of celebrity, the teen princesses of tween popular culture are “discovered” in the onscreen celebrity culture within the films. However, the tween viewer is always one step ahead of the onscreen tabloid journalists, paparazzi and “mean girls”; the tween viewer knows of the girls’ “true” selves all along.

The teen princesses work to “prove” that princesshood *can* be “achieved” rather than “just” “attributed”, which is not valued as an appropriate route to princesshood. The teen princesses normalise, and make possible – even *probable* – a myth of “becoming” a princess. “Becoming” a princess requires the same guarantee of “achievement” necessary for other forms of celebrity, discussed in this chapter. Talent and “authenticity” proven through hard work (that is, the perpetual makeover and self-surveillance outlined in Chapter 1) are essential for both princesshood and music/television/dance stardom. Thus tween popular culture’s princesshood and narratives of “becoming” a princess are compatible with, and supportive of, adult postfeminist media’s emphasis on neoliberal selfhood, and are articulated using the

²⁸¹ Nick Couldry, “Everyday Royal Celebrity”, in David Morley and Kevin Robins, eds, *British Cultural Studies*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 221

²⁸² Janet McCabe, “And Bringing Up the Rear: Pippa Middleton, her Derrière and Celebrity as Feminine Ideal”, *Celebrity Studies* 2.3 (2011), p. 355, emphasis in original.

fairy-tale narrative and the myth of the American Dream, or rather “success myth”. The tween consumer is prepared for her future consumption of such adult women’s media as the reality television series *American Princess* (WE, 2005-2007) as discussed by Weber. She notes at work in such makeover programmes the contradictory ideological blend of meritocratic advancement and neoliberal marketplace competition, and emphasised through a valorisation of colonialist honour and status.²⁸³ Laying the foundations for the tween girl’s future understanding and enjoyment of this paradoxical ideological media, tween popular culture employs these same juxtaposing values (albeit softened through the use of the *fictional* Cinderella narrative rather than the employment of *real* competing women) in its narratives of “becoming”-princess. “Becoming”-princess articulates so well the values of “authenticity” and “achievement” crucial in articulations of modern celebrity and central to cultural constructions of tweenhood.

My additional fourth category to Rojek’s model, “potential” or “not-yet-achieved” celebrity is particularly prevalent in recent tween popular culture. A number of the examples I have included in the thesis belong to this category of celebrity, including *Camp Rock* and *Camp Rock 2: The Final Jam* (which are set at a summer camp for talented teenage musicians, all with the hope of one day getting their big break and becoming famous). *Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen* (2004) epitomises “not-yet-achieved” celebrity. The film’s opening sequence establishes the protagonist, Lola’s (Lindsay Lohan), desire to become famous, and emphasises her investment in celebrity: after a bird’s eye view shot of the New York City skyline, symbolising the American Dream, the audience is placed inside Lola’s fantasy of a celebrity lifestyle. Lola is dressed as Audrey Hepburn’s iconic *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* (1961) character Holly Golightly, and she is saying goodbye to her mother and two young sisters, to live by herself in an upmarket apartment. In reality, Lola (whose real name is Mary, but demands that she be addressed as Lola), is leaving New York City with her single mother and sisters in an old, run-down car to live in a small New Jersey town. She dramatically says goodbye to Broadway and “goodbye any chance of becoming a famous actress”, telling the audience in voice over that “In my family I am a flamingo in a flock of pigeons”. Through her ambitious dreams of becoming famous, flamboyant dress, and changing her name to Lola, she claims that

²⁸³ Weber, “Imperialist Projections”, p. 148

“ordinariness” is something she must fight against in her life. Lola hopes to gain a celebrity lifestyle through the performance of multiple, false selves, a notion visualised in the film’s poster:

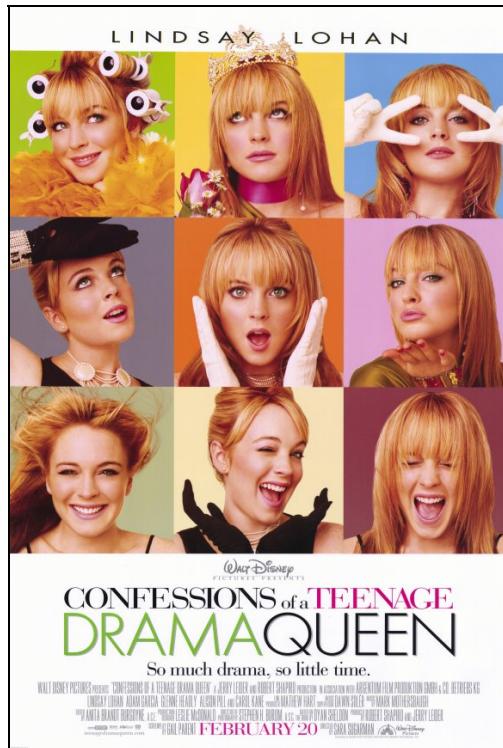


Figure 9: The multiple performed selves of Lola, in *Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen*.

To make her life seem more exciting and unique to her new schoolmates, and thereby closer to a celebrity lifestyle, Lola indulges in fantasies including the one described above, and takes this one step further by fabricating information about her life and family to her new school class mates. Such lies get her into trouble and almost destroy her friendships. In competition with her wealthy classmate and “mean girl” Carla (Megan Fox) who has tickets to a rock concert and exclusive after-party (the rock band, Sid Arthur is Lola and her new best friend Ella’s favourite band), Lola also claims to have tickets and access to the party. Lola’s confidence and her refusal to back down leads her and Ella (Alison Pill) to travel to New York City in the hope that they will somehow get into the concert and party; she loses their money, risks their safety and even their lives, as she continues to lie and attempts to push her way into the adult, celebrity world of rock stardom.

After helping Sid Arthur front man Stu Wolf (Adam Garcia), who is thrown out of his own party for being drunk and disorderly and is then taken to a police

station, Lola finally realises the risks and dangers of her excessive lying and over confidence; more significantly, she realises the artifice of Stu Wolf's claimed authenticity. Stu Wolf invites Lola and Ella back into his party, and Lola takes the opportunity to ask him about the deeper meaning of his "poetry", and what certain song lyrics that "spoke" to her really mean; he is drunk and admits he doesn't know what the songs mean, shattering the illusion of authenticity. It is from this point onwards that Lola begins to understand the damage inauthenticity can cause; "crying wolf", she is not believed when telling her classmates the truth about her encounter with Stu Wolf, and is called a "sham" and laughed at. Lola's multiple, artificial selves render her untrustworthy and absurd to her schoolmates.

Although her confidence has been knocked ("I felt more like a pigeon than a flamingo"), Lola is persuaded to go on stage in her role as Eliza Doolittle in the school's musical production *Eliza Rocks*, a modern rendition of *Pygmalion*. To the film's audience, the production is a semi-autobiographical portrayal of Lola's own dreams of becoming famous; Lola's final message to the film audience is that it is important and necessary to have ambitious dreams, because celebrities like Stu Wolf can come into one's life (Stu is in recovery for alcohol use since meeting Lola, and arrives at the *Eliza Rocks* after party as a friend of Lola's). However, multiple, *over*-performed selves are discouraged; instead, the necessity for a consistent sense of authenticity is emphasised (of course, such a sense of self is a cultural construct, in that one is always performing multiple selves to various audiences).²⁸⁴ Lola tells the audience in voice over at the film's close, "It was the first time I realised that absolute reality could be so much more fun than fantasy". Furthermore, Lola has exchanged "attributed" celebrity (her association with Stu Wolf) for "achieved" celebrity (her talent of performing on stage). Lola's aspirational choice of theatrical performance over "attributed" celebrity allows her to demonstrate *several* skills – that of acting, singing, and dancing; she "achieves" her celebrity by proving that she is multi-talented and understands the importance of the "real".

Therefore as these examples show, according to tween popular culture, the hierarchy of fame places Rojek's "achieved celebrity" at the top, with "ascribed" and particularly "attributed" forms much lower; in order to move up the hierarchy of fame, the celebrity must prove their talent, skill and hard work, to successfully

²⁸⁴ See Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1959).

demonstrate that their fame is instead “achieved” and deserved. As I have mentioned throughout the chapter, proving one’s fame as “achieved” is largely done via proving one’s *authenticity*. The idea that the celebrity onscreen must prove their deservedness of “achieved” fame by proving their authenticity would support Dyer’s argument that “The processes of authentication [...] are the guarantee of [...] star ‘quality’”, and that “It is this effect of authenticating authenticity that gives the star charisma”.²⁸⁵

As argued in Chapters 1 and 2, in the cultural construction of tweenhood, authenticity is predicated in the girl’s role(s) in same-sex friendship, sisterhood and daughterhood: in each role she must be “true”. Similarly, in the girl’s choice of a feminist identity she must go with her “natural”, “true” values. Uniqueness and *not* being false are upheld as signifiers of authenticity in tween selfhood. In tween culture’s construction of celebrity, the meanings and values of “authenticity” become clearer. In tween narratives of celebrity, authenticity simply and straightforwardly equates to an understanding and rejection of “inappropriate” forms of and routes to celebrity, in particular the gendered category of “attributed” celebrity. Such authenticity is signalled and reinforced by the girl’s continual reminder of her roots, and drawing upon this biography in her skill/art form, in effect demonstrating that she remains ultimately *unchanged* in her sense of self in her transition from “ordinary” girl to celebrity.²⁸⁶ As such, by remaining unchanged the girl is presented as more “pure” (equated in tween popular culture with authenticity)²⁸⁷ in her celebrity persona and in her demonstration of talent (of course any notion of “purity” is itself an ideological construct, and at odds with the celebrity as a mediated, constructed persona).²⁸⁸ Tween culture’s construction of celebrity stresses that “talent” is a naturally occurring phenomenon, and demonstration of one’s natural talent (rather than displaying or performing falsity), further proves the girl’s authenticity. In this regard, tween popular culture’s model of authenticity in its construction of celebrity is in keeping with Gary Alan Fine’s notion of the “noble savage” figure of self-taught

²⁸⁵ Dyer, “A Star Is Born and the Construction of Authenticity”, in Christine Gledhill, ed., *Stardom: Industry of Desire*, (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 132-3; see also Erin Meyers, “‘Can You Handle My Truth?’: Authenticity and the Celebrity Star Image”, *The Journal of Popular Culture* 42.5 (2009), p. 891.

²⁸⁶ See Chapter 1 for a discussion of Dubrofsky’s notion of the “unchanged self” in tween popular culture’s construction of authenticity; see Dubrofsky, “Therapeutics of the Self”.

²⁸⁷ The equation of purity with authenticity is discussed with regards to the abstinence movement in the US, in Chapter 6.

²⁸⁸ See Gary Alan Fine who recognises the image of purity in discourses of self-taught art, in “Crafting Authenticity: The Validation of Identity in Self-Taught Art”, *Theory and Society* 32.2 (2003), pp. 161-2.

art.²⁸⁹ Talent and authenticity become collapsed into one another; both are “naturally” inherent within the girl, and tween narratives of celebrity claim that they are mutually dependent. Of course, both are discursive constructs at odds with what they purport to signify, but this impossibility is disregarded in tween narratives of celebrity.²⁹⁰

In Chapter 1 I drew upon Anton’s conceptualisation of authenticity and selfhood, which proved helpful for working through understandings of the cultural construction of authenticity in tween selfhood. However, the examination of tween narratives of celebrity here signals a major break with Anton’s argument in terms of *who* defines or judges one’s authenticity. Anton argues that ultimately, one’s relationship to others and one’s social role does not grant authenticity. He believes that other people do not need to agree whether or not one is authentic; rather, one’s authenticity is accomplished in how one uses one’s “inherent” originality in constructing and living one’s biography.²⁹¹ According to tween narratives of celebrity (and, I would argue, popular culture more broadly), however, authenticity is determined by others’ interpretation of the celebrity’s talent and self; the *audience* ultimately confers one’s authenticity, an argument shared by Allan Moore with regards to pop music.²⁹² This reveals a contradiction in tween popular culture’s construction of authenticity:²⁹³ whilst authenticity is claimed to be a “natural”, “inherent” part of the girl’s self, and indeed central if she is to become “appropriately” feminine (therefore an individual project of the self), narratives of celebrity demonstrate that such authenticity is performed for *other people* to judge, sometimes to an audience of hundreds or thousands (for example in Mary’s performance on stage in *Another Cinderella Story*). Authenticity becomes not inward looking, about one’s own relationship to the self, but outward looking, about how one hopes to be interpreted by others.

The stars within the narratives discussed here, then, must “achieve” their celebrity by getting in touch with and learning how to express their natural

²⁸⁹ Ibid.; Fine also recognises authenticity as a rejection of the plastic culture to be illusory, p. 163.

²⁹⁰ Shumway similarly recognises this impossibility of, yet continued search for authenticity in rock and roll music stardom. See “Authenticity”, pp. 527-8.

²⁹¹ Anton, *Selfhood and Authenticity*, pp. 154-5

²⁹² Moore, “Authenticity as Authentication”. See also Shumway, “Authenticity”; Pickering, “The Dogma of Authenticity in the Experience of Popular Music”; Frith, *Performing Rites*.

²⁹³ Others have noted the contradiction in popular culture’s constructions of authenticity, particularly in relation to pop music. See for example Lawrence Grossberg, “The Media Economy of Rock Culture: Cinema, Post-Modernity and Authenticity”, in Simon Frith, Andrew Goodwin and Lawrence Grossberg, eds, *Sound & Vision: The Music Video Reader*, (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 205-6; and Dyer, “A Star is Born”, p. 135.

authenticity. In many cases, the protagonist who makes the successful and necessary transition from “ascribed” or “attributed” celebrity to “achieved” celebrity needs to be taught the importance of authenticity by a character and guided as to how to “learn” or bring to the surface one’s true self. In each case, the protagonist doesn’t *gain* authenticity but rather learns how to get in touch with one’s “*inherent*” authenticity, how to bring one’s natural authenticity to the surface. A clear example of this uncovering one’s romantic, authentic self in order to prove one’s “achieved” celebrity is Mitchie’s guidance of Shane (Joe Jonas) from “attributed” to “achieved” celebrity in *Camp Rock*, by teaching him the importance of authenticity. In the film’s opening montage, Mitchie is marked as being “inherently” authentic and very talented in her production of “pure” and “unmediated” work, to draw upon Fine’s terminology of self-taught art. The film opens with Mitchie waking and getting ready for school, whilst playing various musical instruments in her bedroom and singing into her mirror (see the “Who Will I Be?” lyrics at the beginning of this chapter). Her bedroom is full of numerous personal belongings and artefacts, and her passion and talent for music is highlighted by her notebook of original songs that she carries around with her, titled “Mitchie’s Songs”; such aspects of the *mise-en-scène* signal her authenticity. In stark contrast to Mitchie’s sincere “deservedness” of (“not-yet-achieved”) fame is Shane Gray’s “inappropriate” celebrity behaviour, as revealed in a news story: part of the male music group Connect 3, Shane reportedly stormed off a music video shoot, and his bad behaviour has caused the band’s summer tour to be cancelled. Watching this “scandal” on the television news, Mitchie and her mother disapprove of his behaviour. Mitchie wants to attend Camp Rock (a summer camp for talented young musicians and performers), but her mother must take on the role of cook at the camp in order to afford the cost. This further emphasises Mitchie’s sincerity and deservedness of fame and success. In contrast, in an attempt to redeem his reputation and save the band, Shane is *forced* to attend Camp Rock for the summer, but he does not want to. Thus, an unfair and unbalanced spread of fame and success is established at the beginning of the narrative. *Camp Rock* exemplifies the Disney Channel’s recent burgeoning trend of narratives depicting working- and lower-middle-class, mixed-race young protagonists “becoming”-celebrity.²⁹⁴ Disney Channel’s simplistic and unproblematic

²⁹⁴ This can be seen most prominently in the new sitcom *Shake It Up!*, as observed by Morgan Blue, in “Dance, Girl, Dance!: Performance & Class Mobility in Disney’s *Shake It Up*”, *In Media Res*, 11 September 2012, <<http://mediacommmons.futureofthebook.org/imr/2012/09/11/dance-girl-dance->>

depiction of a working-class, non-white girl's ease of access to celebrity works to reinforce tween popular culture's investment in the American Dream ideology of the "becoming"-celebrity narrative.

When making new friends at Camp Rock, Mitchie becomes intimidated by the confidence and wealth of many of the campers, but her mother advises her to "be yourself". Mitchie therefore learns her "inherent" authenticity from her mother. Mitchie confronts Shane about his demanding and selfish behaviour, telling him "you're kind of being a jerk"; later, when he opens up to her about the commercial expectations of the record company (the "cookie-cutter pop" they must record), she encourages him to go ahead with his ideas for a new, authentic sound. With his newly uncovered authenticity, Shane alters his behaviour and begins enjoying his time at Camp Rock and regains his passion for music and writing new songs. However, Mitchie has become caught up with the over-confidence and competitiveness amongst some of the campers; like Lola in *Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen*, she has been fabricating her biography and performing a false self. Shane feels betrayed when he finds out she has been lying, and he must then re-teach her the value of authenticity, which he learned from Mitchie herself. He advises the campers (but he addresses his speech directly to Mitchie) ahead of their "final jam" performances:

It's not all about your image: none of it means anything unless people see who you *really* are, and your music has to be who you really are, it's got to show how you feel or it doesn't mean anything.²⁹⁵

Shane's speech to the campers echoes Fine's notion of authenticity and self-taught art cited above, and is not unlike the rhetoric repeated across reality TV programming, in particular in the advice given by judges and mentors on talent show programmes. Other Disney Channel Original Movies similarly feature a moment of realisation by the star of the importance of authenticity, and of gratitude towards the person who has successfully taught them of this importance and guided them in bringing their true self to the surface. *StarStruck*'s arrogant pop star and pin up Christopher Wilde (Sterling Knight) realises and admits that when he is with "ordinary" teenage girl Jessica (Danielle Campbell) (who does not like celebrity culture) out of the public eye, "right

[performance-class-mobility-disney-s-shake-it](#) [accessed 12 September 2012]; elsewhere, however, this recent development in Disney Channel's narratives of celebrity lacks academic attention.

²⁹⁵ Emphasis in original dialogue.

now, here with you, I feel like I can just be myself, not ‘Christopher Wilde’. Just me.” Similarly, after Sharpay (Ashley Tisdale) moves to New York to pursue a career in broadway in *Sharpay’s Fabulous Adventure*, she becomes caught up in the appeals of a “diva” lifestyle; her male friend Peyton (Austin Butler) reminds her of what is “really” important and of her “true” ambition, and Sharpay finally admits that she had become side-tracked and pursued fame in the wrong way: “I lost track of what I want.”²⁹⁶ As these examples demonstrate, according to tween popular culture, the “real” really exists in stardom and celebrity.

As mentioned above, a number of the texts here epitomise the Disney Channel’s recent shift towards representations of the working class, non-white girl “becoming”-celebrity. As part of this trend, in many of the cases discussed here, the teaching of authenticity’s importance and guidance towards one’s true self is carried out by a Latina character. What this seems to suggest then is that the Latina is naturally more “authentic” and thus the most appropriate teacher or guide. This would support Helen Warner’s argument that, with regards to America Ferrera’s star image, the Latina star is often (problematically) not seen as requiring the same deconstruction and search for the “real” that the white star requires, due to her “inherent”, “natural” authenticity.²⁹⁷ Thus, the search for the “real” and desire for the “authentic” so prevalent in contemporary mediated, celebrity-driven popular culture, (and notions so central to theories of stardom and celebrity), are seemingly incorporated onscreen in tween narratives of fame and success. Warner’s recognition of the already naturally “authentic” non-white female celebrity versus the need to uncover the white celebrity’s authenticity, is placed onto the Latina “teacher”/“guide” and the leading protagonist on a journey from “ascribed” or “attributed” to “achieved” and therefore “authentic” celebrity.

Material Girls’ Ava and Tanzie make their transition from “ascribed” (and arguably “attributed”) to “achieved” celebrity by proving their authenticity, a process through which they are guided primarily by their Latina housekeeper, Inez (Maria

²⁹⁶ I use the term “diva” here in the way it has been conceptualised by Doty. Whilst within the *High School Musical* franchise (of which this film is a part) Sharpay is clearly signalled to be a diva, her excessive aesthetic style and behaviour provide comedy; that is, she is not *really* a diva, merely “performing” as one, revealing her “true” self behind the artifice in each film in the franchise (of course the figure of the diva is a constructed performance also). However, in this narrative she comes close to becoming a *real* diva, which is an “inappropriate” and “inauthentic” way to successfully “become”-woman. See Doty, “Introduction”.

²⁹⁷ Helen Warner, “*Perfect Fit*: Industrial Strategies, Textual Negotiations and Celebrity Culture in Fashion Television, (PhD Thesis: University of East Anglia, 2010), p. 195

Conchita Alonso). Inez had been the sisters' housekeeper during the peak of their celebrity lifestyle, and when they become bankrupt and homeless, Inez takes them in to her small, lower-class apartment and teaches the girls necessary skills (primarily feminine skills of housework), and the importance of family. The sisters witness the very real struggles that Inez, as a working-class Mexican immigrant, must deal with, reflecting a reality of US society and highlighting the unequal spread of wealth and the unequal ease of access to a celebrity lifestyle; by being with Inez, Ava and Tanzie begin their journey to understanding authenticity, and bringing out their "true" selves.

Camp Rock's Mitchie Torres (played by Demi Lovato), as discussed above, is Shane Gray's teacher and guide in "achieving" his celebrity and understanding the importance of and proving his authenticity. Her Latino heritage is marked clearly during the film's opening scenes, with shots of her colourful and cluttered bedroom, and her patterned, earthy coloured outfits, signalling the "tropicalism" of Latina identity that Isabel Molina Guzmán and Angharad N. Valdivia identify in popular culture.²⁹⁸ Her image is contrasted with the blonde-haired blue-eyed Tess (Meaghan Martin), *Camp Rock*'s "diva" and "mean girl", who wears pastel colours and shiny, metallic jackets and leggings.



Figure 10: Mitchie's authenticity in *Camp Rock*.

²⁹⁸ Isabel Molina Guzmán and Angharad N. Valdivia, "Brain, Brow, and Booty: Latina Iconicity in U.S. Popular Culture", in *The Communication Review* 7 (2004), p. 211



Figure 11: Tess's inauthenticity.

According to the film, Mitchie's authenticity has been passed down to her maternally from her mother, who has taught her the importance of "being yourself". Mitchie's mother, Connie's (Maria Canals-Barrera), ethnic authenticity is also signalled through her role as the camp's cook (she is seen making large batches of chilli, complete with tortilla chips and guacamole). The fact that her mother takes on the role of the camp's cook in order to pay for Mitchie's summer at Camp Rock highlights the initial imbalance of wealth and entry into the world of celebrity. Mitchie's successful teaching of authenticity's importance to Shane (and the rest of the campers), and her overall popularity as a performer at Camp Rock (shown by the fact that the film was followed by a sequel, *Camp Rock 2: The Final Jam*, where Mitchie returns the following summer as the star of the camp along with Shane), supports Negra's argument that "ethnic female film stars have symbolized the promise of American pluralism and proved the desirability and reliability of the American Dream".²⁹⁹

In *Sonny with a Chance*, Lovato plays Sonny Monroe, a Mid-Western small-town teenage girl who is discovered on the internet through a self-made comedy sketch, and gains a job as writer and performer on a fictional popular tween comedy sketch show, *So Random!* in Hollywood³⁰⁰. The Disney Channel sitcom narrative

²⁹⁹ Negra, *Off-White Hollywood: American Culture and Ethnic Female Stardom*, (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 3; see also Tara Lockhart's discussion of Jennifer Lopez's authenticity and charisma versus her hard work and control, realising "a particular version of the ethnic-American Dream.", in "Jennifer Lopez: The New Wave of Border Crossing", in Myra Mendible, ed., *From Bananas to Buttocks: The Latina Body in Popular Film and Culture*, (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2007), p. 153; similarly, Mary C. Beltrán also notes the way in which Jennifer Lopez was promoted as "authentic", with this authenticity primarily located on her body shape, see *Latina/o Stars in U.S. Eyes: The Making and Meanings of Film and TV Stardom*, (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009), pp. 132-153.

³⁰⁰ A more recent example of this narrative is Disney Channel sitcom *Shake it Up!*, which began airing in 2010 and centres on "ethnically ambiguous" best friends CeCe and Rocky successfully "making it" as dancers on a local television show. For a discussion of the ambiguity of Latina stars' ethnicities onscreen, see Angharad Valdivia, "Latinas as Radical Hybrid: Transnationally Gendered Traces in Mainstream Media", *Global Media Journal*, 3.4 (2004),

begins with Sonny's arrival in Hollywood, with the "lucky break" having already happened, and the audience witnesses the process of "becoming" famous. Having proven her talent and skill for comedy writing and performing, Sonny is already established as belonging to Rojek's category of "achieved" celebrity, and throughout the episodes' narratives, the audience watch Sonny trying to *maintain* her "achieved" celebrity status, as she is tempted numerous times by the trappings of "attributed" celebrity. For example, in series 1, episode 4,³⁰¹ Sonny's cast mate Tawni (Tiffany Thornton), who is highly invested in the glamour of being a celebrity and ensuring she is popular and visible in the media, encourages Sonny to feel concerned that she hasn't yet received any fan mail. To try and make herself seem more well-known and admired to her fellow cast members, Sonny writes herself a fake fan letter. However, this gets her in trouble when the studio boss wants to speak to the fan on the telephone and invite him to a recording of the show. By the end of this episode and others, Sonny remembers the importance of authenticity and avoids getting caught up in the negative aspects of celebrity, reminding herself of her talent and hard work. Sonny's established "achieved" celebrity and her "inherent" authenticity is highlighted on the official *Sonny with a Chance* website, within the virtual *Tween Weekly* fictional fan magazine:³⁰²

<<http://lass.calumet.purdue.edu/cca/gmj/sp04/gmj-sp04-valdivia.htm>> [accessed 31 August 2011]; see also Beltrán, *Latina/o Stars in U.S. Eyes*, pp. 154-171; see also Guzmán and Valdivia, "Brain, Brow, and Booty", pp. 214-215.

³⁰¹ "You've Got Fan Mail", *Sonny with a Chance*, (Disney Channel, 22 February 2009)

³⁰² *Tween Weekly* features regularly in the sitcom, with the cast members often eager to find out whether they have been featured in photographs and articles.

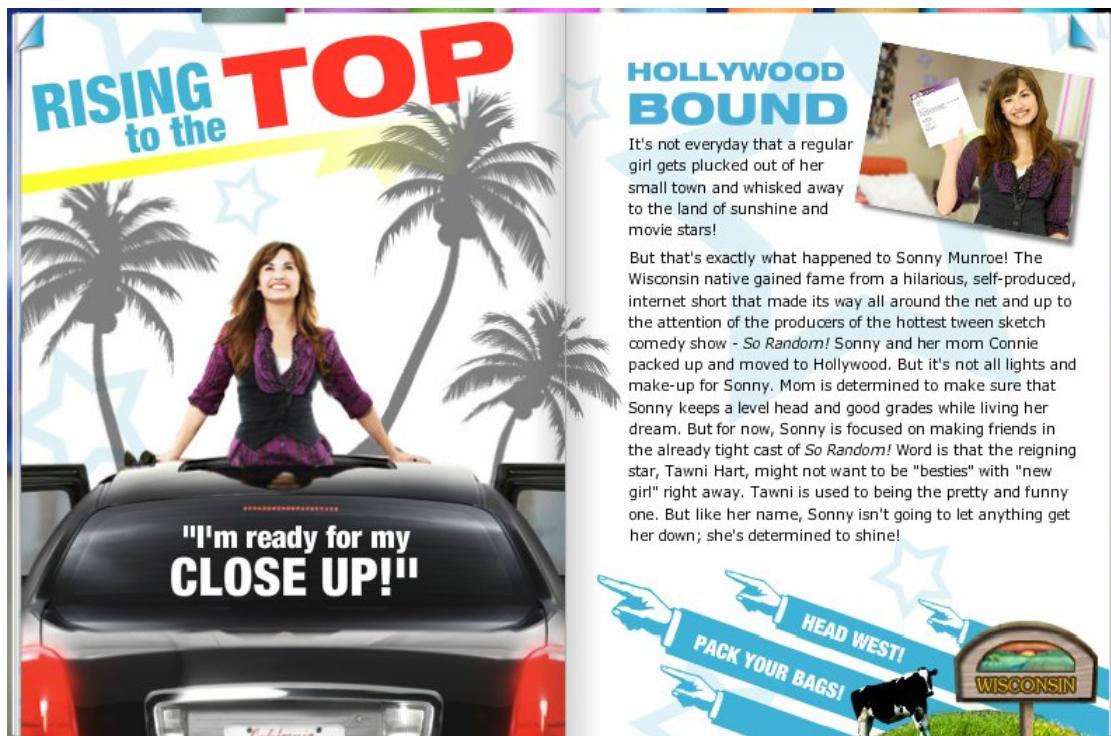


Figure 12: *Sonny with a Chance's Tween Weekly* magazine.³⁰³

Sonny's mother, Connie (Nancy McKeon), is given credit for keeping Sonny "grounded" and reminding her of the importance of authenticity ("Mom is determined to make sure that Sonny keeps a level head and good grades while living her dream."). Like Connie in *Camp Rock*, Sonny's mother passes down her own natural authenticity to Sonny; it is Connie who offers advice during moments in which Sonny can be seen to be taken in by the appeals of the "wrong" type of fame, and Connie reminds Sonny of her roots in Wisconsin³⁰⁴ (see for example series 1, episode 1).³⁰⁵

Sonny with a Chance and *Camp Rock* exemplify the Disney Channel's recent tendency to feature "ethnically ambiguous" leading characters,³⁰⁶ which reflects a broader cultural moment, according to Guzmán and Valdivia: "We live in an age when Latinidad, the state and process of being, becoming, and/or appearance Latina/o, is the 'It' ethnicity and style in contemporary, U.S. mainstream culture",³⁰⁷ a

³⁰³ <<http://www.disney.co.uk/DisneyChannel/supersites/sonnywithachance/tweenweekly/index.html>> [accessed 13 October 2011]

³⁰⁴ The fact that Sonny is from Wisconsin is highlighted numerous times during the series, and can be seen to play an authenticating function; place, identity and authenticity will be discussed in Chapter 5.

³⁰⁵ "Sketchy Beginnings", *Sonny with a Chance*, (Disney Channel, 8 February 2009)

³⁰⁶ See Valdivia, "Mixed Race on the Disney Channel: From *Johnny Tsunami* through *Lizzie McGuire* and Ending with *The Cheetah Girls*", in Mary Beltrán and Camilla Fojas, eds, *Mixed Race Hollywood*, (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2008).

³⁰⁷ Guzmán and Valdivia, "Brain, Brow, and Booty", pp. 205-6

trend similarly noted by others.³⁰⁸ Recent and current tween films and television shows fully participate in this trend, with some of the most popular franchises – the majority of which are products of the Disney Channel – featuring ensemble multi-cultural and multi-racial casts (*The Cheetah Girls* [2003, 2006, 2008], *High School Musical*, *Camp Rock*, *Lemonade Mouth*), and many including leading Latina characters, with Demi Lovato and Selena Gomez featuring prominently across the texts (Lovato in *Camp Rock*, *Sonny with a Chance*, *Princess Protection Programme*, and Gomez in *Another Cinderella Story*, *Wizards of Waverley Place* [Disney Channel, 2007-2012] and *Princess Protection Programme*). As observed by Valdivia, Disney's broad reach contributes to the national imaginary, and mixed race within Disney (which has otherwise been an upholder of whiteness) is a recent phenomenon.³⁰⁹ She argues that the Disney Channel is currently in a moment of the “ambiguously brown image” in its output of media texts, defined by ambiguity and hybridity.³¹⁰ The commodification of Latinidad and the use of the figure of the Latina within popular culture to market commodities has been noted;³¹¹ whilst this is true and still ongoing, the (primarily Disney) narratives of celebrity within tween popular culture in the current context should not be dismissed for their purely economical use of Latina and other multi-cultural and multi-racial protagonists. It seems that Disney's recent shift towards multi-ethnicity in its representations, rather than a full move towards full-non-white-race, highlights the stronghold of the brand's image as the provider of “wholesome”, “old-fashioned” family entertainment, with the conservative dominant ideology of whiteness still resonant. The brand's ingrained whiteness cannot be simply erased. More significantly, it seems that by depicting multi-ethnic casts, and in particular leading Latinas making the successful transition into celebrity, tween popular culture promotes the ideology that the American Dream – signified through the narrative of “becoming”-celebrity – is as relevant and open to everyone as ever. Moreover, the Latina's apparent “inherent” authenticity works to reinforce tween popular culture's teaching of the investment in authenticity to the tween girl growing up female.

³⁰⁸ See for example Valdivia, “Is Penélope to J. Lo as Culture is to Nature?: Eurocentric Approaches to ‘Latin’ Beauties”, in Mendible, ed., *From Bananas to Buttocks*, p. 129; Beltrán, *Latina/o Star in U.S. Eyes*, p. 154.

³⁰⁹ Valdivia, “Mixed Race on the Disney Channel”, pp. 269-71

³¹⁰ Ibid., p. 272

³¹¹ See for example Priscilla Peña Ovalle, *Dance and the Hollywood Latina: Race, Sex, and Stardom*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011), p. 1, p. 135, pp. 143-4.

The myth of the American Dream, embodied in the narrative of “becoming”-celebrity is particularly compelling in cultural constructions of tweenhood, evidenced in tween popular culture’s recent profusion of films and television programmes centred on celebrity and becoming famous. In particular the narrative of *becoming*-celebrity is central in tween popular culture’s articulation of the tween’s gendered, transitional *selfhood*. *Sonny with a Chance* epitomises this in its focus on “DIY celebrity”, to draw upon a phrase emerging in celebrity studies in recent years.³¹² Sonny’s entrepreneurial and creative initiative in the form of writing, filming and uploading to the internet a comedy sketch marks her as a successful neoliberal female subject. Sonny’s self-promotion and showcasing of her talents leads to her “discovery” and securing of a role in *So Random!* and ensuing celebrity – a narrative that is emphasised several times in both the television series by the characters themselves, and on the official Disney website and fictional magazine *Tween Weekly*. Further, Sonny successfully maintains her authenticity as her celebrity increases, solidifying her status as the ideal neoliberal girl. She exemplifies James Bennett’s argument that “the reward of celebrity itself, in exchange for the endeavours of self-enterprise and self-promotion, serves to act as a form of self-governance that is congruent with neo-liberal discourses of privatisation, personal responsibility and consumer choice.”³¹³ Sonny’s narrative of “becoming”-celebrity epitomises the Disney Channel’s recent trend to employ narratives of success and fame in order to promote – or rather endorse – neoliberal femininity as essential to tweenhood.³¹⁴

Furthermore, such television programmes and films can be seen to reflect the broader “‘demotic turn’” in celebrity, as conceptualised by Graeme Turner.³¹⁵ Thus, fitting in with the wider cultural discourse of “‘ordinariness’” and “‘celebrification’”,³¹⁶ of the contemporary moment, tween popular culture benefits from the wide-held acceptance, indeed *expectation*, for “ordinary” people to “celebrify” themselves across a range of media, by drawing upon the “authenticity” required in such forms of DIY celebrity, and teaching its importance to the tween consumer making her own transition into young womanhood. As this chapter (and

³¹² See for example Turner, *Understanding Celebrity*, and “The Mass Production of Celebrity: ‘Celetoids’, Reality TV and the ‘Demotic Turn’”, *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 9.2 (2006); and Bennett, *Television Personalities*.

³¹³ Bennett, *Television Personalities*, pp. 188-9

³¹⁴ As Chapter 5 demonstrates, *Hannah Montana*, too, exemplifies this strategy.

³¹⁵ Turner, *Understanding Celebrity*; “The Mass Production of Celebrity”; *Ordinary People*

³¹⁶ Turner, “The Mass Production of Celebrity”, pp. 154-6

earlier chapters) have demonstrated, “authenticity” is an “inherent” quality which needs to be brought to the surface and sustained. Paradoxically, this maintenance of “authenticity” in order to prove and uphold one’s status as an “achieved” celebrity requires hard work, an observation similarly made by Bennett.³¹⁷ The tween is taught, therefore, that in order to successfully “make it” (articulated through the metaphor of “becoming”-celebrity), one is required to learn the skills required of the ideal neoliberal feminine subject. Bennett articulates this very paradigm: DIY celebrity “intersect[s] with discourses of the entrepreneurial self that serve as a form of governmentality in order to encourage self- and collective-regulation as a form of empowerment.”³¹⁸ I would argue that this is claimed to be essential for the *girl* in the transitional stage of tweenhood. We are not to view the narratives of success and fame across tween popular culture as a reflection of a social reality in which the majority of tweens want to – or are at least encouraged to – become famous; rather, the texts should be seen as providing a pedagogic function in teaching the tween the importance of authenticity in developing one’s gendered identity. I call this the *celebrification of tween selfhood*. In fact, in many of the narratives, we see very little, if any, of the “discovery” process. For example, Sonny’s “break” has already been granted by the beginning of the series. Instead, the narrative focus is on the self-surveillance and hard work of *maintaining* one’s authenticity as one’s celebrity increases.

Each of the types of celebrity that I have discussed here are presented to the tween as a “choice”, as the lyrics to *Camp Rock*’s “Who Will I Be?” cited at the beginning of the chapter demonstrate. Mitchie sings: “How to choose/ Who to be/ Well let’s see/ There’s so many choices now”.³¹⁹ Thus, just as tween popular culture claims to offer the tween different options of femininity and feminism from which to choose in the development of their gendered identity, so too are “ascribed”, “attributed” and “achieved” celebrity, signified through princesshood, dancing, writing, singing, and acting, presented as valid “choices” in the cultivation of tween selfhood. Of course, the very notion that “ascribed” celebrity is a “choice” is impossible; regardless, it is presented as an option alongside the range of other celebrity types across tween popular culture’s narratives of success and fame. Whilst

³¹⁷ Bennett, *Television Personalities*, p. 174

³¹⁸ Ibid., p. 180

³¹⁹ Demi Lovato, “Who Will I Be?”, *Camp Rock* [on CD]

these celebrity types are offered as “choices” to the tween, as the analysis in this chapter has demonstrated “choice” becomes complicated – it is made clear to the tween that the only valid “option” in the tween’s fantasies of “becoming”-celebrity is that of “achieved” celebrity. Thus, again we see at work the rhetoric of choice as it is employed in tween popular culture’s constructions of femininity and feminism as Chapters 1 and 2 revealed: whilst the tween is claimed to be offered “choice”, the decision has already been made for them by the films and television programmes. Probyn refers to this process in women’s postfeminist media as “winking”, whereby images communicate that you (the consumer) think you are choosing them, but one knows the choice has already been made.³²⁰ The films and television programmes of tween popular culture are not as sophisticated in terms of their ironic “winking” as their adult women’s counterparts in broader postfeminist media culture. That is not to say that the types of celebrity offered are to be read as realistic and valid ambitions for the tween girl – they are still fantasies. It is the characteristics of selfhood required of the “appropriate choice” of “achieved” celebrity – that of authenticity, maintained by the self-governing neoliberal subject – that are to be read as realistic and valid. However, this chapter demonstrates, and is supported by Probyn’s observation, that these are not in fact “options”, they are predetermined by tween popular culture.

Probyn argues that the “choiceoisie” depends on historical understandings and constructions of women as unable to make up their minds and make choices; thus, the “choice” (whatever that may be) is made for them by popular culture.³²¹ One can see this paradigm at work in tween popular culture’s narratives of success and fame; thus, the texts effectively immerse tweens into a culture which paradoxically requires them to make “choices” in order to become “appropriately” feminine (therefore requiring them to be ideal neoliberal subjects), whilst making those very choices on behalf of the girls due to their “natural” inability to make up their minds. This prepares them for the consumption of media that continues to carry out this paradox in teen, and later adult women’s popular culture.

This sits uneasily with the lived reality of girls making the transition into young womanhood. In her interviews with British girls in higher-education, Budgeon found that all of the girls experienced pressures associated with having to *choose* at that particularly transitional moment in their development into young womanhood,

³²⁰ Probyn, “Choosing Choice”, p. 285

³²¹ Ibid., p. 288

and that making choices were heavily laden with value – they felt the requirement to make the “right” decision.³²² Tween popular claims to reflect such pressures of young feminine selfhood, whilst taking the real “choice” away from tweens themselves. Budgeon found when talking to actual girls that “Choice becomes normative in the sense that everyone is free to choose and so to do otherwise constitutes a personal failing.”³²³ This situation is articulated across the narratives of celebrity: to make the “wrong” choice renders the girl “unsuccessful”, relegated to the categories of “ascribed” or “attributed” celebrity. In this way, the tween is constructed as the epitome of the *reflexive self* in the postmodern era.³²⁴

According to tween popular culture’s narratives of celebrity, to “fail” at “achieved” celebrity means one has failed at revealing and maintaining one’s authenticity – and therefore failed at the ideal of the neoliberal girl. Of course, such a message is entirely contradictory given that celebrity is a discursive construction at odds with the notion of authenticity. Through the metaphor of celebrity, these films and television programmes articulate the contradictory – and quite frankly, difficult and unfair – lived social reality of girls in Western societies in a contemporary postfeminist and neoliberal context:

The narratives constructed by the young women in relation to their understanding of their life trajectories reveal a self that is a sovereign, self-authoring, independent person who is responsible for making choices that retain a relation of being truthful to oneself.³²⁵

Thus tween popular culture’s narratives of success and fame fulfil a pedagogic function in teaching the tween what is required of her in terms of the development of a successful neoliberal, gendered self, whilst delivering the – at times – harsh lessons of contemporary femininity in the palatable and familiar narrative of celebrity. As the next chapter discusses, “becoming”-woman is a difficult and contradictory process required of the girl; as such, guidance is often needed, and across tween popular culture, such guidance is offered by the *father*.

³²² Budgeon, *Choosing a Self*, p. 59

³²³ Ibid., p. 67

³²⁴ For an overview of selfhood in postmodernity, see the Introduction to the thesis. See for example Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*; Adams, *Self and Social Change*; and Kellner, “Popular Culture and the Construction of Postmodern Identities”.

³²⁵ Ibid., p. 75

CHAPTER 4:

NARRATIVES OF FATHER-DAUGHTER TRANSFORMATION

OK, life lesson: a lot of people think that the moment a parent lets go of their child is at the wedding – not me. [...] Truth is, *he* said goodbye years ago, the day *she* left home. The trouble starts here: college application season.³²⁶

The above excerpt details the first words spoken in *College Road Trip*. The film centres on intelligent and hard-working high school senior student Melanie (Raven-Symoné) as she looks forward to attending her chosen university. This opening dialogue is delivered in voice over by Melanie's father, James (Martin Lawrence), and is accompanied by footage of a father giving away his daughter to her groom on their wedding day. This "life lesson" is not merely about a parent letting go of a child; it is about a *father* letting go of his *daughter*. In his role as narrator, the film becomes as much about James's journey as his daughter Melanie grows up, as it is about hers.

A brief internet survey of parenting guides for fathers of daughters reveals a vast number of books published in the last decade, with titles including *What a Daughter Needs from Her Dad*, *Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters*, *What Happened to My Little Girl?*, and *But Dad!: A Survival Guide for Single Fathers of Tween and Teen Daughters*.³²⁷ Such guides suggest that first, girls "naturally" require guidance in their journey to "becoming" a young woman; and second, that fathers are the appropriate figures to provide that guidance. Furthermore, there is a suggestion, particularly in the title *Strong Father, Strong Daughters* and in the opening to *College Road Trip*, that fathers themselves are in a state of transition or transformation – particularly in a cultural context of perceived changing of gender roles – as they learn how to parent their teenage daughters and guide them towards "appropriate" femininity; in these examples the father *needs* the daughter just as much as she "needs" him.

Whilst this chapter set out to examine the onscreen cross-generational relationship between parents and their t(w)een children in tween narratives that centre

³²⁶ My emphasis.

³²⁷ Michael Farris, *What a Daughter Needs from Her Dad: How a Man Prepares His Daughter for Life*, (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2004); Meg Meeker, *Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters: 10 Secrets Every Father Should Know*, (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2006); Nancy Rue and Jim Rue, *What Happened to My Little Girl?: Dad's Ultimate Guide to His Tween Daughter*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011); Gretchen Gross and Patricia Livingston, *But Dad!: A Survival Guide for Single Fathers of Tween and Teen Daughters*, (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2012)

on the parent-child relationship, it soon became apparent that the vast majority of the texts I was analysing are not only about the parent-child relationship, but are specifically about the *father*-child relationship – in particular the *father-daughter* relationship. Thus, whilst my initial framework of generational theory still proves useful in examining the father-daughter dynamic (in each case, a Generation X parent and a Millennial child), this only helps explore this relationship in part; the specifically *gendered* paradigm requires contextual analysis that places the films in a post-1980s discourse in which socio-cultural emphasis is placed on childhood and parenting. Furthermore, a framework of studies of onscreen masculinity and feminist critiques of the “backlash” rhetoric in culture are drawn upon.

This chapter identifies and explores two prominent forms of the father-daughter relationship found across tween popular culture: that of the “irresponsible”, uninterested father who must change in order to become the required caring, responsible parent; and that of the overprotective, controlling father who must learn to loosen his authority over his daughter and trust her as a young adult in making the transition into womanhood. As the analyses reveal, both paradigms require the father to undergo a *transformation*, not unlike the girl’s makeover discussed in Chapter 1. Like the girl, the father’s transformation requires that he becomes “authentic” in his gendered self; according to tween popular culture, “authentic” adult masculinity is defined by *fatherhood*. More specifically, the transformation is enabled through a realisation of the power of raising a daughter. This chapter argues that there is a mutual dependency between the father and daughter, with each requiring the other in their respective transformations and ultimate achievement of an “authentic” self.

A number of tween narratives depict a Generation X parent who must learn how to become an “appropriate” parent to a Millennial child. *The Game Plan* centres on famous and successful NFL football player Joe Kingman (Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson), who enjoys a lavish bachelor lifestyle hosting parties in his flashy apartment attended by other celebrity football players, and has casual relationships with a number of women. Unaware that he is a father, his eight-year-old daughter Peyton, from a previous relationship, arrives at his apartment claiming that he must look after her whilst her mother is in Africa carrying out aid work. The opening credits demonstrate that Joe is not ready for parenthood: the film opens with a montage featuring shots of a very phallic Boston skyline and incredibly masculine football stadium. Superimposed over these images are chalk-board style football game

plans, which then become doodled over by what appear to be a young girl's crayon drawings of flowers, animals and hearts. The montage also features shots of Joe's personal belongings in his apartment, all of which are related to his career and suggest his (happily) single status: photographs of himself as a young football player, and numerous trophies, are all set against black, silver and grey minimalist, hard shiny surfaces. Not only is there currently no space for parenthood in his life, but more specifically, it is made clear that there is no space for commitment to femininity at this point in Joe's life, highlighted through the masculine imagery in the credit montage. His lifestyle is unsuitable for raising a young daughter, and the "invasion" or "contamination" of the little girl's drawings during this credit sequence suggest that for Joe, at this time in his life, being a parent – and making a commitment to a woman or girl – is an inconvenience:



Figure 13: The "contamination" of daughterhood in the bachelor lifestyle, in *The Game Plan*.

Similarly, Disney Channel Original Movie *Dadnapped* centres on the father-daughter relationship of "ordinary" teenage girl Melissa (Emily Osment), and her famous novelist father Neal Morris (George Newbern). Neal is the author of a series of very popular comic books about a male teenage spy called Tripp Zoome, which have a large fan community. Melissa's parents are divorced and she lives with her mother, but has plans for a "daddy-daughter trip" with Neal. However, for fear of missing out on an opportunity to profit from and further promote his Tripp Zoome franchise (and by extension his celebrity status), Neal sacrifices the opportunity to bond with his daughter and satisfy her emotional wellbeing, diverting the "daddy-daughter" camping trip by stopping at a Tripp Zoome convention.

During *The Game Plan*'s opening scene of a lavish party in Joe's apartment, he is shown to fully enjoy his bachelor and career-oriented lifestyle, surrounded by his celebrity team mates and attractive single women. As each woman leaves the party, Joe presents them with a Chanel gift bag from a cupboard of many identical bags, further emphasising his current lack of commitment to a single female. However, when expressing his satisfaction with his lifestyle to his family-oriented team mate Travis (Morris Chestnut), Travis tells him: "Oh, you call this 'life'? That ain't life, Joe". Travis then leaves at the end of the party, at which point Joe is left alone in a large, quiet apartment. Like Neal in *Dadnapped*, Joe's self-definition of his masculinity is based on celebrity and image, not the "internal qualities once said to embody manhood",³²⁸ to draw upon Faludi's words.

Joe and Neal can be seen to represent ageing members of Generation X, who made the transition from adolescence to young adulthood during a period of socio-political conservatism in the 1980s, surrounded by a cultural investment in materialism brought about by the context of Reaganomics. They came of age into a world filled with Baby Boomer yuppies, and encouragement from their popular culture – "The golden age of teenage movies" – to earn money and consume.³²⁹ However, the waning national support for the Reagan Administration's political agenda later in the decade, fuelled further by the stock market crash in 1987, and combined with the prospect that Generation X would have to work to an older age than previous generations, created a generational attitude amongst Generation X of individualism and cynicism.³³⁰ Joe and Neal can be read then as teenagers of the 1980s still affected by the era's individualism and materialism as a way of coping with the decade's altered economic climate and the broader socio-cultural turn from liberalism to conservatism. *The Game Plan* deems Joe's lifestyle choice and values of

³²⁸ Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, (New York, NY: Perennial, 1999), p. 9; Estella Tincknell, *Mediating the Family: Gender, Culture and Representation*, (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005), p. 35

³²⁹ Jonathan Bernstein, *Pretty in Pink: The Golden Age of Teenage Movies*, (New York, NY: St. Martin's Griffin, 1997). The onscreen display of Generation X teenagers' economic participation can be seen across the canon of 1980s teen films, from *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* (1982) to *Risky Business* (1983). For an overview of the era's "consumerism and national obsession with wealth, social status, and material wealth", and how it "permeated the value system of [...] youth" through the decade's teen films, see Stephen Topiano, *Rebels & Chicks: A History of the Hollywood Teen Movie*, (New York, NY: Back Stage Books, 2006), p. 170.

³³⁰ See Margot Hornblower, "Great Xpectations", *Time*, 9 June 1997, <<http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,986481,00.html>> [accessed 28 December 2007]; and David M. Gross, and Sophfronia Scott, "Proceeding With Caution", *Time*, 16 July 1990, <www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,970634,00.html> [accessed 25 October 10 2007].

individual success and wealth over a family as “wrong”. Unlike his team mate Travis, who is regularly shown enjoying the company of his wife and children even during football events, and who is confident and comfortable with expressing feelings and emotions (he is therefore “sensitive”), Joe’s masculinity before Peyton’s arrival is claimed by the film to be “inauthentic”. Whilst Joe *thinks*, or *claims* that he is satisfied with his life, in particular the accomplishments and achievements of his football career as signified through the large apartment filled with expensive material objects and his trophies and medals, “true” satisfaction and therefore achievement of manhood (according to the film) comes from having a family, and more specifically raising a daughter.

Joe and Neal can be understood as individualistic members of Generation X, who, after experiencing a disillusioned entry into adulthood, focus their attentions on maintaining the success they have found as an NFL football player and comic book author (and founder of a multi-media franchise), rather than on their familial relationships. Joanne Sujansky and Jan Ferri-Reed argue that “Clearly, the course of world history during the 1980s proved to Generation X that neither security nor safety could be taken for granted, and that institutions once thought impregnable could be brought down, sometimes in ruin.”³³¹ Not only do Joe and Neal embody the cynicism towards traditional notions of the family prominent in cultural depictions of Generation X, but he can also be seen to represent the “problem” of manhood in post-war America, as conceptualised by Faludi. She argues that whereas American manhood before the Second World War was defined by “[t]he frontier, the enemy, the institutions of brotherhood, the women in need of protection”,³³² manhood of the years and decades following the war (beginning with the Baby Boomers’ childhood) has been marked by “betrayals, losses, and disillusionments” of “the promise [of] a mission to manhood”.³³³ Now, Faludi suggests, the contemporary context is “Constructed around celebrity and image, glamour and entertainment, marketing and consumerism”, in which it is the man’s quest to sell his self and in which masculinity is to be *displayed* on the surface rather than *demonstrated* – that is, manhood based on

³³¹ Joanne Sujansky and Jan Ferri-Reed, *Keeping the Millennials: Why Companies are Losing Billions in Turnover to This Generation – and What to Do About It*, (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2009), p. 74

³³² Faludi, Susan, *Stiffed*, p. 30

³³³ Ibid., p. 27, p. 26

vanity.³³⁴ Arguably Joe and Neal exemplify what was seen in the 1970s as a trend of “cultural narcissism” as discussed by Tyler, following a belief that the “classical civic republican values of masculine brotherhood, fraternity and sacrifice had been undermined by an incremental rise in narcissism within the American populace.”³³⁵ Very much targeted towards the women’s liberation movement (and other groups fighting for social equality), the claims of cultural narcissism levelled at Baby Boomers can be extended to indict the generation’s turning away from such traditional, conservative social structures as “the family” and causing a breakdown in a once stable notion of the married husband and wife with children. With the “traditional” family not as compulsory as it had been before the Baby Boomers’ remodelling of social institutions, and the tougher economic climate, Generation X, to which Joe and Neal belong, could effectively be seen to perpetuate the “cultural narcissism” of the previous decade.³³⁶

Whilst Joe represents Generation X as individualistic and materialistic, this is not only due to Generation X’s experience of an unstable and insecure socio-political and economic adolescence and young adulthood. Joe’s individualist lifestyle might also be explained in part by Generation X’s experience of a changing familial context.³³⁷ Journalists, cultural commentators and social historians tend to understand some of the defining traits of Generation X’s youth being first that they were the children of divorce (it is widely reported that 40 per cent of these children lived in single-parent homes), and second that they were “latchkey kids”.³³⁸ Gross and Scott claim that members of Generation X grew up to be sceptical of the institution of marriage, with many actively choosing not to marry.³³⁹ Thus, by viewing Generation X in the way so widely depicted in the media, as the children of “broken families” and having to raise themselves, it is easy to assume that a number of members of Generation X would make the decision not to marry or start a family, due to a loss of

³³⁴ Ibid., p. 35

³³⁵ Tyler, “From ‘The Me Decade’ to ‘The Me Millennium’: The Cultural History of Narcissism”, *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 10.3 (2007), p. 347

³³⁶ Stephanie Coontz notes the socio-cultural belief by the end of the 1980s that the previous two decades had eroded civic commitment and social responsibility in the US, and was seen to be the “age of excess” and “selfishness”, see *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*, (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1992), p. 93.

³³⁷ Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation*, (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2000), p. 123

³³⁸ Hornblower, “Great Xpectations”; Gross and Scott, “Proceeding With Caution”; Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, p. 44; David Lipsky and Alexander Abrams, *Late Bloomers: Coming of Age in Today’s America: The Right Place at the Wrong Time*, (New York, NY: Times Books, 1994), pp. 97-8

³³⁹ Gross and Scott, “Proceeding With Caution”

faith in the traditional nuclear family and traditional childhood. This is certainly how the situation is presented in the broader “backlash” commentary regarding attitudes towards marriage and family in the era following the women’s liberation movement. As members of Generation X, cultural commentators David Lipsky and Alexander Abrams say that they learnt from their childhood that “Staying married didn’t work. Divorcing doesn’t much work. Thanks for the tips.”³⁴⁰ Thus, Joe can be seen to be actively avoiding marriage and raising children due to a cynicism in these institutions – evident in his pleasure and enjoyment found in his casual heterosexual relationships and hedonistic lifestyle. In this way, *The Game Plan* can be seen as a “backlash” text of broader postfeminist media.

Peyton is presented to be more mature and responsible than Joe, as is *Dadnapped*’s Melissa: Peyton refuses to ride in his two-seater, incredibly fast sports car; as a safety precaution Joe gives her a football helmet to wear. Whilst they practice football and ballet in his home gym, Joe has a tantrum, unable to share his towel with Peyton. Joe’s attempts to look after Peyton are unsuccessful: he is unable to feed her suitably, firstly offering her a protein shake, then finally serving her a huge plate of spaghetti, assuming she requires the same diet as an adult male athlete; he orders her not to touch anything in the kitchen to avoid leaving finger prints on his spotless, shiny surfaces. Unwilling to rearrange his schedule or arrange child care, he takes Peyton with him to football practice and publicity duties. Such instances highlight the difficulties faced by real single mothers, yet this is not acknowledged or commented upon by the narrative; instead, the focus remains on valorising Joe’s transformation of masculinity through fatherhood. Finally, Joe takes Peyton to his restaurant’s opening night, and after hours of socialising with celebrities, having his photograph taken, and speaking to the press, he leaves the restaurant, forgetting Peyton. This incident is covered in the tabloids the next day, with claims that Joe is a “BAD DAD”. As these scenes demonstrate, the film claims that Joe has not yet reached manhood – he has not achieved “true” masculinity. Although at times she demonstrates more responsibility than her father, Peyton is a young child who *depends* on an adult. During his first few days of fatherhood, Joe is unable provide that care and welfare; in effect, he is still a child himself.³⁴¹

³⁴⁰ Lipsky and Abrams, *Late Bloomers*, p. 101

³⁴¹ A point for comparison here is the male “body-switch” or “age reversal” films of the 1980s such as *Big* (1988) and *Vice Versa* (1988) in which the boy child is forced into and becoming a man and

Joe's publicist, Stella, works to improve Joe's star image and ensure he is portrayed in the media as a "good" father, stating "I'm the janitor, Joe's the mop, and Peyton's the mess". The construction of Joe as family-oriented includes replacing his sports car with a family-friendly people-carrier, featuring bumper stickers reading "Have you hugged your child today?" and "Kids rock!", and a licence plate that reads "#1 Dad". Such attempts to construct Joe as being invested in parenthood and the safety and well-being of his daughter can be understood to belong to a context of a move back towards "traditional family values" and the "kinderpolitics"³⁴² of the mid-1980s onwards. In the 1990s, socio-political issues were framed by a focus on childhood and could be seen to draw upon the figure of the child.³⁴³

Coontz notes that "According to many commentators, 'the root cause' of problems Americans face as the twentieth century draws to a close is an 'epidemic of family breakdown'."³⁴⁴ This "'crisis of the family'"³⁴⁵ refers to single-parent families (unwed and divorced) and working mothers, which was both a gain of second-wave feminism and had become a necessity in the economic context of Generation X's childhood. As Coontz states, "strengthened family ties and values are put forward as the primary solution to America's economic difficulties and cultural malaise."³⁴⁶ Thus, the apparent neglect of "traditional" childhood brought about by working parents, the more social acceptability of divorce, combined with waning belief in the Reagan administration's individualist and materialist ideologies, brought about a call to return to "traditional family values" and a re-investment in childhood.³⁴⁷

learning the values of the ideal "new man" through a brief period living in an adult man's body. This paradigm can be seen in more recent incarnations including *17 Again* (2009) and *The Change-Up* (2011) in which the irresponsible and immature adult male must learn to become caring and family-oriented. For a discussion of the age-reversal films of the 1980s in a context of a conservative political return to family values, see Marsha Kinder, "Back to the Future in the 80s with Fathers, Sons, Supermen & Peewees, Gorillas & Toons", *Film Quarterly* 42.4 (1989).

³⁴² For examples of the use of this term, see Kenneth T. Walsh, Warren Cohen, Dana Hawkins, Dorian Friedman, David Whitman and Ted Gest, "Kinderpolitics '96: Candidates Focus on Children's Issues, But Will It Really Help the Kids?", *U.S. News & World Report*, 8 September 1996, <http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/960916/archive_035231.htm> accessed [12 October 2012]; Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, p. 13, pp. 97-120.

³⁴³ See Henry Jenkins, "Introduction: Childhood Innocence and Other Modern Myths", in Henry Jenkins, ed., *The Children's Culture Reader*, (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1998).

³⁴⁴ Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, p. 256

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ See Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, pp. 94-5; and Susan J. Douglas and Meredith W. Michaels, *The Mommy Myth: The Idealization of Motherhood and How It Has Undermined Women*, (New York, NY: Free Press, 2004), p. 204, p. 228.

More specifically, *The Game Plan* and *Dadnapped* are part of the broader cultural moment in which “Fatherhood narratives have become such an increasingly, and at times, overwhelmingly, omnipresent feature of Hollywood cinema”,³⁴⁸ a trend recognised by academics including Hannah Hamad, Estella Tincknell and Stella Bruzzi.³⁴⁹ In particular, these films, *College Road Trip* and *Picture This* can be seen to epitomise the current context in which, to quote Hamad, “fatherhood is held up and valorised as the defining characteristic of masculinity in contemporary postfeminist media culture.”³⁵⁰ This characteristic is particularly visible in tween popular culture, as evidenced by the examples discussed in this chapter and by those in Chapter 2, including *Princess Protection Programme* and *Sydney White*, which typify the cycle of teen “princess” or fairy-tale films featuring single (widowed) fathers of teenage girls. The ideological function of these onscreen father-daughter relationships is to conservatively undermine the advances made by second-wave feminism and call for a return to a “traditional” formulation of the family, headed by the patriarch. This is an argument similarly presented and central to Hamad’s and Fitzgerald’s theses, which explore postfeminist fatherhood and stardom, and cultural constructions of lone motherhood, respectively.³⁵¹ Furthermore, the centrality of the father-daughter relationship to tween popular culture, depicted using the widowed father and teenage daughter, demonstrates its ability to support and perpetuate the requirement for the tween to successfully become the “appropriately” feminine subject of neoliberalism, the importance and process of which in these cases, must be taught by the *father*. The power of raising a daughter for the single father is valorised in these narratives; the single father’s journey of raising a teenage daughter in these narratives is shown to be transformative to the father’s sense of self. That is, by guiding his daughter in her own “becoming” as she transitions into young womanhood, developing a sense of a gendered self, the father realises and develops his *own* “true” self. Indeed, the hyper-gendered cultural construction of tweenhood requires the father to reach his potential as a caring, nurturing figure, whilst maintaining his position as the family patriarch.

³⁴⁸ Hannah Hamad, Review: “*Bringing Up Daddy: Fatherhood and Masculinity in Post-War Hollywood* by Stella Bruzzi”, *Film Quarterly* 61.1 (2007), p. 77

³⁴⁹ Hamad, *Postfeminist Fatherhood and Contemporary Hollywood Stardom*, (PhD Thesis, University of East Anglia, 2008); Tincknell, *Mediating the Family*; Stella Bruzzi, *Bringing Up Daddy: Fatherhood and Masculinity in Post-War Hollywood*, (London: BFI, 2005)

³⁵⁰ Hamad, *Postfeminist Fatherhood and Contemporary Hollywood Stardom*, p. 9

³⁵¹ Fitzgerald, *Negotiating Lone Motherhood*

When a girlfriend arrives at Joe's apartment, and Joe prepares for his date, Peyton becomes jealous that he is prioritising the young woman over her. She confronts him, telling him that her mother called him "selfish" – effectively criticising Joe for his Generation X flaws. Thus, before the transformation in masculinity brought about by the power of his daughter, Joe – like Neal of *Dadnapped* – exemplifies the narcissism of the 1970s onwards. Tyler notes that cultural commentators of the 1970s were concerned about "a crisis of traditional forms of authority – the erosion of duty and responsibility, the decline of the patriarchal family and the rise of self-gratification, sexual indulgence and moral agnosticism", all of which Joe is guilty, as demonstrated in the film's opening scenes. When accused by Peyton of selfishness, Joe has in fact made considerable improvements at this point in his journey into parenthood. It is revealed that Peyton lied about being sent to stay with Joe by her mother, and that she had been living with her aunt (Paige Turco) – her guardian – since her mother passed away, and her aunt arrives to take her back home. Joe proves that he has successfully "fixed" his Generation X flaws and become an appropriate parent, invested in family values and childhood, arguing with Peyton's aunt that "Peyton needs her father. She needs me".³⁵² Once Peyton has left, Joe becomes depressed and is unable to perform well in his career. Since she has been taken away from him, her not being there is a distraction for him – a reversal of his previous reaction to taking on the role as her parent at the beginning of the narrative. This proves the conservative, traditionalist view that investing in the institution of the family and choosing to raise a child improves his sense of self, and is the "right"

³⁵² Joe physically demonstrates that he has successfully achieved "true" masculinity earlier in the narrative, when he performs on stage alongside Peyton and her fellow ballet schoolmates, as punishment for his previous derogatory and sexist attitude towards the dance form. His large, muscular body is juxtaposed with his graceful movements and accompanying classical music and "magical" scenery. In this scene, Joe can be seen to prove his ability to change his masculinity, as argued by Susan Jeffords with regards to the filmic heroes of the 1990s whose bodies were partly to blame for their previous abandonment of their feelings and families. She states that "The body that he thought was 'his', the body he had been taught to value as fulfilling some version of a masculine heroic ideal – suddenly that body became transformed into a separate entity that was betraying the true internal feelings of the man it contained." Joe uses his strong, athletic body to bring to the surface his "true" masculinity and discover and reveal his emotions; see Susan Jeffords, "The Big Switch: Hollywood Masculinity in the Nineties", in Jim Collins, Hilary Radner and Ava Preacher, eds, *Film Theory Goes to the Movies*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 1993), p. 201. It is significant to note that in several family and children's films of the early twenty-first century, the role of the previously "inappropriately" masculine adult male who becomes "kinder" and "gentler", is played by large, muscular actors known for their roles as wrestlers and action heroes, including Dwayne Johnson here and in *Tooth Fairy* (2010), and Vin Diesel in *The Pacifier* (2005) – both of which are Disney films. Similarly, *College Road Trip*'s James is played by Martin Lawrence, known for his role as a narcotics detective in the action film *Bad Boys* (1995, 2003).

lifestyle path to choose. More specifically, this narrative demonstrates the transformative power of raising a daughter for contemporary masculinity. Peyton's absence affects Joe's self-realisation and puts into effect his decision to change and ultimately arrive at accomplished masculinity, and more importantly (or indeed, defined by), fatherhood. This narrative epitomises those found across tween popular culture in which the (single) father is guided in improving his masculinity and becoming a better father, largely through addressing his selfishness and narcissism, by the power of raising a teenage (or in the case of *The Game Plan*, a tween) daughter. As argued in Chapters 1 and 2, tween popular culture claims that "appropriate" femininity is largely defined by authenticity – that is, the girl's maintenance of a "true" self and investment in her roles as daughter and friend. In effect, the ideal girl (whom our leading girls successfully prove they are by the narratives' close) is the antithesis to the selfish narcissist. Thus, the leading girl of tween popular culture is the ideal motivator in the father's self-transformation.

By depicting *single* fathers of teenage daughters, such narratives in tween popular culture work to emphasise that the total responsibility for the daughter's wellbeing – that is the entire emotional, physical, moral and financial responsibility (just to name a few) – lies with the father. The necessary ideological impact of the valorised father would not occur if the parent-child conflict was to be depicted in narratives featuring *two* parents; as such, across tween popular culture one finds that the mother is often "dispensed" with. By putting all responsibility for the daughter onto the father, narratives such as *The Game Plan* and *Dadnapped* continue a cultural backlash from the 1980s against second-wave feminism's advancements, proclaiming that men are "in crisis". Following the women's liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s, according to culture at least, men were perceived to be in trouble, with many of their privileges and their overall social position being eroded and undermined.³⁵³ In response to this "crisis" of masculinity, the "new man" emerged from the "men's movement" of the 1980s – a movement which can be seen to make up the broader cultural "backlash" against second-wave feminism at the time. This "new man" was constructed as being more in touch with and expressive of his emotions and playing more of a hands-on role in the family.³⁵⁴ Tween popular culture of the twenty-first century, then, through narratives of "irresponsible" fathers of

³⁵³ See for example Faludi, *Stiffed*, p. 55.

³⁵⁴ See for example Ticknell, *Mediating the Family*, pp. 56-9; see also Jeffords, "The Big Switch".

teenage daughters, works to reassert and perpetuate the “men in crisis”/“new man” model of the post-feminist (and here I use “post” feminism to suggest a socio-cultural period after the height of the second-wave, rather than to suggest we have moved past feminism altogether) context.

Whilst Peyton had been receiving the love, care and welfare she needed from her aunt – her legal guardian – the narrative ends with a particularly anti-feminist move to remove the replacement mother figure (after the narrative has already removed the original mother) and claim that “naturally” the best – indeed, the “right” and “proper” – parental figure for Peyton is her biological father. Regardless of the fact that Peyton’s aunt was able to provide physical, emotional and financial care that she needs, and knows her better than Joe could, following his discovery of and brief period of parenting his daughter, he ultimately secures custody (after a brief conversation with Peyton’s aunt who is quickly persuaded). He forms a new family, with the mother role being fulfilled by Peyton’s ballet teacher with whom Joe has begun to develop a relationship. The conclusion to the narrative effectively undermines the opinion and wish of the deceased mother, who had chosen her sister to be Peyton’s guardian. Joe not only “fixes” his previous selfish flaw, he works to eradicate the cultural narcissism feared by conservative cultural commentators, by investing in and rebuilding the institution of the family, and by eliminating the mother figure (who we are led to believe is selfish and narcissistic, not coming to find Peyton sooner and not putting up a fight to retain custody). This film, and so many of the texts that make up tween popular culture, continue the backlash in popular culture against the advances of feminism, which has been carried out since the late 1970s.

Joe, *Dadnapped*’s Neal, and other single fathers of teenage daughters in tween popular culture, can be seen to continue a trend recognised by Susan Jeffords regarding Hollywood constructions of masculinity in the 1990s. She notes that whilst masculinity in popular culture in the previous decade was typified by the muscular, aggressive action hero (as discussed by many others), the 1990s saw “a ‘kinder, gentler’ U.S. manhood, one that is sensitive, generous, caring, and perhaps most importantly, capable of change.”³⁵⁵ Jeffords recognises that in those narratives in which the male hero must prove he can change himself to fit this new version of

³⁵⁵ Jeffords, “The Big Switch”, p. 197

manhood, the motivation and resolution for the change is provided by the *family*.³⁵⁶ Family certainly provides the motivation for Joe and Neal's change, but more specifically it is the *daughter* that causes them – and other fathers across tween popular culture – to change. The power of recognising and in fact guiding the daughter in her “becoming” a young woman (indeed, realising that the daughter *needs* him to help her in this process) brings about the father's change and ultimate accomplishment of “appropriate” masculinity and “appropriate” fatherhood.

So many of the films that make up the tween popular culture landscape allow for this change in masculinity to emerge because they use the *single* father family structure. Sarah Harwood³⁵⁷ and Tincknell both recognise the way in which films in the 1980s and 1990s removed the mother from their narratives in order to let the father to come to the forefront and be depicted in the way outlined by Jeffords earlier. Tincknell notes that such films of the 1980s onwards excluded mothers in order to represent nurturing fatherhood.³⁵⁸ Peyton's mother has passed away before the narrative begins in *The Game Plan*. Melissa's mother is alive and has a healthy relationship with her daughter in *Dadnapped*, but as the film's title suggests, the narrative does not require her. These films epitomise tween popular culture's reliance on the traditional fairy-tale's family structure in which the mother is removed to allow the daughter to *need* her father in the development of her gendered self, and simultaneously the father to *need* his daughter in the development of “appropriate” fatherhood. Of course this can be seen in the teen “princess” films discussed in Chapter 2, which are conscious modern-day renditions of classic fairy-tales, but this single-father family structure is seen across other non-explicit “princess” films, demonstrated here. Marjorie Worthington suggests that the motherless Disney animated films claim that the ideal young woman – “the true princess” – is she who grows up without a mother figure. She argues that the mother could want more for her daughter than the traditional role of subservient housewife, and so Disney removes this “threat” by removing the mother. Instead, the daughter is guided towards marriage and passive wifehood by a fairy godmother figure.³⁵⁹ This could be argued

³⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 200

³⁵⁷ Sarah Harwood, *Family Fictions: Representations of the Family in 1980s Hollywood Cinema*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), p. 103

³⁵⁸ Tincknell, *Mediating the Family*, p. 57

³⁵⁹ Marjorie Worthington, “The Motherless ‘Disney Princess’: Marketing Mothers out of the Picture”, in Anne C. Hall and Mardia J. Bishop, eds., *Mommy Angst: Motherhood in American Popular Culture*, (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2009), p. 41; see also Katherine N. Kinnick, who similarly notes Disney's

of the father-daughter narratives that make up such a significant proportion of the tween popular culture landscape. In those narratives in which the mother has passed away (always several years before the narrative begins), the teenage girls express – albeit briefly – an emotional yearning for her deceased mother, whom they “naturally” need at this transitory stage in their lives. However, whilst this is mentioned (usually within the opening voice over by the leading girl), the narratives move on with ease to demonstrate that ultimately the *father* provides the best guidance in the teenage girl’s “becoming” a young woman.

Not only do both *The Game Plan* and *Dadnapped* assert that the father is “naturally” the most important and most effective figure in a girl’s transition into young womanhood, and that raising a daughter has the power to transform his self to that of “authentic” masculinity; both films claim that the *daughter* knows and fully believes this fact too, going out of her way to find her biological father and persist in developing a relationship with him. Despite being just eight years old Peyton takes it upon herself to leave the safety and security of her guardian (and no doubt the emotional support following the death of her mother), to meet her biological father and build a relationship; and although she has been let down countless times by her father’s promises, Melissa maintains an emotional investment in their “daddy-daughter trip” which eventually pays off. Both girls inherently know that they *need* their fathers, regardless of their fathers’ previous lack of interest or ability to parent (or in Peyton’s case, the lack of knowledge of his status as a parent).

Whilst both Joe and Neal in *The Game Plan* and *Dadnapped* transform themselves – through fathering teenage daughters – to become “authentically” masculine, the films (and many others across tween popular culture) continue a problematic ideological paradigm identified by Jeffords regarding the “new men” Hollywood depictions of the 1980s and 1990s. She recognises that following the onscreen men’s transformations brought about by the return to family, they are not required to take responsibility for their past actions, and the narratives do not promise that these revised men will bring about changes to the broader social structure.³⁶⁰ In neither film is there any attempt to change the cultural perceptions of NFL football or the comic book industry to allow for a compatibility with “sensitive, generous,

tendency to put forth the message that “mom is replaceable, but a good father is essential, and single dads who fulfill this role are heroic”, in “Media Morality Tales and the Politics of Motherhood”, in Hall and Bishop, eds, *Mommy Angst*, p. 7.

³⁶⁰ Jeffords, “The Big Switch”, pp. 207-8

caring”³⁶¹ fatherhood – there is no overall challenge to the gendered cultural construction of these fields and of parenting.³⁶² The films brush over this dilemma, by revealing the daughter’s happiness and satisfaction towards her transformed father, by whom she can be guided in her “becoming”-woman. When the films show how emotionally fulfilled the daughter is, nothing else matters and the narratives come to a close. It is for this reason that tween popular culture so successfully allows for the promotion of masculine transformation and of the father as central in the girl’s development of a gendered sense of self. At the centre of all tween films and television programmes is the girl “becoming”-woman – her successful achievement of an “authentic” self and “appropriate” femininity is a priority. As long as the audience is given this required narrative ending, and witnesses the leading girl’s emotional fulfilment and satisfaction, which in turn allows the tween viewer to experience such happiness, the narratives avoid having to account for their problematic anti-feminist (indeed, anti-motherhood) stance.

Born into the context of “kinderpolitics”, the Millennial generation is widely understood to be “wanted”, “protected” and “worthy” by adults,³⁶³ according to the media. As the abundance of child advocacy literature noted in this thesis demonstrates, the figure of the Millennial tween exists in an ambiguous cultural context in which, according to such discourses, “Childrearing is a victim of the late twentieth century” as claimed by Joe L. Kincheloe,³⁶⁴ and “The traditional childhood genie is out of the bottle and is unable to return” according to Shirley R. Steinberg.³⁶⁵ Thus the tween is raised in an era in which great parental and wider socio-political and cultural efforts have been made to protect the child, and maintain “childhood innocence” – as Verhaagen states, “the Millennials arrived just as we realized what a mess we were making of our children.”³⁶⁶ This context cannot be considered apart from the “backlash” context of the 1980s onwards. Of course, as has been demonstrated here, and as Jenkins notes:

³⁶¹ Ibid., p. 197

³⁶² See also Hamad, who argues that representations of postfeminist fatherhood manage to uphold and keep intact masculine normativity, in *Postfeminist Fatherhood and Contemporary Hollywood Stardom*, p. 21.

³⁶³ Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, pp. 31-2

³⁶⁴ Joe L Kincheloe, “The New Childhood: Home Alone as a Way of Life”, in Jenkins, ed., *The Children’s Culture Reader*, p. 159

³⁶⁵ Steinberg, “Kinderculture: Mediating, Simulacralizing, and Pathologizing the New Childhood”, in Steinberg, ed., *Kinderculture*, p. 13

³⁶⁶ Verhaagen, *Parenting the Millennial Generation*, p. 2

This dominant conception of childhood innocence presumes that children exist in a space beyond, above, outside the political; we imagine them to be noncombatants whom we protect from the harsh realities of the adult world, including the mud splattering of partisan politics. Yet, in reality, almost every major political battle of the twentieth century has been fought on the backs of our children.³⁶⁷

As conceptualised by Philippe Ariès and James R. Kincaid³⁶⁸ and noted here by Jenkins, “The myth of childhood innocence depends on our ability to locate such a break, as well as upon our sense of nostalgic loss when we cross irreversibly into adulthood.”³⁶⁹ Therefore it must be understood that this turn back to an investment in “traditional” childhood relies on a mythic cultural construction of childhood, and not a naturally occurring stage in life (an argument Kincheloe, amongst many other child advocates, seems to propose).³⁷⁰ Although based on a myth, this investment still carries weight within the narratives in tween popular culture. Whilst, as I have demonstrated, a number of tween narratives feature Generation X parents facing up to their responsibility as parents, and altering their generational flaws in order to become “appropriate” parents, a number of narratives also depict *over-protective* parents, who have become *too* invested in the notion of protecting “traditional” childhood.

The epitome of the over-protective post-1980s parent is *College Road Trip*’s James, the father of high school senior year student Melanie. As the example at the beginning of this chapter suggests, James claims control of the narrative and of Melanie’s life choices. His opening voice-over reveals his military-style plan for choosing a university for Melanie, based on driving distance from home. Raising Melanie as a “protected” child in the era of “kinderpolitics”, James decided the ideal university for his daughter when she was a baby: Northwestern, near to their Chicago home. However, Melanie has taken it upon herself, with the help from school teachers and her mother’s support, to apply to Georgetown University in Washington to study law.

³⁶⁷ Jenkins, “Introduction”, p. 2

³⁶⁸ Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979 Edition); James R. Kincaid, *Child Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 1992)

³⁶⁹ Jenkins, “Introduction”, p. 14

³⁷⁰ Kincheloe, “The New Childhood”, pp. 170-1



Figure 14: James's "perfect college" for Melanie, based on its proximity to the parental home, in *College Road Trip*.

Strauss and Howe argue that in their mid-life, adults tend to raise the current youth generation in a way that is opposite to the way in which they were raised.³⁷¹ Generation X in adulthood, then, are overprotective of their children, aiming to parent them in a radically different way to how they saw themselves brought up.³⁷² *College Road Trip*'s James draws upon his skills as a police chief, using CCTV and a complex alarm system within the house to keep his children safe, and carries out a routine check of looking and waving out of various windows in the house when Melanie leaves to spend an evening with friends. Whilst James and his wife Michelle host dinner with a couple who are expecting a baby, Melanie claims that she is going to study with friends at the library. She is in fact going to attend a party, but knows her father wouldn't allow her to go if he knew the truth. James offers the couple advice on how to raise a child, using home video footage of Melanie as a young child, in which we see her learning to ride a bike whilst wearing so much protective wear that she is unable to move. He claims that he and Melanie have a very good relationship, yet the juxtaposing conversation between Melanie and her friends at the party, which is intercut with James's conversation with the expectant couple, reveals that his over-protection of her has affected trust between them:

James: [T]ake me and Melanie: we've got a solid relationship, there's nothing we can't talk about

Melanie: Are you kidding? I can't tell that man anything. I say left, he says right; I say defence attorney, he says pre-paid excuse-maker. Urgh, that man is so rigid!

James: I'm flexible. As Melanie's grown, I've grown with her.

³⁷¹ Strauss and Howe, *Generations*, p. 100

³⁷² Ibid., p. 415; see also Siegel et al., *The Great Tween Buying Machine*, pp. 16-17.

Melanie: He still treats me like a *kid*.³⁷³

Whilst at work, James overhears his colleagues reminiscing about their raucous college experiences, stating “Oh man, when I think back to half the stuff I did when I was in college, there’s no way I’m letting my kid out of my sight when she goes off to college – not a chance.” It is significant that James’s colleagues are discussing their control over their *daughters*, not sons, here. Narratives of overprotective parents across tween popular culture centre on the parent-*daughter* paradigm, supporting the broader cultural discourse which claims that *girls* are in “need” of protection, a “problem” which can be seen in education, health and policy, and covered in the news media and girlhood advocacy literature. When Melanie receives an opportunity for an interview at Georgetown – and in a reversal of the *Dadnapped* narrative – James plans a “daddy-daughter” road trip; Melanie had been offered a car ride with friends, but James will not let her travel without him being able to oversee her. It also allows him to divert the road trip to stop at Northwestern, in an attempt to persuade Melanie to pick his choice of university. In an attempt to keep Melanie within the boundaries of “innocent childhood”, he plays a personal CD compilation of songs from her childhood, the “Daddy-Daughter Groove Machine”.

To return to the film’s opening sequence, cited at the beginning of this chapter, the specifically *gendered* dynamic of the parent-child relationship in tween popular culture becomes particularly visible. James states that the wedding day is *not* the day when the father must let go of his daughter; rather he must relinquish the daughter years earlier, when she leaves home to study at university (assuming her economic and class status allows for this). However, by making this very connection between the two events in a daughter’s life, emphasised by the accompanying footage of a young woman’s wedding ceremony, the patriarchal power and control central to the wedding becomes central to the narrative of a girl leaving home for university. As observed by Lynda E. Boose:

[W]hat the wedding ceremony is really all about is not the union of bride and groom [...] but the separation of daughter from father. From the structural dynamics of the ceremonial script, it seems clear that Western tradition has always recognized the peculiar force of the daughter-father bond and the need to invoke special powers to sever it. Even while the ceremony is busy separating the

³⁷³ Emphasis in original dialogue.

bride and transferring her to her husband, however, it unavoidably memorializes and thus paradoxically reasserts all of the tensions that define the conjunction of daughter and father.³⁷⁴

Thus by introducing the narrative of Melanie's application to and eventual leaving for university with images of a father giving away his daughter to her new husband, and with the authorial voice accompanying this montage belonging to the onscreen father, the gendered power dynamic of the traditional institution of marriage and in particular the wedding itself, are transferred onto the onscreen father-daughter relationship in this film. James dreads the day when Melanie leaves home to study at university, because his possession of her as a part of his household will be relinquished. More specifically, however, Melanie's quest to leave for university is, in his eyes (as suggested by the opening wedding sequence) a precursor to her wedding day, at which point he loses complete patriarchal control over her. By attempting to control *which* university at which Melanie will study, James is trying to retain his patriarchal authority over his daughter. As Boose argues of the traditional wedding of previous centuries: "losing one's daughter through a transaction that the father controls circumvents her ability to ever choose another man over him, thus allowing him to retain vestiges of his primary claim."³⁷⁵

Similarly, *Picture This* centres on high school student Mandy (Ashley Tisdale), who lives with her widowed father, Tom (Kevin Pollack). In the opening voice over, she explains that "Mum died when I was four; and even though he loves me, dad had issues about letting go", accompanied by a shot of Tom knocking on her bedroom door and checking that she is there and she is safe. For her eighteenth birthday, she finally receives from her father a new mobile phone that she has been yearning for; however, he also bought himself the same phone so "Now we can stay in contact twenty-four-seven, it's going to be great!" The narrative follows Mandy as she creatively convinces her father via video calls that she is studying at her friend's house, when she is in fact travelling around various locations in the town with friends, and finally attends a party. Like James, Tom attempts to control Mandy's transition into young adulthood and wants to be able to constantly keep her under surveillance; as an architect, he has plans to build an apartment duplex to share with his daughter,

³⁷⁴ Lynda E Boose, "The Father's House and the Daughter in It: The Structures of Western Culture's Daughter-Father Relationship", in Lynda E. Boose and Betty S. Flowers, eds, *Daughters and Fathers*, (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), p. 68

³⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 31

to enable her to go to university and him to commute to work. His overprotectiveness is visualised in a sequence depicting Mandy's nightmare vision in which she is trapped inside the model of her father's special-built home, whilst her full-sized father watches her through the windows:



Figure 15: Mandy living inside her father's model father-daughter duplex in *Picture This*.



Figure 16: Tom keeping an eye on Mandy in the model duplex.

Picture This exemplifies a trend in teen films of the 1990s onwards, as noted by Kathleen Rowe Karlyn, in which “The mother’s absence [...] lays the foundation for an incest scenario that guides the daughter to learn the skills of femininity.”³⁷⁶ Of course there is no actual incestuous relationship here between the onscreen father and daughter; rather, the father’s “desire stops short of overstepping conventional boundaries [...] manifest[s] itself as an intense ‘overprotectiveness’ of or emotional involvement with the daughter”.³⁷⁷ In particular the teen “princess” films of tween popular culture, and more broadly the comedies and dramas featuring single fathers of teenage daughters, employ this “incest motif” by drawing upon the fairy-

³⁷⁶ Karlyn, “‘Too Close for Comfort’: *American Beauty* and the Incest Motif”, *Cinema Journal* 44.1 (2004), p. 84

³⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 70

tale's convention of the deceased mother. Tom's dealing with the loss of his wife is displaced as patriarchal control of his daughter. One of the cultural causes for the emergence of the father-daughter incest motif, is, according to Karlyn, "the crisis in masculinity",³⁷⁸ outlined earlier in this chapter. Like the other single fathers discussed here, Tom has had to alter his masculinity and transform his sense of a gendered self through single-handedly raising a daughter. This is "unnatural", and whilst the single (widowed) father raising a daughter is to be seen as "exceptional", it nonetheless "naturally" drives him to develop an inappropriately protective relationship with his daughter.

Like James in *College Road Trip*, Tom fears relinquishing control over his daughter as she quests to leave home – the house that he owns and in which he controls the rules. Boose observes that in the traditional model of the family headed by the patriarch, the daughter is the most expendable and least retainable member, due to her inability to extend the patrilineal history and because of her future role as wife to another patriarch. However, Boose argues, "To an institution that fears loss, the daughter's presence by definition constitutes a threat to its maintenance of closed boundaries."³⁷⁹ This fear is physically incarnated in Tom's designs for the father-daughter duplex, as demonstrated in the images above; this relationship can be seen as symptomatic of the socio-cultural construction of daughterhood within the patriarch-headed family, according to Boose: "For the father, the daughter's adolescence signifies a contradictory mélange of threats: loss, desire, and betrayal."³⁸⁰

The specifically gendered dynamic of the parent-child relationship in tween popular culture is particularly evident in *College Road Trip* when one considers that Melanie has a younger brother, Trey (Eshaya Draper), who receives no such concern from James. Preadolescent Trey spends his time carrying out scientific experiments, inventing things, and training a piglet to become an intelligent spy – all of which could put Trey in considerable danger; however, he is seen as a "quirky" and imaginative child and at times a nuisance to James, whose concern lies with Melanie who is aware and careful throughout the narrative never to put herself in any danger. Even when James finds Trey hiding in the car during the road trip, he does not punish him or show concern for any harm that he might have endured, instead continuing to

³⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 71

³⁷⁹ Boose, "The Father's House and the Daughter in It", p. 22, p. 31

³⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 35

focus his attentions on controlling Melanie's quest to leave home. This gendered disparity in James's fathering exemplifies Boose's observation regarding the father-daughter relationship in Western fiction:

In patriarchal myths, the daughter out of her correct locale sets up the threat of territorial invasion and usurpation of the father's cultural space. When the threat of insurrection comes from the son, it fits into the authorized structure of patriarchy. When it comes from the detached daughter, it engenders a vision of social inversion that must be vehemently quashed within the fiction.³⁸¹

Thus Trey requires no parental concern from James, for his rule-breaking and mischief is justified by his developing masculinity – he is “naturally” independent and adventurous.

James's final act of over-protection in *College Road Trip* sees him spy on Melanie at a sorority where he has agreed to let her stay for the night with friends. He assumes she is being attacked when he watches her silhouette dancing through bedroom curtains, and so he breaks into the bedroom. When he is discovered the next morning, he is arrested. Melanie refuses to bail him out, disappointed that her father is still unable to trust her as a young adult. James's mother releases him, and he expresses how he feels about Melanie growing up: “How am I supposed to know she's safe if she goes all the way to Washington?” His mother (Arnetia Walker) responds telling him of her own experience, revealing that she was very worried when James left for the army:

[...] but you had to follow your own path and I had to let you leave the nest. I wanted you home, everyday you were gone; but I had to trust you, I had to trust that you could take care of yourself, and I had to believe in you. So why can't you believe in her?

Following the advice from his mother, James learns to trust Melanie to become a young adult, and loosen his protection over her.

A similar conversation occurs between Tom and his sister (Maxim Roy) in *Picture This*, in which she confronts him about his idea to build the apartment for Mandy and himself: “Oh God, she's not a little girl anymore, she's a woman, Tom! [...] This is the time when you need to learn to let go, not hold on tighter.” Later, when watching home videos featuring Mandy learning to ride a bike as a young girl,

³⁸¹ Ibid., p. 34

he realises “I lost control of my daughter. I lost control of my life”, whilst watching footage of himself letting go of Mandy’s bicycle as she rides away. It is significant that in both *College Road Trip* and *Picture This* the life-changing advice comes from *women*, and more specifically, *mothers* (James’s own mother, and Tom’s sister and mother of his nephew, respectively). This works to further emphasise the “fact” that for men to fulfil the caring, nurturing role is “unnatural” and must be learned, in this case from those who *do* “naturally” fulfil that role – *mothers*. According to popular culture, for a man to fulfil the nurturing role is unnatural, and therefore *exceptional*; as Tincknell observes of 1990s filmic depictions of fatherhood, unlike “natural” and therefore unexciting motherhood, fatherhood provides “a heroic rediscovery of the self.”³⁸² When Mandy returns home, he apologises, telling her “I’m so sorry about being paranoid and overbearing and ridiculous”, admitting he was “a control freak”. Thus both *College Road Trip* and *Picture This* reveal that an over-investment in the “kinderpolitics” of a post-Generation X childhood does not provide “appropriate” parenting; in particular to be a possessive, jealous father to the teenage daughter will inevitably create generational conflict and affect the father-daughter relationship, which “should” be one of closeness and mutual dependency. Furthermore, this film exemplifies the specifically gendered dynamic of many father-daughter relationships found across tween popular culture. With the fairy-tale narrative-style removal of the mother by death before the film begins allowing for Karlyn’s “incest motif” to play out, Tom avoids punishment for his controlling behaviour over Mandy. As Karlyn argues:

As men claim their right to “act out” and girls to “act bad”, incest provides a discourse, an established set of conventions for examining – and usually reasserting – male authority perceived to be under siege. [...] Incest provides a narrative structure [...] that ideologically inverts the social realities of white male privilege. This structure redirects sympathy toward beleaguered midlife heroes by portraying them as victims of unhinged and vengeful wives, seductive and manipulative daughters, or both.³⁸³

Whilst *Picture This* does not feature a vengeful wife or a seductive daughter (such subject matter would be too adult for a tween narrative), Tom’s controlling behaviour

³⁸² Tincknell, *Mediating the Family*, p. 68; see also Elizabeth Traube who discusses this “natural”/“unnatural” dichotomy, in *Dreaming Identities: Class, Gender, and Generation in 1980s Hollywood Movies*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), p. 131.

³⁸³ Tincknell, *Mediating the Family*, p. 68

³⁸³ Karlyn, ““Too Close for Comfort””, p. 71

is “justified”, according to the film, because he was left to raise Mandy on his own, without a wife/mother. Tween popular culture (and popular culture more broadly) presents lone fatherhood as “unnatural”, instead “exceptional”; thus, Tom is extraordinary in his single-handedly raising of a daughter. The audience are invited to sympathise, thus eliminating any reprimanding or retribution for his attempts to trap Mandy in his duplex apartment.

Reading tween popular culture’s constructions of the parent-child relationship within a framework of generational theory can guide us in some way towards an understanding of both the “irresponsible” and the “overprotective” parent types, and the transformation both must undergo towards the narrative resolution, in each case being the realisation of the power of parenthood and achievement of “appropriate” masculinity and fatherhood. Generation X (as they were presented in the media at least) could be seen to have missed out on the epitome of youth, with no rallying cry or social cause for which to fight. Generation X, then, were seen to enter young adulthood without having achieved a coherent generational identity and without having accomplished the milestones of adolescence that previous generations had done so visibly and aurally.³⁸⁴ Furthermore, it was widely claimed during the 1980s onwards that the boundaries between childhood and adulthood had been “blurred”, creating confusion over the definition of adolescence and a previously “clear” endpoint of adulthood³⁸⁵ – lamented by conservatives as symptomatic of the shift towards liberalism brought about by such social movements as second-wave feminism. It is easy to assume, then, that there was resentment felt from Generation X towards the preceding generation.

This understanding of Generation X has been exacerbated since the “arrival” of the Millennial Generation, particularly in discourses of marketing and business, and amongst social historians. Sujansky and Ferri-Reed, for example, describe Generation X as a “forgotten” generation, amidst the publicity regarding the Millennials, claiming that “Gen Xers agreed that they had been given the short end of the generational stick.”³⁸⁶ Describing Generation X as a sandwich generation living in

³⁸⁴ See for examples Gross and Scott, “Proceeding With Caution”; I believe it is easy to bemoan Generation X’s apparent lack of generational identity, embodied in the enigmatic “X”; however, it is more useful to think of their relative small size, their cynicism and the seeming absence of social purposes as their *defining* characteristics.

³⁸⁵ Postman, *The Disappearance of Childhood*; Elkind, *The Hurried Child and All Grown Up & No Place to Go: Teenagers in Crisis*, (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1988 Edition)

³⁸⁶ Sujansky and Ferri-Reed, *Keeping the Millennials*, p. 57, p. 60

the shadow of both the Baby Boomers and the Millennials, they argue that “They are only now beginning to come into their own.”³⁸⁷ Therefore, I would argue that popular culture’s response to such discursive constructions of Generation X as one that passed into adulthood without yet accomplishing a collective social identity or role, the parent-child narratives of tween popular culture claim that the members of that generation find their purpose and achieve their generational identity in *parenthood*.

Looking to generational theory, however, offers a limited explanation of the onscreen parent-child relationship in tween popular culture. As this chapter has highlighted, the majority of families depicted onscreen are single-parent and single-child, and more specifically, *father-daughter* models. Analysis of such depictions cannot be carried out without a consideration of the discursive “backlash” against feminism, which has continued since it came to prominence in the 1980s. Faludi defines it as:

a powerful counterassault on women’s rights, a backlash, an attempt to retract the handful of small and hard-won victories that the feminist movement did manage to win for women. This counterassault is largely insidious: in a kind of pop-culture version of the Big Lie, it stands the truth boldly on its head and proclaims that the very steps that have elevated women’s position have actually led to their downfall.³⁸⁸

Recognising the narratives as part of the broader “backlash” in popular culture against the advances made by second-wave feminism highlights their overt presentation of “men” - or “masculinity-in-crisis”, which can then only be “fixed” – or rather, *transformed* – through fatherhood, and in particular, through fathering a *daughter*. The masculine traits deemed “inappropriate” by the narratives are in fact those which feminists have been negatively accused of embodying: narcissism, selfishness, and “irresponsibility” for choosing or prioritising one’s career and material wealth over family. Faludi has similarly observed the way in which the “men-in-crisis” have been condemned for defining their manhood with characteristics symptomatic of feminine vanity.³⁸⁹ Through a postfeminist transformation that “proves” that feminism has worked by revealing the “authentic” man as a caring, nurturing father, feminism is simultaneously undermined through the father’s proclamation that men, too, can “have it all”. Ideal masculinity, according to tween popular culture, is one that is both

³⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 61

³⁸⁸ Faludi, *Backlash*, pp. 9-10

³⁸⁹ Faludi, *Stiffed*, p. 39

comfortable with and willing to reveal his emotions and feelings and take on the role of primary caregiver to a child, whilst also maintaining and asserting patriarchal authority and “proving” women are indeed “the second sex”.³⁹⁰ Such a paradigm is in keeping with Hamad’s view of postfeminist fatherhood, particularly as represented by celebrity fathers; she argues that:

involved male parenting has been normalised and naturalised, seemingly in response to the second-wave feminist call for increased egalitarianism in parenting and greater gender equity in its labour share, the issue of which is hence discursively positioned as moot and redundant, with the aid of a judiciously culturally circulated discourse of post-feminist fatherhood, which conceptualises it as beneficially transformative, as a prerequisite for the attainment of a credibly mature masculine identity and as a boon to a man’s sexual desirability.³⁹¹

Tween popular culture allows for this anti-feminist masculine transformation by creating a “need” for fathers in teenage daughters, as highlighted in James’s admission to Melanie during the denouement of *College Road Trip*, after he has taken his mother’s advice and allowed Melanie to choose her own path: “I was afraid that if I let you go, that you’d never need your daddy again.” James has found his identity in fatherhood, and depends on his daughter’s need for him for his sense of “authentic” self. Tween popular culture, and culture more broadly, claims that at any moment, teenage girls could become “de-railed” in their “becoming”-women, hence the vast number of parent guides available which specifically address the subject of raising daughters,³⁹² and furthermore supported by celebrity culture’s fixation on young female “train-wreck” celebrities.³⁹³ Such narratives often figure the role of the father in seeking to help, or rather control, the celebrity;³⁹⁴ this narrative of the father (or

³⁹⁰ de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*

³⁹¹ Hamad, “‘Hollywood’s Hot Dads’: Tabloid, Reality and Scandal Discourses of Celebrity Post-feminist Fatherhood”, *Celebrity Studies* 1.2 (2010), p. 154

³⁹² See for example Tankard Reist, ed., *Getting Real*; Carey, *Where Has My Little Girl Gone?*; Hamilton, *What’s Happening to Our Girls?*; Lamb and Mikel Brown, *Packaging Girlhood*; and Wiseman, *Queen Bees & Wannabes*.

³⁹³ For academic discussions on this, see Holmes and Negra, “Introduction: In the Limelight and Under the Microscope – The Forms and Functions of Female Celebrity”, in Holmes and Negra, eds, *In the Limelight and Under the Microscope*; Negra and Holmes, “Introduction”, *Genders* 48 (2008), <http://www.genders.org/g48/g48_negraholmes.html> [accessed 7 December 2012]; Cobb, “Mother of the Year: Kathy Hilton, Lynne Spears, Dina Lohan and Bad Celebrity Motherhood”, *Genders* 48 (2008), <http://www.genders.org/g48/g48_cobb.html> [accessed 7 December 2012]; Kirsty Fairclough, “Fame is a Losing Game: Celebrity, Gossip Blogging, Bitch Culture and Postfeminism”, *Genders* 48 (2008), <http://www.genders.org/g48/g48_fairclough.html> [accessed 7 December 2012].

³⁹⁴ Cobb argues that with regards to young female “train-wreck” celebrities, there is a “cultural desire for the return of the father to save his daughter [which] articulates western culture’s ongoing need to

even grandfather) “saving” the self-destructive daughter can be seen in tween dramas, including *The Last Song* (2010) and *Surviving Summer* (2009).³⁹⁵ The father is presented to be the most suitable and indeed valuable figure to provide guidance to the teenage girl in her “becoming” a young woman. This is claimed by showing that the father needs the *daughter* in order to successfully transform himself into “authentic” masculinity. Tween culture’s hyper-gendering of femininity (as demonstrated in Chapters 1 and 2) allows for the prominent assertion of the father’s patriarchal authority, and also the learning of culturally “feminine” characteristics such as sensitivity and selflessness. The two roles are perfectly compatible. Thus, the father and daughter of tween popular culture have a mutual dependency and undergo simultaneous transformations. One’s successful achievement of “authentic” selfhood is proof of the other’s arrival at “authentic” selfhood: the viewer knows that the onscreen father has accomplished “appropriate” and “authentic” masculinity defined through successful fatherhood, when the daughter proves that she has achieved “authentic” femininity and is successfully “becoming” a young woman, and vice versa. *Hannah Montana* can be seen as one of the most iconic tween media franchises, and this father-daughter paradigm is central within it. It is here that I now turn in the next chapter.

control disruptive femininity [...] through an image of an authoritative but kinder and gentler patriarchy, filling the role of the ‘parent she needs’”, in “Mother of the Year”.

³⁹⁵ Titled *Greta* in the US.

CHAPTER 5:
GROWING UP FEMALE WITH MILEY CYRUS, MILEY STEWART
AND HANNAH MONTANA

Most people know me as Hannah Montana, but Hannah is a television character. She's fiction. Sure, I've put a lot of myself into her. I've tried to make her come to life. But that doesn't make her real, and it doesn't make her *me*.³⁹⁶

Hannah was still carrying me. It was Hannah who made so many copies of [my first album as Miley Cyrus] sell. But whenever I worried that all my success was due to Hannah I was like, wait a minute! *I am Hannah!* I worked hard to be that character and to make her my own. So Hannah wasn't carrying me. I was carrying both of us.³⁹⁷

Maybe I will never be
 Who I was before
 Maybe I don't even know her anymore
 Or maybe who I am today
 Ain't so far from yesterday
 Can I find a way to be every part of me³⁹⁸

The first two excerpts are taken from Miley Cyrus's 2008 autobiography, *Miles to Go*, written when the star of *Hannah Montana* was 15 years old. They display an ambivalence about the relationship between the on- and off-screen personae of Hannah Montana and Miley Cyrus; at first Cyrus stresses that the two are separate, yet later in the book there appears to be a slippage between the personae and the two are collapsed. The third excerpt is the chorus taken from "Every Part of Me", which featured on the *Hannah Montana* series 3 soundtrack. It effectively articulates Hannah Montana and Miley Stewart's status as a girl "becoming" a young woman; Hannah sings of the complexity in understanding and successfully making the transition from girlhood into young womanhood. The uncertainty and hesitancy within the lyrics suggests that she needs guidance in navigating this process.

This chapter argues that in *Hannah Montana*, the narrative of "becoming"-woman is paralleled by that of "becoming"-celebrity; that is, the franchise epitomises the vast proportion of tween popular culture that employs celebrity as an allegory for

³⁹⁶ Miley Cyrus, *Miles to Go*, (Bath: Parragon, 2010 Edition), p. 10, emphasis in original.

³⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 162, emphasis in original.

³⁹⁸ Hannah Montana, "Every Part of Me", *Hannah Montana 3*, (Walt Disney Records, 5099968421724, 2009) [on CD]

growing up female. It highlights the value of the “real” in celebrity culture as a way of guiding the tween as she develops a gendered identity – effectively carrying out the celebrification of tween selfhood (see Chapter 3). The discourses of authenticity – which are key in frameworks of stardom and celebrity³⁹⁹ – are central to *Hannah Montana*, and are arguably a site for pleasure and meaning-making in terms of tweens’ own “becoming”. I argue that the star persona of Miley Cyrus is intimately tied to the onscreen dual persona of Miley Stewart and Hannah Montana, and that *Hannah Montana* depends on the enmeshed personae for its articulation of “becoming” and for its construction of tween selfhood. In particular, the franchise actively draws upon Miley Cyrus’s offscreen persona within the narrative in its formulation of the “real” and “authentic”, which in this case are located within the *family* and one’s *roots* – in particular, the Southern identity. Miley Stewart and Cyrus’s on- and off-screen father, Robby Ray Stewart and Billy Ray Cyrus, is central in *Hannah Montana*’s articulation of the “real”, and in its guidance of “becoming”-woman and “becoming”-celebrity. Both the star and character (who are effectively enmeshed, as are Miley Stewart and Cyrus) exemplify fathers depicted across tween popular culture; he is shown to be the ideal figure for guiding the girl in her “becoming”-woman (see Chapter 4). He and his daughter demonstrate a mutual dependency for the transformation of the self, as portrayed through the “incest motif”.⁴⁰⁰ This chapter is a star study, drawing upon existing seminal work within the field of stardom and celebrity studies, whilst updating and adapting such work to allow for a model which makes sense of the distinctly gendered (female) and age-specific (young) form of celebrity within tween popular culture.

The Disney Channel sitcom *Hannah Montana* began in 2006, followed by music album soundtracks, merchandise varying from clothing and bedroom accessories to stationary, a concert tour and theatrically released 3D concert movie *Hannah Montana and Miley Cyrus: Best of Both Worlds Concert* (2008), theatrically released feature-length film *Hannah Montana: The Movie* (2009) and soundtrack. The sitcom ended with its fourth and final series on the Disney Channel in early 2011. The narrative centres on “normal” teenage girl Miley Stewart who attends school and spends time with friends and her father Robby Ray (played by offscreen father Billy

³⁹⁹ See for example Holmes and Redmond, “Introduction: Understanding Celebrity Culture”, in Holmes and Redmond, eds, *Framing Celebrity*; Redmond, “Intimate Fame Everywhere” in Holmes and Redmond, eds, *Framing Celebrity*; Gamson *Claims to Fame*; Bennett *Television Personalities*.

⁴⁰⁰ Karlyn, “Too Close for Comfort”; see Chapter 4.

Ray Cyrus) and brother Jackson (Jason Earles). She is also secretly a world-famous, highly successful “teen pop sensation” Hannah Montana, with the addition of a blond wig and glamorous clothes and make-up.

Like many of the media texts that make up the tween popular culture landscape discussed in the previous chapters, the *Hannah Montana* franchise often employs the message of “staying true to yourself”. “Staying true to oneself” is an articulation of tween popular culture’s investment in the authentic in relation to the tween self. Of course, the concept of “authenticity” and the “real” have in turn been central to theoretical understandings of the self in stardom and celebrity, with Dyer’s seminal work displaying this: “the whole media construction of stars encourages us to think in terms of ‘really’ – what is [the star] really like?”⁴⁰¹ The narratives within *Hannah Montana* centre on the constant reminder to Miley/Hannah to “stay true to yourself”, as a way of demonstrating her deservedness of fame, and proving her “achieved celebrity”, which as argued in Chapter 3, is predicated on the “authentic” self. Miley/Hannah must continually remember where she came from, be a “true” friend, daughter and sister, and constantly be invested in the “real”, not allowing herself to get carried away with the “trappings” of celebrity. *Hannah Montana* thus offers a commentary on the construction of stardom and celebrity, whilst actively carrying out this very construction. The Miley Stewart/Hannah Montana duality offers pleasure to the tween in terms of Gamson’s “fame games”.⁴⁰² The series, which extends to the franchise as a whole, continually emphasises the duality of ordinary/extraordinary, of Miley Stewart/Hannah Montana, for example when Hannah Montana sings “I’m just an ordinary girl/ Living in an extraordinary world”,⁴⁰³ or that she has “The best of both worlds”.⁴⁰⁴ Instances like these both reveal and support the “code” or “rhetoric of authenticity”,⁴⁰⁵ and I would argue that the franchise relies on the pleasure gained from investing in this duality and enjoyment of the search for the “real”. This would support Gamson’s argument that in celebrity culture audiences gain pleasure from the *process* of searching for the real,

⁴⁰¹ Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies*, p. 2

⁴⁰² Gamson, *Claims to Fame*

⁴⁰³ Hannah Montana, “Just Like You”, *Hannah Montana*, (Walt Disney Records, 0946 381044 2 1, 2006) [on CD]

⁴⁰⁴ Hannah Montana, “The Best of Both Worlds”, *Hannah Montana* [on CD]

⁴⁰⁵ Gamson, *Claims to Fame*, pp. 143-4; see also Elizabeth Eva Leach, “Vicars of ‘Wannabe’: Authenticity and the Spice Girls”, *Popular Music* 20.2 (2001).

rather than ultimately finding the “real self”.⁴⁰⁶ *Hannah Montana* offers its tween viewers the pleasures of searching for the “real” in her dual persona, whilst teaching them of the importance in such an investment in “authenticity” and the self. Here, this search for the “real” is made simple through the Miley/Hannah duality. By being “let in on” the construction of celebrity – in particular the dual persona – the tween viewer is claimed to be given power through such access to the “rhetoric of authenticity”, which in turn, as this chapter argues, seemingly gives her skills to successfully “become” a young woman. The franchise as a whole highlights the contradictory importance of ensuring a consistent, unchanged self (rather than altering oneself), in order to “become” a better, improved self. Here I draw again upon Dubrofsky’s “therapeutics of the self” (see Chapter 1), in which she argues that across reality television programming, unlike traditional models of the therapeutic which promote a *changed* self, maintaining an *unchanged* self paradoxically allows for transformation.⁴⁰⁷

Hannah Montana’s putting on display the construction of celebrity and accordingly the investment in the “real” feeds the notion of tween girls’ apparent desire to become famous themselves. Writing in 2003, Jo Littler argues:

The markers of what makes a celebrity authentic [...] are the presentation of emotional intimacy with the audience, alongside a degree of reflexivity about being in a position of a celebrity, and an ability to reference the legitimate “moment before” fame.⁴⁰⁸

Because of the dual narrative of *Hannah Montana*, this is something Miley/Hannah does continually: when she is Miley, she is not famous, but just “ordinary”. Whilst as Miley, she effectively represents “The subjectivity that is aspiring to be a star”, which Littler argues “is the position that is coded as being ‘real’”.⁴⁰⁹ As such, the Miley side of the duality is where one finds the “real” self, and an identificatory subject position of the girl *before* she becomes a celebrity. Miley/Hannah presents an emotional intimacy with the tween audience by “letting them in on the secret” of her double life, and reflexively singing about and making reference to being a star. After performing

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 181-2; the investment in the “real” in regard to selfhood is also a central tenet of reality TV programming; see for example Hill, “*Big Brother*”, p. 324; Hill, *Reality TV*, pp. 57-78; and Andrejevic, *Reality TV*, pp. 117-141.

⁴⁰⁷ Dubrofsky, “Therapeutics of the Self”

⁴⁰⁸ Jo Littler, “Making Fame Ordinary: Intimacy, Reflexivity, and ‘Keeping it Real’”, *Mediactive 2* (2003), p. 13

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

as Hannah Montana, she always returns to being Miley Stewart, therefore constantly and “authentically” returning to that “moment before” fame. Littler goes onto say that “The subjectivity that is aspiring to be a star [...] is the position that is coded as being ‘real’”, and argues that such celebrities “are presented as being like us *in wanting to be celebrities*.⁴¹⁰ Hannah’s ability to always return to being Miley further highlights tween popular culture’s emphasis on the *unchanged* self as the ideal, transformative one.⁴¹¹

Within girlhood studies and celebrity studies, academics including Melanie Lowe, Catharine Lumby, Linda Duits and Pauline van Romondt Vis, and Kim Allen and Heather Mendick have carried out empirical research into girls’ relationships with female pop stars and fame more generally.⁴¹² Such studies reveal girls’ desires to *become* famous themselves, and girls’ investment in the “real” and “authentic”, both in their choices of consuming and enjoying particular celebrities, and in their own values and behaviour as girls “becoming” young women. Representative of this is Allen’s findings when interviewing teenage girls attending a performing arts institution, who imagined themselves as potentially becoming famous in their futures. She found that “the notion of authenticity – the importance of ‘being yourself’ – was central”.⁴¹³ “Being yourself”, according to the girls in Allen’s research, refers to *not changing* one’s self (in keeping with Dubrofsky’s argument cited above); changing considerably (either in terms appearance through plastic surgery, or altering one’s values) signals that one is “selling out”;⁴¹⁴ of course, celebrity ultimately relies on “selling out”, but this is not commented upon in tween culture – rather what becomes important is the *managing* of this contradiction. An investment in the notion of authenticity in the female celebrities girls look up to as role models can be seen as a way of making sense of “becoming” young women themselves, with many parallels

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., emphasis in original

⁴¹¹ Dubrofsky, “Therapeutics of the Self”

⁴¹² Melanie Lowe, “Colliding Feminisms: Britney Spears, ‘Tweens’, and the Politics of Reception”, *Popular Music and Society* 26.2 (2003); Catherine Lumby, “Doing It For Themselves? Teenage Girls, Sexuality and Fame”, in Redmond and Holmes, eds, *Stardom and Celebrity*; Linda Duits and Pauline van Romondt Vis, “Girls Make Sense: Girls, Celebrities and Identities”, *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 12.1 (2009); Kim Allen, “Girls Imagining Careers in the Limelight: Social Class, Gender and Fantasies of ‘Success’”, in Holmes and Negra, eds, *In the Limelight and Under the Microscope*; Kim Allen and Heather Mendick, “Young People’s Uses of Celebrity: Class, Gender and ‘Improper’ Celebrity”, *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* (2012); at the time of writing, Allen, Mendick and Laura Harvey have begun a research project titled “The role of celebrity in young people’s classed and gendered aspirations”, <<http://www.celebyouth.org/>> [accessed 24 October 2012].

⁴¹³ Allen, “Girls Imagining Careers in the Limelight”, p. 164

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., p. 165

existing between the ways in which processes of “becoming” celebrities and “becoming” young women are constructed and discussed in both popular culture and academic literature.⁴¹⁵

Many of the narratives which feature in the *Hannah Montana* texts revolve around this notion of being a star whilst remaining true to oneself, highlighted in a number of Hannah Montana’s songs, including “Just a Girl”:

I’m just a girl with a dream that got the best of me
 In a world that believes fame is everything
 Got outta touch with the ones
 Who gave me my wings to fly, to fly⁴¹⁶

Thus, just like the girls in Allen’s study who “were caught in [...] bind between an investment in the more transformative potential of the celebrity lifestyle and a critical distancing from the ‘negative’ aspects of fame”,⁴¹⁷ Miley Stewart/Hannah Montana must carefully live the life of a star, without letting herself get caught up in the “negative” aspects of fame, which as expressed in this song, are centred on not staying “true” to herself and not remembering her roots – indeed, in “Just a Girl”, Hannah sings “That I...I almost forgot where I belong”.⁴¹⁸ The consequences of not “staying true to yourself”, as the lyrics to “Just a Girl” demonstrate, are shame and an ensuing public apology to those one has “let down”. This tension parallels the “becoming” of girls to young women – particularly in a postfeminist context – as illustrated in Allen’s research, there is a “fine balancing act that must be achieved in order to perform femininity and be seen as ‘real’.”⁴¹⁹ Therefore, Miley/Hannah is not just expressing the difficulties of being a celebrity, but is in fact representative of the difficulties of “becoming” a young woman.

This balancing act is expressed explicitly in series 2, episode 26 of the television series.⁴²⁰ Whilst being fitted for new Hannah Montana outfits at the costume designer’s studio, Hannah becomes intimidated by the designer’s other client, Isis (Rachel York), a Madonna-style older female popstar. Isis claims to know what her “next next next look” will be, and Hannah worries that her fans will soon get bored of

⁴¹⁵ See Allen and Mendick, “Young People’s Uses of Celebrity”.

⁴¹⁶ Hannah Montana, “Just a Girl”, *Hannah Montana* 3

⁴¹⁷ Allen, “Girls Imagining Careers in the Limelight”, p. 163

⁴¹⁸ Hannah Montana, “Just a Girl”, *Hannah Montana* 3

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., p. 167

⁴²⁰ “Yet Another Side of Me”, *Hannah Montana*, (Disney Channel, 3 August 2008)

her good-girl image, so she comes up with the “anti-Hannah” angry, rock star image. Whilst sleeping, Miley dreams that she reveals this new image to her young female fans at a Sunshine Girls (a Girl Guides-style club) concert having been presented with the title “Role Model of the Year”. Whilst performing as the “anti-Hannah”, the young girls revolt and become violent. When she wakes from this nightmare, Miley admits to her father that “You’re right, I don’t want to be a hard-edged Hannah; that’s not the kind of message I want to send to my fans”, and when asked by Robby Ray how she plans to keep her audience interested, she expresses the centrality of authenticity to her star image:

Miley: There’s got to be a way to keep them interested, and still be me. Sure Isis can change who she is all the time, but I like who I am and I don’t want to change to hold onto an audience who hasn’t even left me yet.

Robby: Well, as long as you’re true to yourself, your fans’ll always be there.

Miley seems to be articulating the difficulties faced by and the pressures placed on female stars and celebrities by culture, to maintain their star or celebrity status as they age. Thus, by staying “true to herself”, Miley/Hannah will successfully “become” a young woman and retain her “achieved celebrity” status with her fans. It is assumed that she will go on to attend the Sunshine Girls concert and receive the “Role Model of the Year” award, even though (if one considers the cultural hierarchy of music genres and their assumed authenticity), the alternative, sub-cultural “anti-Hannah” could potentially be the more “authentic” of the two star images. Isis, the “inappropriately” feminine pop star is shown to be “fake” *because* she is constantly changing her image. Isis does not maintain her “real” self. This moment, and the franchise as a whole, highlights the contradictory importance of ensuring a consistent, unchanged self (rather than altering oneself), in order to “become” a better, improved self.⁴²¹

In the song “Just Like You”, Hannah Montana expresses that she is “just an ordinary girl” like the tween viewer/consumer, and therefore an ideal point of identification through which to “become”:

Can’t you see
I’m just an ordinary girl

⁴²¹ Dubrofsky, “Therapeutics of the Self”, pp. 267-8

Living in an extraordinary world
 Trying to live
 Trying to learn
 Trying to just be who I am
 Who I am⁴²²

Hannah Montana tells her audience in this song that she herself is in a state of “becoming”, trying to *learn* to be a young woman, whilst trying to maintain a notion of authenticity. She can be seen to parallel the girls in Allen’s research: she found that “The girls were caught between the perceived pressure to change in order to ‘get ahead’ and a desire to maintain a sense of their authentic, essential self.”⁴²³ As depicted in “Yet Another Side of Me”, Hannah/Miley seems to share these same anxieties of “getting ahead”, or in her case, staying ahead, in terms of keeping her appeal with fans, and maintaining an authentic self. At the end of this episode we see that Isis has in fact copied Hannah Montana’s image. However, she is too “old” and inauthentic in comparison to Hannah, who successfully balances a performance of “appropriate” femininity and sustains a notion of “realness” or “truth”. As the antithesis of authenticity, Isis has not been successful in her “becoming”-woman or “becoming”-celebrity.



Figure 17: The “inauthentic” Isis versus the “authentic” Hannah Montana, in “Yet Another Side of Me”.

This paralleling of stars and celebrities’ balancing of performance and authenticity, with girls’ balancing of performativity (of femininity) and staying “true to oneself” supports Duits and van Romondt Vis’s research findings when discussing

⁴²² Hannah Montana, “Just Like You”

⁴²³ Allen, “Girls Imagining Careers in the Limelight”, p. 170, emphasis in original.

with tween girls the functions of celebrities as identity tools. Whilst I have already cited this work in Chapter 2, it is necessary to reiterate their argument here, in which they state that in girls' development of an identity, "the need for authenticity limits the available range of identities."⁴²⁴ This notion of a fine balancing act carried out by tweens "becoming" is reinforced in the official *Hannah Montana* magazines. In the "Giant A1 Poster Special", readers received "Fab Free Gifts", including a "Makeover Set!" (consisting of lip balm, nail stickers and hairbands), and a "Superstar Belt!" (pink with a silver star-shaped buckle):⁴²⁵



Figure 18: "Fab Free Gifts!": Makeover Set and Superstar Belt.

Thus the poster magazine encourages the tween to "become" a young woman by performing and decorating "appropriate" femininity onto the body, or rather celebrating themselves. Ironically, however, if all the consumers of this particular issue choose to wear the free accessories, their identities would, as Duits and van Ramondt Vis state above, be limited in terms of uniqueness and authenticity.

This responsibility that the neoliberal girl⁴²⁶ has to continually remind herself of her roots and "stay true to herself" whilst making the transformation into woman/celebrity, is at the centre of the narrative of *Hannah Montana: The Movie*. During the first scenes of *The Movie*, it is apparent that Miley/Hannah has become too invested in the "negative" aspects of fame: whilst being followed by journalists and

⁴²⁴ Duits and van Romondt Vis, "Girls Make Sense", p. 54

⁴²⁵ Disney Presents: *Hannah Montana Forever*, 25 November – 22 December 2010

⁴²⁶ Allen, "Girls Imagining Careers in the Limelight", pp. 165-6

paparazzi, Hannah shops with her publicist in Los Angeles, and is visibly immersed in the appeal of designer shoes and watches – so much so that she physically fights Tyra Banks over a pair of high heeled shoes. This commitment to consumption comes at the cost of personal and family ties; she misses saying goodbye to her brother Jackson as he leaves for college, and is late for best friend Lilly's sweet 16. Moreover, since she doesn't have a chance to return to being Miley without risking being seen by tabloid journalists and paparazzi, she arrives at the party as Hannah, stealing the limelight from Lilly. She thus prioritises the attention and extravagant consumption allowed for by celebrity over the markers of authenticity – her family and best friends. Remaining as Hannah rather than making that crucial transformation back to Miley (the “moment before” celebrity), renders her *inauthentic*.

Miley's father Robby Ray decides to intervene and take Miley/Hannah “back to her roots” in Tennessee, whilst she thinks she is flying to New York to perform at a concert. Hannah is angry once she realises she has been taken to Tennessee, telling her father “Hannah means everything to me”, to which he responds, “That right there just might be the problem”. Miley has become *too* invested in her onscreen/extraordinary persona, and needs to re-invest in the offscreen/ordinary persona. Robby Ray tells her of his plan: “Right now let's just see if the country girl exists. Think of it as a Hannah detox”. Thus, by employing the popular language of celebrity culture, evoking the tabloid coverage of young female celebrities such as Britney Spears and Lindsay Lohan entering rehabilitation for alcohol or drug abuse, the intervention and task of regaining authenticity is established.

After some initial protest, Hannah/Miley finally realises her responsibility in *The Movie* to work on bringing back to the surface her “true self” after a conversation with her grandmother (Margo Martindale) who tells her, “I just miss my Miley”. Miley asks, “Why does everyone keep saying that?” to which her grandmother replies, “Maybe you should be asking yourself that question”. This “Hannah detox” narrative relies on its star Miley Cyrus's – and father Billy Ray Cyrus's – Southern identity. Billy Ray Cyrus was already known for his country music stardom (which is referenced within the series, because Robby Ray was a successful country music star before Hannah Montana's fame), and regular references are made throughout the television series to the family's Tennessean identity, having moved to California at some point before Miley became Hannah. Allusions to their previous rural lives in Tennessee appear not only in the series' narratives, but also in the construction of

Miley Cyrus's star persona. She discusses the centrality of her Southern, rural heritage in her 2008 autobiography, with an entire chapter on being a "Southern Girl".⁴²⁷ It is problematically suggested then that because Cyrus grew up as a young girl on a farm, surrounded by nature and animals, she can more easily access her "authentic" self. Negra similarly notes the use of "the south as an identity-restoring home for white women" in a number of 1990s and 2000s postfeminist chick flicks.⁴²⁸ James C. Cobb notes the way in which the South has been mythicised as "provid[ing] an attractive alternative to the tyranny of technology, bureaucracy, and the profit-motive fostered by the nation's relentless pursuit of 'progress.'"⁴²⁹ It is this nostalgic view of the South as a place offering a "simpler" – even "backward" – and deeply conservative⁴³⁰ way of life (which has provided both its positive and its negative conceptions within US culture)⁴³¹ that allows for the "Hannah detox" in *The Movie*, and provides Miley Cyrus and Stewart with their inherent "authenticity". Miley/Hannah needs to return to this rural, Southern setting in order to bring back to the surface her "real" self and to reject the "wrong" type of female celebrity she was at risk of becoming.

However, whilst her rural Tennessean heritage apparently allows her easier access to her inherent authenticity, it also makes the need for her to work at "becoming" "appropriately" feminine even more necessary; her thick Tennessean accent and colloquial idioms, and investment in more rustic pleasures (such as playing the acoustic guitar and singing with her father at home, and caring for and riding her horse Blue Jeans in a Western style) earns her the label "hillbilly" at numerous points throughout the series. Miley's Tennessean identity puts her at constant risk of being deemed "white trash". Her "authenticity" is located (at least in part) in her Southern identity, thus she must continually highlight this; however, in order to avoid slipping into the category "white trash", she needs to work hard at covering the negative

⁴²⁷ Cyrus, *Miles to Go*, pp. 132-8

⁴²⁸ Negra, *What a Girl Wants?*, p. 39

⁴²⁹ James C. Cobb, *Redefining Southern Culture: Mind & Identity in Modern South*, (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1999), p. 84; see also Pamela Wilson, "Mountains of Contradictions: Gender, Class, and Region in the Star Image of Dolly Parton", in Cecelia Tichi, ed., *Reading Country Music: Steel Guitars, Opry Stars, and Honky-Tonk Bars*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), p. 109.

⁴³⁰ For a discussion of conservatism in the South, see Peter Applebome, *Dixie Rising: How the South is Shaping American Values, Politics, and Culture*, (San Diego, CA: Harvest, 1997), p. 7.

⁴³¹ I stress here that I am not referring to 'the South' as a straightforwardly tangible, geographic location, but rather, as Tara McPherson states, "as much a fiction, a story we tell and are told", in *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined South*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 1.

markers that give away her Southern identity, if she is to “become” appropriately feminine. As recognised by John Hartigan, Jun., “white trash” has been used:

in a disparaging fashion, inscribing an insistence on complete social distance from problematic white bodies, from the actions, smells and sounds of whites who disrupted the social decorums that have supported the hegemonic, unmarked status of whiteness as a normative identity in [the US].⁴³²

He notes that the term has been visibly co-opted as part of the broader nostalgic, camp pop cultural interest in “downmarket chic”.⁴³³ This provides a potential context for *Hannah Montana*’s reliance on the Stewarts’ Southernness for much of the comedy (such comic moments are intended to be laughed at in terms of naïvety and “blissful” ignorance rather than in disgust)⁴³⁴ – particularly in episodes featuring Miley Stewart’s Aunt Dolly, played by Miley Cyrus’s real-life godmother Dolly Parton.⁴³⁵ Nevertheless, Miley/Hannah is always precariously close to becoming, as Tyler says of the British equivalent white, working-class category of the “chav”, “not invisible normative whites, but rather hypervisible ‘filthy whites’”, that is, “a dirty whiteness – a whiteness contaminated with poverty.”⁴³⁶ Similarly, Hartigan argues that “white trash” works as a form of “unpopular culture”, as an example of what whites *should not* be.⁴³⁷ Thus, Miley/Hannah’s work to maintain a “true” self in order to prove her “achieved” celebrity status, to successfully “become” both woman and celebrity, is made more difficult and more important, because of her potential to fall into the “inappropriate” category “white trash”.

After spending the first night in Tennessee in *The Movie*, Miley wakes the next morning telling herself to “Commence Operation Save Hannah Montana”, enthusiastically volunteering to feed her grandmother’s chickens whilst wearing a checked shirt, denim dungarees, Wellington boots and her hair in pig-tails:

⁴³² Hartigan, Jun., John, “Unpopular Culture: The Case of ‘White Trash’”, *Cultural Studies* 11.1 (1997), p. 317; see also Annalee Newitz and Matt Wray, “Introduction”, in Matt Wray and Annalee Newitz, eds, *White Trash: Race and Class in America*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997).

⁴³³ *Ibid.*, p. 325

⁴³⁴ For a discussion of class disgust, see Tyler, “Chav Mum Chav Scum: Class Disgust in Contemporary Britain”, *Feminist Media Studies* 8.1 (2008).

⁴³⁵ For a discussion of the ways in which the contradictory identities of female, Southern, rural, Appalachian and working-class, are exploited within Dolly Parton’s star persona, see Wilson, “Mountains of Contradictions”. Such exploitation of contradictory meanings can be seen to some extent in *Hannah Montana*’s constructed celebrity, and by extension that of Miley Cyrus.

⁴³⁶ Tyler, “Chav Mum Chav Scum”, p. 25

⁴³⁷ Hartigan, “Unpopular Culture”, p. 320



Figure 19: Miley Stewart: “Commence Operation Save Hannah Montana”, *Hannah Montana: The Movie*.

By taking time to work on bringing back to the surface her authenticity, to focus on getting back to her “true” self, Miley/Hannah can be seen as an icon of postfeminist culture, representing “the self as a project”.⁴³⁸ As this example demonstrates, Miley/Hannah is “the self-surveilling postfeminist subject”, working towards “the achieved self”⁴³⁹ – which can also be read here as “achieved celebrity”. As part of the broader postfeminist and *neoliberal* popular culture context, particularly in the wake of reality TV programming and a broader shift towards therapeutic culture, this intervention narrative – “Operation Save Hannah Montana” – can be seen to function in the same way as the “life intervention [...] strand of makeover television” (in reference to predominantly weight loss and dieting reality programmes), which has, according to Laurie Ouellette and James Hay, “a concern to facilitate care of self as a strategy of freedom and empowerment”.⁴⁴⁰ Here, however, the freedom and empowerment is claimed but merely illusory, when one considers that Miley/Hannah succumbs to her father’s intervention.

Whilst Miley needs to be reminded of her responsibility to retain an authentic self and carries out the necessary self-work in order to achieve this, this does not mean that the investment in celebrity is discarded. Rather, a desire to “become” celebrity is still very much emphasised, for example in the lyrics to “The Good Life”, which features on the film’s soundtrack:

Grab a little Gucci bag and some Prada shoes

⁴³⁸ Tasker and Negra, “Introduction”, p. 21

⁴³⁹ Negra, *What a Girl Wants?*, p. 119

⁴⁴⁰ Ouellette and Hay, “Makeover Television, Governmentality and the Good Citizen”, p. 475; see also Ouellette and Hay, *Better Living Through Reality TV: Television and Post-welfare Citizenship*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008).

Here take my credit card, they're all here to wait on you
 Jimmy Choo calls out your name, D&G on every wall
 When you can't decide, it's okay just buy them all

There's no better feeling
 There's nothing more appealing
 [...]⁴⁴¹

The song references no negative consequences to the investment in the expensive designer labels and extreme level of consumption of celebrity culture. Instead of discarding the accoutrements of celebrity altogether, Miley's self-work towards regaining authenticity allows her to "become" a *better* celebrity – one that can enjoy the material payoffs that she has worked hard for through a self-surveilling maintenance of authenticity.

During the film's final scene, whilst performing as Hannah at a charity concert in her hometown, she faces the dilemma of carrying on living her two lives, wondering whether it would be easier to give up her extraordinary persona and just be Miley. However, she is easily persuaded by fans in the audience who promise to keep the secret and beg her to carry on as Hannah, at which point the film ends. Therefore the film's overall message is that one should be invested in the transformative potential of celebrity, yet whilst maintaining an "authentic" self, mirroring the contradictory position in which the girls in Allen's research found themselves.⁴⁴²

This contradictory position of wanting to be a celebrity whilst not letting oneself become *too* invested in celebrity is typical of tween popular culture, and can be seen as a downshifting of the contradictory nature of adult female popular culture. The narrative of *The Movie* fits in with "postfeminist retreatism" found in a number of contemporary chick flicks, as discussed by Negra.⁴⁴³ Therefore, as with the other tween narratives discussed in the previous chapters, what we can arguably see here is a rehearsal of the complex and conflicting narratives circulating within mainstream media for the female further along in the process of womanhood. Negra notes that "it has become common practice for the female protagonist of the contemporary romantic comedy to abjure an urban environment, 'downshifting' her career or ambitions in

⁴⁴¹ Hannah Montana, "The Good Life", *Hannah Montana: The Movie*, (Walt Disney Records, 50999 6 96174 2 3, 2009) [on CD]

⁴⁴² Allen, "Girls Imagining Careers in the Limelight", p. 163, pp. 165-6

⁴⁴³ Negra, *What a Girl Wants?*, pp. 15-46

order to re-prioritize family commitments and roles".⁴⁴⁴ Through her father's literal dislocation of Miley/Hannah from Los Angeles to her hometown in Tennessee, Miley shifts the emphasis from her career to family and friends and successfully rediscovers her authenticity; this film – for tweens – fits in with the wider range of recent films for women, epitomising the narrative of "retreatism", as according to Negra, "Popular culture insistently asserts that if women can productively manage home, time, work, and their commodity choices, they will be rewarded with a more authentic, intact, and achieved self".⁴⁴⁵ As the ideal neoliberal subject, Miley is rewarded with a more authentic self – both in her celebrity and as a young woman – through her "coming home".⁴⁴⁶

However, *The Movie* – and more broadly the franchise as a whole – does not straightforwardly fit in with the "retreatist formulae of contemporary chick flicks".⁴⁴⁷ As discussed above, once Miley has addressed her need to alter her priorities and rediscovers her authenticity, she returns to her double-life of "ordinary" tween and "extraordinary" popstar in California; the audience know this because at the film's close she agrees to continue her career as Hannah, and because series 3 of the sitcom continues to air when tweens leave the cinema. Thus, she does not give up paid work, or stay home.⁴⁴⁸ Rather, *The Movie* epitomises the *perpetual makeover* of tween popular culture, discussed in Chapter 1. As with the makeovers discussed in Chapter 1, the emphasis here is on the *process* of bringing back to the surface one's "true" self, rather than reaching an end point. In reality television, this is done under constant literal surveillance by cameras,⁴⁴⁹ but in *The Movie* (as in other tween films and television programmes), the tween is addressed as a girl—"becoming"-woman who must understand and learn the importance of constant self-surveillance to ensure her "consistent", authentic self.

This cyclical nature of the retreatist makeover narrative is expressed in *The Movie*'s closing song, "You'll Always Find Your Way Back Home", at which point Miley's journey to rediscover her innate authenticity has been achieved, and she has agreed to carry on with her onscreen celebrity persona as Hannah. The lyrics

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 18

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 5

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 17

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 5

⁴⁴⁹ Dubrofsky, "Therapeutics of the Self", p. 274

articulate that no matter how much you change your surface attributes – and even your values – you will return back to your roots time and time again:

You can change your style, you can change your jeans
 You can learn to fly and you can chase your dreams
 You can laugh and cry but everybody knows
 You'll always find your way back home⁴⁵⁰

She leaves the stage through the large crowd of Hannah fans in the back of a truck, presumably back to Los Angeles. The song suggests that, through the metaphor of Miley/Hannah's celebrity, girls are in a constant state of transition – “becoming” – in their testing out of new identities, and yet they always ultimately need to be reminded of their “true” selves before beginning this process all over again – this chorus is repeated three times during the song. Dubrofsky's “therapeutics of the self” can again be identified in the song's message: the tween girl can change her style, but ultimately the “true” self remains *unchanged*, always returning to one's roots. Again, the emphasis here is on the *process* of the transformation. By the narrative's close, Miley/Hannah has successfully brought back to the surface her “authentic” self, proving her “achieved” celebrity status, and may return to Los Angeles, where she must continue to maintain that true self and constantly prove her deservedness of her celebrity. The neoliberal requirement of self-surveillance and work towards an achieved, authentic self is ingrained here, ready for the next logical step up to teen girl narratives, and eventually adult woman narratives.

The Movie's perpetual makeover narrative relies on Miley's Southernness to enable the re-emergence of her “authentic” self to happen with ease; this in turn relies on Miley (and Billy Ray) Cyrus's Southern identities. Regarding filming *The Movie*, Miley Cyrus states in her autobiography (the 2010 edition):

to have Miley Stewart come back to Tennessee, Miley Cyrus's home – it was life imitating art imitating life (like my dad always says). It tends to get me going in circles, thinking about how my character Miley's life is like mine and mine is like Miley's. *Hannah Montana* is all fiction, of course, but there's a thread running through it that is connected with what's real in my world and the way I've been raised, being with my dad through the journey of music.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁵⁰ Hannah Montana, “You'll Always Find Your Way Back Home”, *Hannah Montana: The Movie* [on CD]

⁴⁵¹ Cyrus, *Miles to Go*, p. 218

Hannah Montana relies on its star's own “becoming” offscreen, and merges the three personae of Miley, Miley and Hannah in order to effectively articulate the centrality of this process in tweenhood, and to claim itself as a point of guidance for the tween-“becoming”-woman in this very process. Not only is Miley Cyrus's offscreen persona utilised within the franchise's narratives of “becoming”; so too is that of her real-life father, Billy Ray Cyrus, who plays the onscreen father and manager of *Hannah Montana*, Robby Ray Stewart.⁴⁵² Tween popular culture's employment of the father-daughter mutual dependency paradigm (see Chapter 4) is rendered more visible through the use of a *real-life* father and daughter. Whilst Miley Cyrus's mother is still alive and married to Billy Ray Cyrus and is herself an “attributed celebrity”, within *Hannah Montana*'s narrative Miley Stewart's mother has passed away three years before the point at which the series begins in March 2006. It is made clear that her mother is dead, but the reason for her death is never discussed. She does, however, appear in flashbacks, dream sequences, and home video footage at various points throughout the duration of the series, played by Brooke Shields. Therefore the television series conveniently fits in with the fairy-tale narrative as played out in numerous tween “princess” films discussed in Chapter 2, and allows for the demonstration of the *need* for the father to guide the daughter in her “becoming”, which in turn provides him with a transformation in masculinity, and therefore of the self. Looking to the father-daughter relationship in *Hannah Montana* proves central in understanding the tween girl as “becoming” through Miley/Hannah.

Robby's position as a recently widowed father coping with a daughter “becoming”-woman is represented explicitly at the beginning of the television series' narrative. In series 1, episode 7,⁴⁵³ as Miley's birthday approaches she is concerned about what her dad might buy her for her present.⁴⁵⁴ As Hannah, whilst promoting a

⁴⁵² It is worth noting that whilst Billy Ray Cyrus plays Hannah Montana's manager within the franchise, he has made it clear offscreen in interviews that he is not Miley Cyrus's manager, stressing “For the record, [...] to set it straight, I want to tell you: I've never made a dime off of Miley”, in Chris Heath, “Mr. Hannah Montana's Achy Broken Heart”, *GQ*, March 2011, <http://www.gq.com/entertainment/celebrities/201103/billy-ray-cyrus-mr-hannah-montana-miley> [accessed 19 February 2011]. This can be read as a response towards tabloid and celebrity news and gossip outlets' frequent scrutiny of celebrity “momagers” (mothers also filling the role of managers to their young female celebrity daughters) who are often seen to be “pimping” their daughters. Cobb suggests that such harsh judgement is due to a perceived “inappropriate” merging of the two diametrically opposed roles of mother and manager, which do not naturally fit together, according to postfeminism; see Cobb, “Mother of the Year”.

⁴⁵³ “It's a Mannequin's World”, *Hannah Montana*, (Disney Channel, 12 May 2006)

⁴⁵⁴ Although not explicitly stated or shown in the episode, it is Miley's 14th birthday, as Miley Stewart plays a character of the same age as Miley Cyrus.

new range of fashionable scarves in a clothes shop, she confesses to best friend, Lilly (at this point disguised as her alter-ego Lola), “Mum always knew the right stuff to buy me”, to which Lilly/Lola replies, “Look, no dad knows how to shop for a girl”. This reinforces the widely-held cultural belief that women *naturally* fulfil the caring, nurturing role, whilst for men this is unnatural; rather, when the man carries out this role, it is seen to be *exceptional*, particularly when raising a daughter, as discussed in the previous chapter. In the shop, Robby browses childish, flowery, frilly dresses whilst trying to choose something for Miley’s birthday present. When he presents her with a baby pink woolly jumper, with white lace trimmings and a stuffed kitten on the front which meows when squeezed (with the tail on the back of the jumper), Miley is embarrassed but does not want to hurt her dad’s feelings.



Figure 20: Miley’s childish birthday present from her father, Robby Ray, in “It’s a Mannequin’s World”.

The humour of this episode is centred on Robby’s confusion over his tween daughter’s fashion sense and taste, and the fact that as a man; he “naturally” doesn’t understand girl culture. However, during a conversation between Robby Ray and Miley, it becomes clear that what is being dealt with here is not just confusion of a middle-aged single father’s view of teenage girls’ style and appearance, but a father’s attempts to halt or take control of his daughter’s transition into young womanhood:

Robby: We both know I messed up, don’t we? [...] I saw a lot of clothes you’d’ve liked a lot more, but I just couldn’t get myself to buy them.

Miley: Why not? You see what I wear to school; you see what I wear on stage as Hannah Montana.

Robby: Yeah, maybe that's just it. My little girl's just growing up so fast, there's a part of me that just wanted to hold onto the little girl you used to be.

Miley: Aw, daddy, I'll always be your little girl. I'll just be your little girl that dresses better.

[...]

Robby: You know, your mum and I, when she was around, we used to have a deal that she'd buy all the presents, and I'd just carry the bags for her. Maybe it's time I just started carrying your bags for you.

This conversation between Miley and Robby highlights several key points central to the father-daughter relationship in tween popular culture. First, as stated above, Robby filling the role of carer and nurturer to a girl “becoming” a young woman is “unnatural”; he more comfortably and “naturally” provides the role of carrying shopping bags. Second, in this episode, Robby fits into the over-protective father category, alongside James in *College Road Trip* and Tom in *Picture This*, discussed in the previous chapter. And third, and perhaps most significantly, is the suggestion of Karlyn’s “incest motif”, brought about by Robby’s “crisis” in masculinity due to being “unnaturally” thrust into the role of sole parent to a teenage daughter following the death of his wife. His suggestion that “Maybe it’s time I just started carrying your bags for you” symbolically places Miley in the role vacated by her dead mother, whose shopping bags Robby previously carried.

Robby’s struggle to loosen control over his daughter’s “becoming” a young woman (much like James in *College Road Trip* and Tom in *Picture This*) is demonstrated fully in series 2, episode 13.⁴⁵⁵ Miley/Hannah wants to travel to Florida to perform at a charity concert, where a rival female teen popstar, Michaela (Selena Gomez), will be performing. However, when Robby severely injures his back and cannot travel, he decides Miley cannot go to Florida without him, to which she responds: “why are you treating me like such a baby? [...] I hate you!” Miley tricks her body guard, Roxy (Frances Callier), into chaperoning her to Florida behind her father’s back. Robby realises Miley’s plan, and finds her on the plane before it takes off, where the father and daughter express how they feel and address their conflict. Robby explains his ambivalent emotions through a song, “Ready, Set, Don’t Go”:

She’s waitin’ on my blessings

⁴⁵⁵ “I Want You to Want Me...to Go to Florida”, *Hannah Montana*, (Disney Channel, 21 July 2007)

Before she hits that open road
But baby get ready, get set, don't go

She says things are fallin' in place
Feels like they're fallin' apart
I painted this big old smile on my face
To hide my broken heart
If only she knew⁴⁵⁶

He tells Miley, “Darling, no daddy ever wants to see his little girl grow up, but every day I know some day she has to”, and agrees to let her continue on the journey to Florida. Thus, as in the examples discussed in the previous chapter, Robby addresses his “inappropriate” behaviour towards Miley, and effectively transforms his masculine self resulting in ideal fatherhood. This in turn benefits Miley in her own “becoming”-woman, for which she still nevertheless relies on Robby for guidance. Again, his expression of struggling to let Miley make the transition into young adulthood without him controlling her every choice manifests itself in the “incest motif”, as he sings of a “broken heart”, not unlike a love song.

“Ready, Set, Don’t Go” featured on Billy Ray Cyrus’s album, *Home at Last*, as did a duet version with Miley Cyrus. Thus the real-life father-daughter relationship is explicitly drawn upon for the father-daughter conflict in this episode of *Hannah Montana*. Miley Cyrus explains in her autobiography that Billy Ray Cyrus wrote the song in response to his daughter securing the role on the Disney Channel sitcom and moving from Tennessee to California (yet before he gained the role as her onscreen father):

The family had packed up and was heading to Los Angeles. He watched us drive away and felt happy to see my dreams coming true and sad at the idea of me going so far away – and growing up. What Dad doesn’t have that bittersweet moment?⁴⁵⁷

In both the television episode and in Miley Cyrus’s account of the “real life” inspiration for the song, justification for Robby Ray Stewart/Billy Ray Cyrus’s struggle to loosen control over his daughter is provided in the fact that he is a man, and a father, so “naturally” finds this process difficult and so “naturally” expresses such ambivalent emotions through resistance and finally through the “incest motif”

⁴⁵⁶ Billy Ray Cyrus, “Ready, Set, Don’t Go”, *Home at Last*, (Walt Disney Records, 050087112066, 2007) [on CD]

⁴⁵⁷ Cyrus, *Miles to Go*, p. 96

(see Chapter 4). This is particularly evident onscreen within *Hannah Montana*, as Robby has been “unnaturally” forced into the role as nurturer, single-handedly raising a daughter since the death of his wife, the “natural” nurturing figure.

In her autobiography, Miley Cyrus states:

The media has said some stuff about my dad and me being too close or too cuddly for a father and daughter. For me and my dad, it's not weird at all. And who cares if the public likes it or not? I think it's special that we're still a father and a daughter, that we love each other, that we aren't afraid to show it, and that we don't let other people tell us what expressions we're supposed to have on our faces when we take a picture together!⁴⁵⁸

By addressing the media's scrutiny of their father-daughter relationship, Miley Cyrus is merely adding to the construction of her relationship with Billy Ray Cyrus as one framed by the “incest motif”, and firmly embeds this motif within their star personae.

One event in their mediated father-daughter relationship which garnered the level of attention Miley Cyrus refers to in her autobiography was a posed photograph of Miley and Billy Ray Cyrus, taken by controversial celebrity photographer Annie Leibovitz; this photo, and another single portrait photograph of Miley Cyrus, were accompanied by an interview with Miley Cyrus and featured in the June 2008 edition of *Vanity Fair*. The portrait of then 15 year old Miley Cyrus (in which she appeared topless, clutching a white sheet to her front but exposing her back) attracted considerable attention across celebrity news and gossip outlets on the internet, centred on the issue of sexualisation. Whilst the public reactions to the photograph, the way in which the incident was mediated, and the official responses from Miley Cyrus and Disney lend themselves to a wide-reaching examination of how a young female celebrity's media controversy is negotiated, and the role it plays in her star image whilst she is seen to be in a state of “becoming”, there is not space here to carry out such a case study. Rather, the focus in this chapter is on the second photograph, that of Miley and Billy Ray Cyrus, which generated far less discussions and reactions, and did not lead to such media controversy.

In the father-daughter photograph Billy Ray Cyrus casually sits on the floor, with one arm supporting him on the ground and the other holding onto Miley's hand; Miley is lying back against him, with her torso on his lap, her head resting on his arm, and her free hand placed on her thigh. The striking contrast between light and dark in

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 231

Leibovitz's photograph causes Billy Ray and Miley Cyrus's bare white skin to stand out against their black vests and dark denim jeans. The image is highly sensory, with emphasis placed on the act of touching.



Figure 21: Annie Leibovitz's father-daughter portrait of Miley and Billy Ray Cyrus for *Vanity Fair*.⁴⁵⁹

As Karen Lury states, “touch is so central to childhood and to sexuality”, with a differentiation between “the ‘good touch’ and the ‘bad touch’”.⁴⁶⁰ Lury’s argument is pertinent to this photograph:

Like the bride, a child can have their hand taken by another – and since we understand that to take possession of the hand implies in the marriage contract the possession of the whole self, “body and soul” and is therefore a metonymic gesture, this means that the action of holding another person’s hand is both a simple and erotic act.⁴⁶¹

What makes this photograph potentially “erotic” is Miley’s forward-directed hips and bare midriff, and Billy Ray Cyrus’s open lap into which his daughter’s upper body leans. What is claimed to be a casual instance of father-daughter bonding could be construed as highly sexual, with focus drawn to the erogenous zones. Furthermore, whilst Billy Ray looks away into the distance, Miley Cyrus looks directly into the camera, perhaps knowingly, controlling the erotic gaze. Billy Ray Cyrus’s hand appears considerably larger and stronger than Miley’s, covering her entire hand, connoting possessiveness. With his skin appearing tanned in comparison, and his

⁴⁵⁹ In Bruce Handy, “Miley Knows Best”, *Vanity Fair*, June 2008,

<<http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/features/2008/06/miley200806>> [accessed 4 June 2010]

⁴⁶⁰ Lury, Karen, *The Child in Film: Tears, Fears and Fairy Tales*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), p. 55

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.

limbs large and muscular rather than small and bony (her hip bone visibly protrudes), his heightened masculinity dominates the scene, and he exerts patriarchal authority over Miley Cyrus.

Lury argues that, (with reference to Shirley Temple), cuteness is bound up with whiteness in that it “makes respectable” the white father’s desire to control a little girl’s unruly behaviour and by extension her sexuality; the girl’s whiteness, and the father’s control of her sexuality, confirm the father’s racial identity and power, and determine the continued whiteness of his descendants.⁴⁶² The lack of “cuteness” in this photograph generates the discomfort felt by those claiming its “inappropriateness” in the online news, gossip and blog sites. The Cyrus’ possible “white trash” status risks emerging itself here in the image. This is signalled in the choice of clothing (Billy Ray’s vest, jeans and visible tattoos, and Miley Cyrus’s tight tank top bearing her midriff, and tight-fitting jeans). Any suggestion of an incestuous relationship could earn them the label “white trash”, with the common (and long-standing) negative association made between in-breeding and “hillbillies” in cultural constructions of Southern, rural, poor, large families. Such stereotypes can be found in popular culture from comic to horror genres.

In response to claims that the photograph with his daughter resembled that of two lovers, Billy Ray Cyrus stated on *The Today Show* (NBC, 1952-) in June 2008:

I’m sorry I offended somebody. That’s just a daddy who loves his daughter a whole lot [...]. Miley and I just got caught up in this adventure of this dream and what we do for a living and, again, we both love acting, we love making music, and we love each other. I’m her dad, she’s my daughter. If a daddy hasn’t hugged his daughter recently, I recommend he does.⁴⁶³

Here, Billy Ray Cyrus highlights the mutual dependency in his father-daughter relationship, justifying the nature of the photograph as an expression of appreciation for one another as they work together. Their mutual dependency is described as “natural” and necessary, as he articulates the way in which they have been “caught up in this adventure of this dream and what we do”, taking away the notion that their relationship (which can be read through the “incest motif”), and by extension the

⁴⁶² Ibid.

⁴⁶³ Billy Ray Cyrus, quoted in Mike Celezic, “Billy Ray: I Didn’t Know They’d ‘Strip Down’ Miley”, [NBCNews.com](http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/25205499#.UIbEr2eNOul), 17 June 2008, <<http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/25205499#.UIbEr2eNOul>> [accessed 23 October 2012]

photograph, are constructed; rather, they are “naturally” and “authentically” occurring.

It is interesting to note that in August 2008, just over three months after Miley Cyrus’s *Vanity Fair* photo controversy broke, Disney Channel aired the “Yet Another Side of Me” episode of *Hannah Montana* discussed earlier. I would suggest that this episode can be seen as a negotiation of the controversy, as Disney attempts to respond to the incident whilst embedding it within the narrative and overall brand of *Hannah Montana*. In the episode, Miley/Hannah turns to *her father* for advice on how to manage her transition into a more mature star image, a question that was reiterated several times and was at the centre of Bruce Handy’s interview with Miley Cyrus accompanying Leibovitz’s photographs. In it he asks the reader:

The real question is: How do you grow up in public, both as a person and as a commodity? For every Jodie Foster or Brooke Shields there are a dozen Gary Colemans. Michael Jackson’s face speaks volumes. So did Judy Garland’s medicine cabinet.⁴⁶⁴

Handy suggests that the Leibovitz photograph for *Vanity Fair* functioned in Miley Cyrus’s star persona as a step towards a more mature profile.⁴⁶⁵ It is significant that in the “Yet Another Side of Me” episode, Robby provides Miley/Hannah with the answer. She is unable to tackle this transition by herself, and her father is “naturally” the best figure to provide the guidance she needs, something which is justified in the narrative by Robby’s ability to draw upon his own previous experiences as a celebrity. Thus whilst during the *Vanity Fair* photo controversy, Miley Cyrus and Disney were required to provide explanations and apologies (Billy Ray Cyrus later provided comments, as demonstrated above on *The Today Show*), within the narrative of *Hannah Montana*, the father is *central* in carrying out the “damage control” following Hannah’s media controversies, and is the key figure in advising and guiding Miley/Hannah in her transition into young womanhood.

From the beginning of the series, the personae of Miley Cyrus, Miley Stewart and Hannah Montana were already blurred, and I would argue that the more the three personae grow up, the more the offscreen persona of Miley Cyrus becomes enmeshed within the onscreen persona of Miley/Hannah. The franchise further embeds the

⁴⁶⁴ Handy, “Miley Knows Best”

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

celebrity Miley Cyrus within *Hannah Montana* as a way of negotiating its “ageing” star’s transition into young womanhood. Whilst various strategies for embedding Cyrus within the franchise were employed across the duration of the four series, and within the multi-media extra-texts, these strategies were heightened in the fourth and final series. Series 4 began in 2010, and whilst this final series comprised of considerably fewer episodes than the previous three series, the narrative included a great deal more milestones in Miley’s “becoming”-woman. Over 13 episodes, Miley attends her senior year of high school and graduates, ends a romantic relationship and enters another, applies to and prepares to begin college, and ultimately must decide whether or not to go Stanford University in California with her best friend Lilly. As Hannah, she develops a new musical style (which is ambivalently received by her fans), reveals the secret of her double-life on television (then as Miley must deal publicly with the aftermath), and is offered a role in a Steven Spielberg film alongside Tom Cruise in Paris.

The final series features a number of guest stars playing themselves; whilst guest stars appeared in the previous three series, this number increased significantly in series 4. The use of music stars and television personalities such as Sheryl Crow and Jay Leno works to firmly situate Miley/Hannah in the “real”, and further embed Miley Cyrus within her onscreen persona. The franchise continually emphasises the onscreen/offscreen duality when the audience see Hannah removing her wig and becoming Miley again, or when she sings that she has “The best of both worlds”. As this chapter demonstrates, from the very first episode the tween viewer is “let in on the secret” and allowed access to the very construction of celebrity. Whilst the “real” can be found in the Miley side of the Miley/Hannah duality, by embedding Miley Cyrus firmly within this already complex duality, the tween finds the “real” and “authentic” in *Cyrus*, for example when listening to the series 2 soundtrack, *Hannah Montana 2/Meet Miley Cyrus*,⁴⁶⁶ or watching Hannah remove her wig backstage in *The Best of Both Worlds Concert* – with the help of real-life mother Tish Cyrus – and return to the stage as Miley Cyrus.

After revealing her secret dual-identity on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* (NBC, 1992-) in series 4, episode 9,⁴⁶⁷ episode 10⁴⁶⁸ was presented as an interview

⁴⁶⁶ Hannah Montana and Miley Cyrus, *Hannah Montana 2/Meet Miley Cyrus*, (Walt Disney Records and Hollywood Records, 5099950146321, 2007) [on CD]

⁴⁶⁷ “I’ll Always Remember You”, *Hannah Montana Forever*, (Disney Channel, 7 November 2010)

with Miley, reflecting on her career as Hannah and discussing her decision to end the dual persona. Within the narrative, the interview is carried out by Robin Roberts and broadcast on *Good Morning America* (ABC, 1975-), thus firmly placing this narrative milestone within the “real” world. More specifically, the “real” is located here in Miley Cyrus. Indeed, Corner’s notion of “selving” can be seen at work here (see Chapter 1). As the “true self” of Hannah Montana, Miley Stewart’s “true self” is here revealed to be Miley *Cyrus*. The tween is invited here to judge the “really” in *Hannah Montana*, in Miley Cyrus, supporting Gamson’s argument cited earlier in this chapter whereby in celebrity culture, the process of searching for the “real”, by considering the multiple possible selves of the celebrity, is more important than finally arriving at the “real”.⁴⁶⁹ Indeed, this episode in which Miley Stewart/Cyrus appears on *Good Morning America* uses irony in the way suggested by Gamson, and allows the tween viewer to “see the joke” of celebrity’s constructedness. Gamson argues that “The private self is no longer the ultimate truth”, but rather “truth” can be found in the “relentlessly performing public self.”⁴⁷⁰

In this episode with Robin Roberts, Miley reminisces beginning her role as Hannah. Miley states that “that’s what, at the end of the day, people did love about Hannah, is that she *was* real, because *I* was real”.⁴⁷¹ “I” here can be read as Cyrus-as-Miley/Hannah, rather than Miley-as-Hannah, complexly layering the on- and offscreen personae. The interview, whilst part of the *Hannah Montana* narrative, can be seen as an interview with Cyrus upon the series’ approaching end, preparing the tween for Cyrus’s eventual growing up and out of the role. However, before allowing Cyrus to fully move onto more mature roles independently of *Hannah Montana*, Miley states in the interview – direct to the camera, and therefore the tween viewer – “I’ll never say goodbye to Hannah. She’s always been a part of me, and always will be.” At the end of the interview, Miley Stewart asks that her fans love her as Miley; arguably this statement should be read as being delivered by the Miley *Cyrus* layer of the personae.

Between the broadcasts of the episode of Hannah revealing her secret and giving up her ordinary/extraordinary duality (“I’ll Always Remember You”), and the episode featuring Miley’s interview and reflection upon leaving behind that stage in

⁴⁶⁸ “Can You See the Real Me?”, *Hannah Montana Forever*, (Disney Channel, 5 December 2010)

⁴⁶⁹ Gamson, *Claims to Fame*, pp. 180-2

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 54

⁴⁷¹ Emphasis in original dialogue.

her life (“Can You See the Real Me?”), offscreen Miley Cyrus turned 18. Thus, to acknowledge that Cyrus had made the transition into adulthood offscreen, the series necessarily allows the Miley/Hannah duality to be broken down, whilst for the tween this transition is made sense of by a reminder that Cyrus’s star persona is embedded within the Miley/Hannah onscreen personae, and she is crystallised within the girlhood of *Hannah Montana*, particularly with the addition of “*Forever*” to the final series’ title.⁴⁷²

Whilst the series ends with Miley deciding to put the film opportunity on hold, and instead attend college at Stanford with Lilly, the *Hannah Montana Forever* series DVD boxset features the alternate ending within its bonus material.⁴⁷³ In this alternate ending, Miley and Lilly say goodbye at the airport as Miley leaves for her film role in Paris, and Lilly stays to attend college. Following a shot of a tween playing with a Hannah Montana doll in the airport lounge, we transition to the final scene, with subtitles telling us that we are now in “TENNESSEE, TWELVE YEARS AGO”. A young girl is playing in her bedroom with a Barbie doll dressed as a popstar, singing “I’m a rockin’ rock star, yes I are [sic]/ Miley Cyrus is a rockin’ rock star, gonna go real far, far, far far”. Thus, we are watching a young Miley Cyrus (Mary-Charles Jones) playing at her future role as Miley/Hannah. Cyrus’s real-life mother and father then enter her bedroom and tuck her into bed. Young Miley Cyrus tells her parents, “I really am gonna be a rock star someday. Just like daddy”.

⁴⁷² Miley/Miley/Hannah sings “I’ll Always Remember You”, on the series soundtrack; similar lyrics can be found in “Kiss It Goodbye”, “Love That Lets Go”, *Hannah Montana Forever*, (Walt Disney Records, 5099964697321, 2010) [on CD]; similar lyrics can also be heard in “Wherever I Go”, *The Best of Hannah Montana*, (Walt Disney Records, 5099908728821, 2011) [on CD].

⁴⁷³ “Alternate Ending: ‘Wherever I go’”, *Hannah Montana Forever: Final Season*, (Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment, 105982, 2011) [on DVD]



Figure 22: The “real”: Billy Ray, “Miley”, and Tish Cyrus, in the alternative ending to *Hannah Montana Forever*.

The “real” here, then, is intimately tied to the *family* – and more specifically in this case, the Southern, rural family. This alternate ending, then, supports the franchise’s – and the Cyrus’ star images’ – emphasis on the family and where one comes from as central to formulations of the “real” in their articulation of tweenhood. Just as she emphasises her Southern, rural identity within her autobiography, Miley Cyrus also highlights the importance of her *family* in her “becoming” throughout the book. Having established an “appropriate” version of “authenticity” through his own country music stardom for his daughter to learn from (country music has been culturally constructed as an inherently “authentic” genre of artistic expression),⁴⁷⁴ Miley follows in Billy Ray Cyrus’s footsteps.

Whilst himself a “hillbilly” (Miley Stewart refers to Robby Ray during the narrative with this label), Billy Ray Cyrus has not had to employ glamour in his performance of masculinity as a country music star, due to the unequal role class plays in gender (and celebrity) identities; rather, his southern, rural identity is emphasised in his “authentic” masculinity. Miley, on the other hand, must employ glamour in her alter-ego Hannah⁴⁷⁵ and remove her Tennessean identity from this persona, whilst paradoxically using that very identity as the source for her inherent

⁴⁷⁴ See Peterson, *Creating Country Music*; see also David Sanjek, “Blue Moon of Kentucky Rising Over the Mystery Train: The Complex Construction of Country Music”, and Mark Fenster, “Commercial (and/or?) Folk: The Bluegrass Identity and Bluegrass Traditions”, in Tichi, ed., *Reading Country Music*.

⁴⁷⁵ See for example Skeggs, *Formations of Class & Gender*, pp. 110-1.

“authenticity”.⁴⁷⁶ The scene then ends with a still photograph of Miley, Billy Ray and Tish Cyrus, thus firmly solidifying Miley Cyrus’s star persona within the *Hannah Montana* franchise, enmeshing all three personae of Miley, Miley and Hannah. Thus, regardless of Miley Cyrus’s claims that she is “breaking out” with her album *Breakout*,⁴⁷⁷ or that she “Can’t Be Tamed”,⁴⁷⁸ her offscreen persona becomes increasingly intimately tied to the Miley/Hannah persona.

Contemporary forms of celebrity and contemporary celebrity culture are not only incredibly *gendered*, but also *age*-defined. Much of celebrity culture centres on young females growing up, and the very transition these young females (such as Miley Cyrus) are making into young womanhood is a central part of their celebrity. It seems that tween popular culture remains ambivalent and uncomfortable in accepting or at least acknowledging that its young female characters and stars will eventually make the transition into adult womanhood: whilst Miley/Hannah’s “becoming”-woman is at the centre of the *Hannah Montana* brand, as the analysis in this chapter demonstrates, it employs narrative, ideological and visual strategies to retain Miley/Hannah within the transitional stage of female adolescence. Effectively, these strategies work to construct her as a *tween*.

Whilst Miley/Hannah is a symbolic tween constructed by Disney, one of the leading providers of tween popular culture, the *Hannah Montana* brand and Miley Cyrus’s star persona effectively articulate the *father* as central in the girl’s development of a gendered identity. One might even read the Hannah side of the dual persona as a creation of Robby: the series informs the tween viewer that Hannah Montana was created after the death of Miley’s mother, and Robby’s wife. In the first two series of *Hannah Montana* (before Hannah underwent an offscreen change of image, appearing more “girly” in series 3 and 4), Hannah appears as a child playing at being an adult; in this way she could be seen as a replacement mother/wife figure, a visible manifestation of Robby’s coping with losing his wife. A consideration of Karlyn’s “incest motif” certainly allows for such a reading.

By employing celebrity as an allegory for growing up female, with the parallels of “becoming”-woman and “becoming”-celebrity used to make sense of the

⁴⁷⁶ A similar contradictory mix of identities and meanings can be seen in Dolly Parton’s star image; see Wilson, “Mountains of Contradictions”.

⁴⁷⁷ Miley Cyrus, “Breakout”, *Breakout*, (Hollywood Records, 8712898, 2008) [on CD]

⁴⁷⁸ Released as a single in 2010, from *Can’t Be Tamed*, (Hollywood Records, D000629702, 2010) [on CD].

tween's own transitional identity, *Hannah Montana* normalises the desire to "become" famous. Stars and celebrities' balance of performance and authenticity is paralleled with girls' balancing of gender performativity and "keeping it real". I do not wish to overstate (as many cultural commentators tend to do) the idea that today's generation of tweens all share an obsessive aspiration to become celebrities. Instead I would like to emphasise that the normalisation of the experience of "becoming"-celebrity works to stress the importance within tween popular culture of an investment in celebrity culture. Regardless of whether or not the tween viewer actually wants to "become" famous herself, she is nonetheless taught or reminded of the necessity to have an emotional investment in, and actively consume, celebrity. Such narratives of celebrity as *Hannah Montana* and its star Miley Cyrus work to guide the tween in her development of an appropriately "authentic" feminine self, through the emphasis on the celebrification of tween selfhood. Celebrity here then can be seen as a pedagogic tool in articulating the discourse of the self, playing a central role in the production of the self,⁴⁷⁹ in this case the *transitional* self of the tween as she grows up female.

As Duits and van Romondt Vis argue, "celebrities offer audiences a perfect opportunity to engage in questions of authenticity and an ideal of individual autonomy".⁴⁸⁰ The use of celebrity as an allegory for growing up female in *Hannah Montana* – the celebrification of tween selfhood – works to teach the tween of the necessity of a neoliberal process of self-surveillance and investment in and maintenance of authenticity in her own "becoming"-woman. However, as noted by Duits and van Romondt Vis, "The repertoire of authenticity and the reflexive nature of the sense-making process especially hinder the notion of the neo-liberal subject", and "The norm of authenticity restrains experimentation and limits choice".⁴⁸¹ According to the scripts of tween femininity claimed by *Hannah Montana*, authenticity is an inherent quality, located largely within the family and one's roots, and can be brought to the surface through a makeover-esque transformation that needs to be continually repeated to ensure the authenticity is maintained. Furthermore, this transformative process of both "becoming"-woman and "becoming"-celebrity is of course predicated on consumption, whether that be through purchasing the music

⁴⁷⁹ David P Marshall, "The Promotion and Presentation of the Self: Celebrity as Marker of Presentational Media", *Celebrity Studies*, 1.1 (2010), p. 36; see also Allen and Mendick, "Young People's Uses of Celebrities".

⁴⁸⁰ Duits and van Romondt Vis, "Girls Make Sense", p. 43

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., p. 55

album soundtracks, the official magazines, or cinema tickets for the theatrical films. Thus the “authentic” femininity that the franchise claims becomes redundant, and yet the tween has already begun the cycle of self-surveilling transformation, which is firmly upheld and reinforced in postfeminist popular culture for adult women.

CHAPTER 6:

FALLING IN LOVE WITH THE JONAS BROTHERS

Thus far I have discussed tween popular culture's construction of the girl-“becoming”-woman as a gendered (that is, feminine) self. What I have not yet fully explored is the girl's development of sexuality – a central facet in the girl's transitional self as she progresses towards womanhood. Furthermore, whilst the previous chapters have analysed films, television programmes, popular music and celebrities predominantly featuring *girls* in the leading roles, here I turn my attention to a multi-media tween brand featuring *boys* at its centre. In the second of the two gendered case studies, this chapter takes as its focus the Jonas Brothers in order to explore tween popular culture's address to, and indeed construction of, the tween as a girl “becoming”-woman, developing and discovering a sexual identity.

This chapter argues that the Jonas Brothers are carefully placed within the Disney discourse of tween media and are closely associated with *Hannah Montana*; they are constructed as highly romantically desirable to the tween. Whilst continuing in the cultural tradition of rock and teenybop genres, as a tween brand the representation of the Jonas Brothers employs various ideological strategies to ensure their star personae are made “safe”. Key to these strategies is the blurring of the on- and off-screen personae of the three brothers. As with the texts analysed in previous chapters, “authenticity” is central to the Jonas Brothers brand image, and the “authentic” in this case is located within Christian Right family values and the band's association with the abstinence movement. These values are significant in the Jonas Brothers' addressing the tween as a potentially “true” and “authentic” fan. Whilst the brand acknowledges young feminine sexuality, it negotiates the cultural anxieties of this taboo subject by not only addressing the tween as desiring, but also (importantly) as *desirable*. It requires the tween to turn to *herself* and transform that self into an “appropriately” desirable one. As such, the tween is constructed as a neoliberal, self-surveilling, transforming subject.

In a shift from the previous case study, this chapter carries out a greater level of contextual analysis, placing the Jonas Brothers star personae and multi-media brand within a socio-political discourse in which the Christian Right comes to prominence. Furthermore, the texts are discussed within a cultural context in which a

purity movement can be seen to emerge and grow. The analysis offered here reveals a number of gendered disparities between the girl-centred and boy-centred texts of tween popular culture, particularly in the construction of star personae. What it also reveals, however, is the striking narrative and ideological semblances between the Jonas Brothers' texts and those of *Hannah Montana*: "authenticity", neoliberal transformation, and the father-daughter (and later husband-wife) relationship are all key in their address to and construction of the tween-“becoming”-woman.

The Jonas Brothers are comprised of Kevin, Joe and Nick, siblings and primarily music artists. Their popularity and association with Disney dates to 2007 when they were signed to Hollywood Records (part of the Disney Music Group) and they appeared as themselves in a series 2 episode of *Hannah Montana*. Between 2007 and 2009 they released three music albums with Hollywood Records; and in 2008 and 2010 they starred in Disney Channel Original Movies *Camp Rock* and *Camp Rock 2* as fictional band Connect 3, also featuring on the films' music soundtracks. They starred in the Disney Channel reality TV series *Jonas Brothers: Living the Dream* (Disney Channel 2008-2010), the theatrically released *Jonas Brothers: 3D Concert Experience* (2009), and the Disney Channel sitcom loosely based on themselves as music artists, *Jonas* (Disney Channel 2009-2010),⁴⁸² also featuring in the music soundtrack. Whilst the Jonas Brothers were an established band between 2005 and 2007, and the brothers have gone on to expand their careers independent of one another in various media since their Disney Channel sitcom ended in 2010, the focus of this chapter will be on the Jonas Brothers' 2007-2010 Disney-associated period. This will allow for a discussion of the band's – and brand's – relationship to the Disney Channel's *Hannah Montana*, and to place the analysis of gendered celebrity within the conservative ideological context of the Disney brand.

The Jonas Brothers were introduced as a Disney tween brand through *Hannah Montana*, firstly with their appearance in season 2 episode 16,⁴⁸³ and secondly by supporting and performing with Miley Cyrus/Hannah Montana in the *Hannah Montana & Miley Cyrus: Best of Both Worlds Tour*. Soon after, this was released theatrically and on DVD as a 3D concert film in 2008. The Jonas Brothers' appearance as themselves in the series 2 episode of *Hannah Montana* was broadcast

⁴⁸² The second series was retitled *Jonas L.A.*, following the band's move from New Jersey to California at the end of the first series.

⁴⁸³ “Me and Mr Jonas and Mr Jonas and Mr Jonas”, *Hannah Montana*, (Disney Channel, 18 August 2007)

after the Disney Channel's premier of its Original Movie *High School Musical 2*, which became the most-watched basic cable telecast of all time, with 17.24 million viewers; the *Hannah Montana* episode was watched by 10.7 million viewers – at the time the most ever for a series telecast on basic cable.⁴⁸⁴ The theatrical release of the *Best of Both Worlds Concert* broke records, including the highest box-office total for a Super Bowl weekend, and the highest grossing opening weekend for a 3D or a concert film.⁴⁸⁵ Disney's strategic introduction of the Jonas Brothers into their output of tween brands ensured maximum exposure of the band to millions of already-loyal tween viewers. The band also gained an association with *Hannah Montana*, which Disney boasted in 2007 was the third most-watched tween television programme in 2007,⁴⁸⁶ and which (according to *People* magazine) had projected merchandise sales for the 2007-2008 fiscal year of \$1 billion.⁴⁸⁷ Whilst the band had been relatively unknown until 2007, such exposure through and association with *Hannah Montana* helped generate their almost instant phenomenal popularity within tween popular culture.

The series 2 episode of *Hannah Montana*, employs narrative strategies to address the tween viewer as “naturally” developing heterosexual romantic desire (which tween popular culture claims is “naturally” part of “becoming”-woman); these narrative strategies are further used to guide the tween in directing this desire towards the Jonas Brothers. In the episode, Hannah barges in on the band as they practice at the recording studio; she is visibly excited when she sees the brothers, exclaiming: “Sweet mamma it’s the Jonas Brothers!”,⁴⁸⁸ accompanied by the live audience’s cheers and applause. The tween viewer is encouraged to share Hannah’s reaction of excitement and expression of humility toward the Jonas Brothers, and is offered the studio audience as an identificatory position via their cheers and screams. As the

⁴⁸⁴ Nellie Andreeva, “‘High School Musical 2’ Upstages TV Records”, *The Hollywood Reporter*, 19 August 2007, <www.lexisnexis.com> [accessed 27 October 2012]

⁴⁸⁵ Shawn Adler, “‘Hannah Montana’ Is Best Of Box Office, Breaks Records For Concert Movies”, *MTV.com*, 4 February 2008, <<http://www.mtv.com/news/articles/1580854/hannah-montana-best-box-office.jhtml>> [accessed 27 October 2012]; Joseph V. Tirella, “The Billion Dollar Girl”, *Portfolio.com*, 7 February 2008, <<http://upstart.bizjournals.com/culture-lifestyle/culture-inc/arts/2008/02/07/Hannah-Montanas-Earning-Potential.html?page=all>> [accessed 27 October 2012]

⁴⁸⁶ “Tweens”, <https://www.disneyconsumerproducts.com/Home/display.jsp?contentId=dcp_home_ourfranchises_disney_tween_uk&forPrint=false&language=en&preview=false&imageShow=0&pressRoom=UK&translati> [accessed 2 March 2012]

⁴⁸⁷ Mark D'Agostino, Mary Green, Lisa Ingrassia, Eileen Finan, Mary Margaret, Hitha Prabhakar, and Monica Rizzo, “Hollywood’s Richest Kids”, *People*, 5 May 2008,

<<http://www.people.com/people/archive/article/0,,20196091,00.html>> [accessed 28 October 2012]

⁴⁸⁸ Emphasis in original dialogue.

previous chapter demonstrates, Miley/Hannah – and the star persona Miley Cyrus – are constructed as the trusted point of guidance, or site through which, the tween “becomes” a young woman. Having gained the loyalty of tween viewers, she arguably has the power to persuade such viewers to pursue the Jonas Brothers as a site through which to direct their developing heterosexual romantic desire, and to consume them as a multi-media brand. Similarly, when introducing the band’s arrival onstage during the *Best of Both Worlds Concert* film, Hannah asks the arena audience to get ready and stand up out of their seats in anticipation. Thus, whilst at this point the band would have been relatively unknown to the tween audience, they are nevertheless presented as successful and highly desirable.⁴⁸⁹

The Jonas Brothers’ construction as suitable tween pin-ups relies in part on the approval secured from the tween’s parent(s). This is evident in the Jonas Brothers’ introduction on *Hannah Montana*; the narrative centres on Miley’s father, Robby, spending a great deal of time having fun with the Jonas Brothers and writing songs for them, which makes Miley jealous.⁴⁹⁰ Therefore, if the father of tween popular culture’s ideal neoliberal girl icon approves of and enjoys the company of the Jonas Brothers, then the tween consumer, and her parents, are assured that they are “safe” and “suitable” sites for the tween’s romantic desire. Such parental approval carries over into the offscreen star personae of Miley and Billy Ray Cyrus, during the 2006–2007 relationship between Miley Cyrus and Nick Jonas.⁴⁹¹ Their dating is playfully suggested in the “Me and Mr Jonas and Mr Jonas and Mr Jonas” episode of *Hannah Montana*, as Nick seems besotted with Hannah, telling her “you’re pretty” twice when he meets her, and Hannah flutters her eyelashes and speaks softly as she introduces Nick as the “cute sensitive one”. Robby then breaks their handshake, introducing himself to the brothers as “her daddy: the cute protective one.” As Chapter 4 argues, tween popular culture claims that the ideal figure to guide the tween in her “becoming”-woman is “naturally” and (paradoxically) “extraordinarily” the father. By extension, then, the father is also claimed to be the central figure in guiding the

⁴⁸⁹ See Andrew Goodwin, who recognises such manipulation techniques used within the music industry, in *Dancing in the Distraction Factory: Music Television and Popular Culture*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), p. 106.

⁴⁹⁰ This also supports the “incest motif” discussed in the Chapters 4 and 5.

⁴⁹¹ Cyrus, *Miles to Go*, p. 152, p. 196; whilst the relationship was kept private (Miley refers to Nick only as “Prince Charming” in her 2008 autobiography), rumours circulated in the celebrity news and gossip outlets at the time, and both Miley and Nick have since confirmed and discussed it publicly; see for example Liz McNeil, “Miley: Nick Jonas and I ‘Were In Love’”, *People*, 7 August 2008, <<http://www.people.com/people/article/0,,20217447,00.html>> [accessed 16 July 2011].

daughter in the development of a *sexual* identity as part of her feminine self, a relationship that continues a model which has been depicted in culture for centuries – particularly in fairy-tales.

The tween is encouraged to express her desire through the identificatory subject position of fans, located in the site of the hysterical crowd. This is most clearly demonstrated during the opening sequence of *The 3D Concert Experience*: after witnessing the brothers being woken up by their security guard early one morning whilst on tour, the viewer watches as they eat breakfast and discuss their schedule. This opening sequence is filmed in the style of observational documentary. Following breakfast in the hotel suite, the sequence cuts to the interior of a four-by-four vehicle in which the brothers are being driven to the concert venue; however, they have become caught in a traffic jam. In what becomes clearly a staged event, the brothers realise they are going to be late for their own concert, and consider alternative ways of getting to the venue. Many fans are visible in the traffic jam, also on their way to the concert; they spot the Jonas Brothers and hysteria breaks out. The Jonas Brothers' stationary car becomes mobbed by screaming fans, so they decide to leave via the sunroof and run along the roofs and bonnets of other stationary cars. They run through the streets towards the roof of a building, where a helicopter is waiting to take them to the concert; the band is followed the entire way by screaming fans waving their arms and carrying signs.

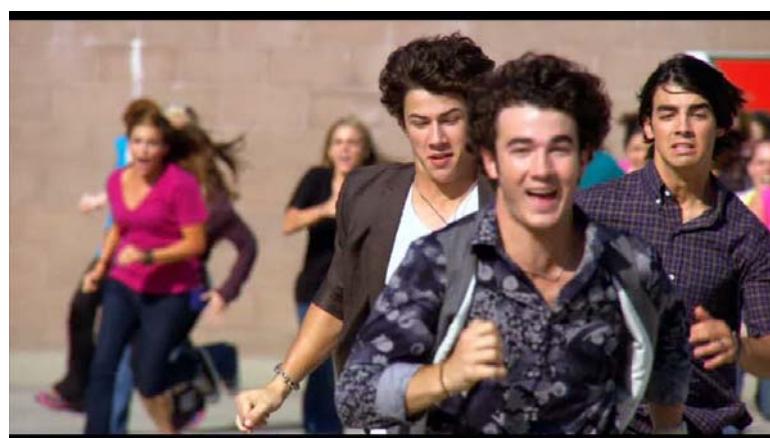


Figure 23: The Jonas Brothers running from hysterical young, female fans in *Jonas Brothers: 3D Concert Experience*.

With a sense of urgency and danger, the band is presented as highly successful, famous and desirable; this sequence thus works in the same way as the band's

introduction through *Hannah Montana*: they are constructed as perhaps more well-known than they really are at this point in their career (the concert film did not do as well as anticipated during its theatrical release).⁴⁹² The identificatory position of the hysterical mass of fans continues into the concert itself, with numerous reaction shots from within the audience, of screaming, crying fans, with t-shirts, face-paint and signs displaying their desire for the Jonas Brothers.



Figure 24: Point of identification: the hysterical crowd.

Whilst audience shots are common in concert films (recent tween feature-length concert films *High School Musical: The Concert – Extreme Access Pass* [2007] and *The Best of Both Worlds Concert* employ this technique), what is significant in the *Jonas Brothers* concert film is the onscreen audience profile and its response. Whereas in *High School Musical: The Concert* and *The Best of Both Worlds Concert* the audiences visibly comprise of tweens, many of whom are accompanied by parents or guardians, ecstatically singing along with the stars on stage, the *Jonas Brothers* concert shows only tweens and teenage girls, apparently unaccompanied by adults, singing along, and also *crying* with a mixture of desperation to be near to and to touch the Jonas Brothers, and for an overwhelmed sense of disbelief and euphoria that they are watching the band live, in person. Therefore the point of identification for the tween audience watching the concert film in the cinema or at home is not only the tween or teenage girl experiencing happiness within a community of similarly happy girls, to be physically within the same place as their media idol, and to be demonstrating their knowledge of and dedication to the celebrity (by singing all of the

⁴⁹² Jennifer Armstrong, “Jonas Brothers Come Up Short at the Box Office”, *Entertainment Weekly*, 6 March 2009, <<http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,20263162,00.html>> [accessed 29 October 2012]

lyrics); in this case, the point of identification is also the *hysterical* girl who displays an almost uncontrollable heterosexual romantic desire towards the celebrities on stage. As such, texts within the Jonas Brothers brand, in particular the 3D concert film, can be seen to support Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber's notion of teenybopper culture as offering girls a chance to actively define themselves as being part of a subculture.⁴⁹³ Thus the gendered reception of these Disney Channel stars – Miley/Hannah and the Jonas brothers – is claimed to be significantly different, and the tween is guided in such gendered reception through the onscreen audience described here.

In their discussion of “Beatlemania”, Barbara Ehrenreich, Elizabeth Hess and Gloria Jacobs critique the way in which terms such as “mayhem” and “religious idolatry” were used to describe the young female fandom of the Beatles during the 1960s; they note the way in which the phenomenon was seen as “an extremity of feeling usually reserved for football games or natural disasters”;⁴⁹⁴ they identify the hysteria with language such as “screaming, sobbing, incontinent”.⁴⁹⁵ Such (often derogatory) descriptions can be seen in journalistic coverage of the apparent hysteria surrounding the Jonas Brothers and in interviews with the band, such as Chitra Ramaswamy's 2009 interview in *Scotland on Sunday*: she describes the “growing throng of teenage girls [...], lollipops in their cheeks and boy bands on their minds” and later says how there is “fainting, weeping and screaming”, even comparing the behaviour to that of Beatlemania,⁴⁹⁶ (a comparison similarly made by a number of other articles). The Jonas Brothers are discursively constructed, then, as a definitive teenybop band and as exemplary tween pin-ups, in part by the language used in journalistic coverage of the band's fans. The Jonas Brothers are positioned as continuing a 60 year old cultural tradition of male teenybop stardom, providing as

⁴⁹³ Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber, “Girls and Subcultures”, in Ken Gelder, ed., *The Subcultures Reader*, (Oxon: Routledge, Second Edition, 2005), p. 112; see also Sheryl Garratt, who argues that part of the appeal of such music fandom is the comradeship of girls identifying with one another, “Teenage Dreams”, in Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin, eds, *On Record: Rock, Pop & the Written Word*, (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 401; similarly, McRobbie and Simon Frith note the way in which music allows the opportunity for girls to express a collective identity, teenybop solidarity, “Rock and Sexuality”, in McRobbie, *Feminism & Youth Culture*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, Second Edition, 2000), pp. 148-9.

⁴⁹⁴ Barbara Ehrenreich, Elizabeth Hess and Gloria Jacobs, “Beatlemania: Girls Just Want to Have Fun”, in Lisa A. Lewis, ed., *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 85-86

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 90

⁴⁹⁶ Chitra Ramaswamy, “The Jonas Brothers Interview: Faith, Pop and Chastity”, *Scotland on Sunday*, 17 May 2009, <<http://scotlandonsunday.scotsman.com/sos-review/The-Jonas-Brothers-interview-Faith.5272752.jp>> [accessed 22 June 2011]

pin-ups therefore, the site to which girls “naturally” direct their hysteria and fantasies of desire⁴⁹⁷ – and such girls learn this “natural” behaviour towards the band from watching and identifying with the crowd in *The 3D Concert Experience*, and watching and reading about coverage of the brothers in the media.⁴⁹⁸

Fandom, and by extension desire, of the Jonas Brothers are presented as being legitimised and confirmed through the collection of artefacts and knowledge about the band. That is, such collecting, and building of knowledge, works to prove one’s “*authentic*” fandom – that one is a “*true*” fan of the Jonas Brothers. Melanie Nash and Martti Lahti similarly argue that with regards to young female fandom of Leonardo DiCaprio during the 1990s, “collection is an expression of devotion, where quantity of accumulation translates into quality of fandom and the *proof of sincerity*.⁴⁹⁹ The Jonas Brothers appeared on the cover of *Rolling Stone* magazine in 2008 and again in 2009, as well as featuring in a 2009 special Jonas Brothers collector’s edition. These issues offer an opportunity for the tween to demonstrate her “*true*” fan status by going beyond tween popular culture’s existing Jonas Brothers texts. However, the band’s appearance in three issues of the magazine does not allow us to straightforwardly discuss them as a tween brand, and indeed problematises their status as “teenybopper” stars. The magazine claims to offer “Bold stories. Big interviews. Insightful commentary” and it defines its audience as “irreveran[t]”.⁵⁰⁰ This description certainly does not fit with the construction of the tween examined in this thesis. The magazine’s demographic profile is made up of over 60 per cent male readers, primarily aged between 18 and 24.⁵⁰¹ One might argue that the *parents* of tween Jonas Brothers fans would have purchased the issues; in such instances, ideologically the parents secure authority over their daughters’ developing desire, which is directed

⁴⁹⁷ For a discussion of teenybop culture and male stardom, see McRobbie and Frith, “Rock and Sexuality”.

⁴⁹⁸ Ehrenreich et al. suggest that American girls knew how to behave upon the Beatles’ arrival from the UK in the 1960s, having watched coverage of “Beatlemania” in the UK via television; this technique can be seen at work in the Jonas Brothers’ *multi-media* Disney branded texts. See “Beatlemania”, p. 86, p. 99.

⁴⁹⁹ Melanie Nash and Martti Lahti, “‘Almost Ashamed to Say I Am One of Those Girls’: *Titanic*, Leonardo DiCaprio, and the Paradoxes of Girls’ Fandom”, in Kevin S. Sandler and Gaylyn Studlar, eds, *Titanic: Anatomy of a Blockbuster*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999), p. 70, my emphasis.

⁵⁰⁰ *Rolling Stone* Media Kit, <<http://www.srds.com/mediakits/rollingstone/index.html>> [accessed 29 October 2012]

⁵⁰¹ *Rolling Stone* Reader Profile, <<http://www.srds.com/mediakits/rollingstone/demographics.html>> [accessed 29 October 2012]

towards “appropriately” heterosexually desirable boys, as claimed not only by the Disney Channel, but as demonstrated by the cover photographs.

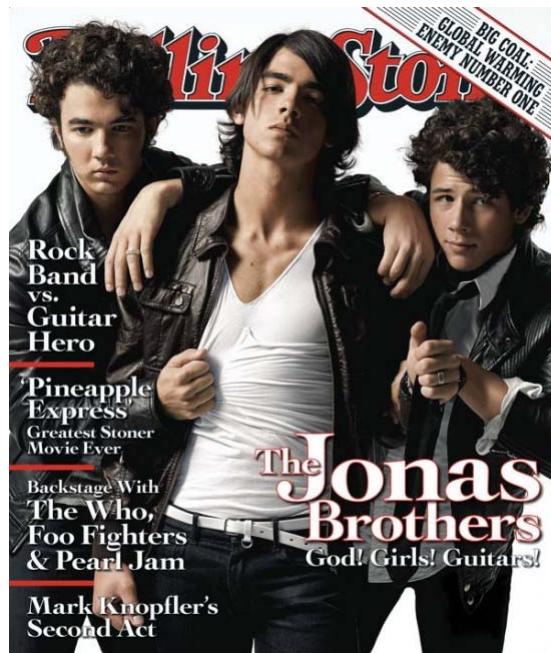


Figure 25: On the cover of *Rolling Stone* in 2008.⁵⁰²

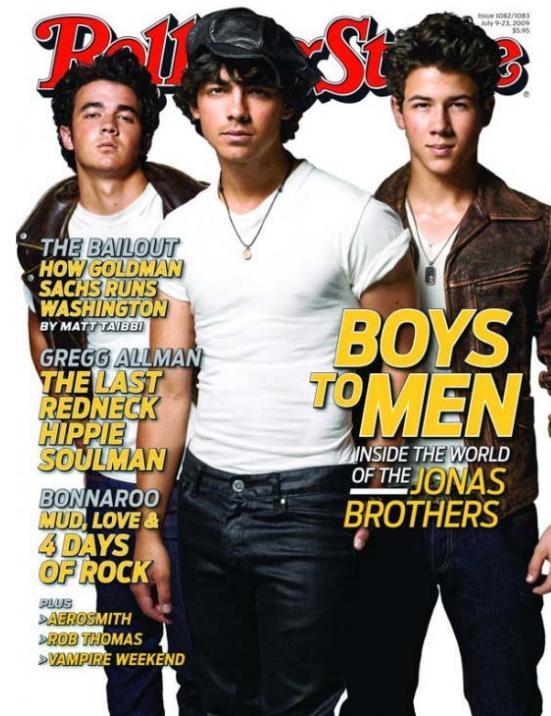


Figure 26: On the cover of *Rolling Stone* in 2009.⁵⁰³

⁵⁰² *Rolling Stone*, 7 August 2008

⁵⁰³ *Rolling Stone*, 9 July 2009

The band's appearance on the cover of *Rolling Stone* – twice – claims their status as *rock*-pop stars. The magazine's constructed audience, and actual demographic profile, of adult “irreverent” males interested in liberal politics and rock and roll “legends”, leaves an imprint on the band's star persona after having appeared on the cover. Both cover photographs of the band give further weight to their status as not just tween pop stars, but rock stars: in both images, the brothers (particularly Joe) look brooding, and they share the covers with captions referencing legendary rock artists including the somewhat controversial band The Who. The monochrome colours, emphasised by the brothers' tight white t-shirts and leather jackets, and the iconic red magazine header, exert masculinity, authority and rock. This could be seen to cause a disjuncture in the band's image as a Disney tween brand. Angela McRobbie and Simon Frith argue that “Of all the mass media rock is the most explicitly concerned with sexual expression”, and that in order to make sense of rock music's construction of masculinity – “rock is a male form” – it is useful to explore “cock rock” versus “teenybop”.⁵⁰⁴ They state that “Cock rock shows are explicitly about male sexual performance” attended by and listened to by males, and that “The cock rock image is the rampant destructive male traveller, smashing hotels and groupies alike”.⁵⁰⁵ By contrast, “Teenybop [...] is consumed almost exclusively by girls”, and “The teenybop idol's image is based on self-pity, vulnerability, and need. The image is of the young boy next door”.⁵⁰⁶ On their *Rolling Stone* covers, the Jonas Brothers seem to sit somewhere between these two types of rock masculinity.

This is further emphasised in the 2009 *Rolling Stone* interview with the band, in which Joe Jonas states that he compares his role within the band to that of the Rolling Stones' front man, Mick Jagger.⁵⁰⁷ This point for comparison is elaborated in a 2008 interview with the Jonas Brothers in the *Times*:

“And I would love to meet Mick Jagger. A lot of what I do on stage is Mick Jagger-inspired. I love the way he performs and how he dances.” You wonder about this. Joe Jonas, purity-ring wearer, wanting to know what put the Jaggerness in Jagger. Should I tell him it was lots of sex?⁵⁰⁸

⁵⁰⁴ McRobbie, and Frith, “Rock and Sexuality”, p. 137, p. 140

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 140, p. 141

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 141

⁵⁰⁷ Joe Jonas, quoted in Eliscu, Jenny, “Boys to Men”, *Rolling Stone*, 9 July 2009, <<http://web.ebscohost.com>> [accessed 28 June 2011]

⁵⁰⁸ Joe Jonas, quoted in Chrissy Iley, “The Jonas Brothers: No Need to Lock Up Your Daughters”, *The Times*, 30 November 2008,

Joe's choice of Jagger as his inspiration, as noted by Chrissy Iley in this interview, sits uncomfortably with his role as a tween pin-up; indeed, Jagger is cited as a cock rock performer in McRobbie and Frith's work.⁵⁰⁹ However, I would argue that rather than disrupting the band's star personae as sites for directing tweens' developing (compulsory) heterosexual desire, their appearance on *Rolling Stone* works to legitimise their "achieved" celebrity status, and to prove their "authenticity" – that is, to demonstrate their status as "naturally" talented music artists and as deserving of their celebrity. Such "authenticity" in turn further validates their status as "appropriate" boys to which the tween should direct her desire.

The tween is offered a vast amount of details regarding the brothers' biographies, interests and tastes, in the *Rolling Stone* collector's edition, the official *Burning Up* tour book,⁵¹⁰ and the *Living the Dream* reality TV series; in the case of the book and magazine special issue, such details are accompanied by a large amount of photographs. The *Rolling Stone* collector's edition contains a quiz, asking the reader "What's Your Jonas IQ?", the answers to which the reader would only know if they have read very closely the entire magazine. By developing an extensive knowledge of the Jonas Brothers, (including their nickname for their grandmother), the tween is offered potential power and pleasure, and legitimisation of their fandom and desire. Such dedication is encouraged and supports tween popular culture's (and contemporary media more broadly) investment in and promotion of the "real". These texts encourage the tween to search for the "real" in the Jonas Brothers, with the understanding that such collection of texts and knowledge of the "true" Jonas Brothers will affirm their status as an "authentic" fan.

Furthermore, the promise of exclusivity is claimed through such collection of knowledge and artefacts, which further supports McRobbie and Garber, and McRobbie and Frith's suggestion that girls develop their own community through teenybopper culture: the official Jonas Brothers fan club boasts exclusivity and connection to other likewise legitimate and devoted fans. By joining "Team Jonas" for an annual subscription of \$35, the tween is given access to members-only forums,

<http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/music/article5244849.ece>
[accessed 22 June 2011]

⁵⁰⁹ McRobbie and Frith, "Rock and Sexuality", p. 140

⁵¹⁰ Joe Jonas, Kevin Jonas and Nick Jonas, *Burning Up: On Tour with the Jonas Brothers*, (London: Puffin Books, 2009)

chat and blogs on [JonasBrothersFanClub.com](http://www.jonasbrothersfanclub.com),⁵¹¹ and is allowed to buy official “Team Jonas” merchandise through the official Jonas Brothers merchandise website (membership must be proven in order to purchase a “Team Jonas Varsity” t-shirt).⁵¹² What this suggests, then, is that in addition to finding the “real” Jonas Brothers, one can effectively *buy* “authentic” fandom status. Indeed, such evidence of the Jonas Brothers’ “true” selves can be sought largely through purchasing: in the *Rolling Stone* collector’s edition, the *Burning Up* official tour book, and a subscription to the Disney Channel in order to watch *Living the Dream*. The more the tween consumes and the more money she spends, paradoxically the more “authentic” her fandom becomes, according to the Jonas Brothers brand. This goes against Anton’s conceptualisation of authenticity in relation to selfhood, who argues that authentic selfhood cannot be bestowed by purchased artefacts.⁵¹³ Rather, it does support Arnould and Price’s argument that consumption can provide the foundation for the individual’s authentic self; that is, consumption can be an authenticating act.⁵¹⁴ Becoming an “expert” and demonstrating one’s “true” desire for the Jonas Brothers is expensive, and requires parental authority: in order to subscribe to “Team Jonas” and buy the merchandise, a bank card is required – something presumably most tweens would not have. Securing parental agreement to purchase within the Jonas Brothers brand effectively secures parental approval of the brothers as appropriate tween pin-ups.

Ahead of the series premier of *Jonas*, Gary Marsh, entertainment president of Disney Channels Worldwide, claimed that the sitcom was comparable to *The Monkees* (NBC, 1966-1968),⁵¹⁵ and producer Roger Schulman stated that Beatles films *A Hard Day’s Night* (1964) and *Help!* (1965) were “very much a template” for the sitcom.⁵¹⁶ Jill Serjeant asks “Could the Jonas Brothers become the next Beatles? Or merely the new Monkees?”,⁵¹⁷ and Paige Wiser even matches the Lucas brothers

⁵¹¹ <<http://www.jonasbrothersfanclub.com/service/subscribe/>> [accessed 17 July 2011]

⁵¹² <http://www.jonasbrothersmerch.com/index.php?main_page=index&cPath=5> [accessed 17 July 2011]

⁵¹³ Anton, *Selfhood and Authenticity*, p. 151

⁵¹⁴ Arnould and Price, “Authenticating Acts and Authoritative Performances”, p. 145

⁵¹⁵ Gary Marsh, quoted in Rob Owen, “Disney Backing Them Up Again: Jonases Promoted Into a Sitcom”, *U-T San Diego*, 1 May 2009,

<<http://www.utsandiego.com/news/2009/may/01/lz1c01jonas185957-disney-backing-them-again-jonase/>> [accessed 27 October 2012]

⁵¹⁶ Roger Schulman, quoted in Jill Serjeant, “Beatles Films Inspire New Jonas Brothers TV Show”, *Reuters.com*, 16 January 2009, <<http://www.reuters.com/assets/print?aid=USN1631149420090117>> [accessed 27 October 2012]

⁵¹⁷ Ibid.

with their corresponding Monkees predecessors.⁵¹⁸ Such comparisons circulating in the media before the series premier ensured its – and the band’s – status as belonging to the teenybop genre, with the associated expectation of their roles as tween pin-ups. The sitcom centres on three brothers, Kevin, Joe and Nick Lucas, who make up the well-known and successful band Jonas. They live with their parents and younger brother Frankie (played by their real-life brother Frankie) in New Jersey, and attend high school. The brothers try to live “ordinary” lives as teenagers at home and school when they are not writing, recording or performing music as a band.

This first episode highlights a number of significant gendered differences from *Hannah Montana*, which also centres on a young music star trying to balance an “ordinary” life with an “extraordinary” celebrity life. First, the Lucas brothers do not attempt to disguise their identity as music stars, instead choosing to attend a regular school as themselves. This highlights a disjuncture between *Jonas* and the Jonas Brothers’ offscreen celebrity, articulated thus far. Their star personae suggest they are unable to carry out “ordinary” everyday tasks without risk of being barraged by hysterical fans: documentary footage in *The 3D Concert Experience* shows the brothers being grabbed by fans waiting behind railings – some of whom climb over the barriers – during media appearances, and fans trying to grab the brothers’ feet and hands as they perform on stage – again, some fans appear to break onto the stage and hug the brothers. In *Jonas*, however, the brothers are fully capable of attending school, having to deal only with fellow school student (and now friend of the band) and fan, Macy’s, occasionally distracting hysterical behaviour. Furthermore, whilst *Hannah Montana* regularly features hired professionals to carry out various tasks within Hannah’s career (see for example the previous chapter for a discussion of Hannah working with a designer to help her with her star image), in *Jonas*, the brothers draw upon friends and family for such roles – their close female friend and schoolmate Stella designs and creates the band’s outfits. According to the two programmes, then, it seems that young *male* celebrities do not require strategies to ensure they can have the “best of both worlds” in the same way that is required for young *female* celebrities. That is, this major difference between the two programmes

⁵¹⁸ Paige Wiser, “‘JONAS’ Review: Better than ‘Hannah’. Slightly.”, *Chicago Sun-Times*, 30 April 2009, <http://blogs.suntimes.com/tv/2009/04/jonas_review_better_than_hanna.html> [accessed 27 October 2012]; Similarly, Joe Caramanica compares the programme to *The Monkees* in his review for *The New York Times*, “Television Review – ‘Jonas’: The Private Lives of Pop Stars, Male Division”, 2 May 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/02/arts/television/02jona.html?_r=0> [accessed 27 October 2012].

seems to suggest that girls *need* more help and guidance in balancing an “ordinary” and “extraordinary”, or “onscreen” and “offscreen” life; boys, on the other hand, are presented as more capable of balancing (indeed, or *merging*) the two, without the assistance of disguises or PR figures.

As noted in the previous chapter, Billy Ray Cyrus stressed offscreen that whilst he played the role of Hannah’s manager in *Hannah Montana*, he was *not* Miley Cyrus’s manager, thereby preventing the risk of being accused of “pimping” his daughter and inappropriately mixing the roles of parenthood and work.⁵¹⁹ It is significant to note that the Jonas Brothers’ father, Kevin Jonas Senior on the other hand *is* the band’s manager. This is openly acknowledged in articles and interviews with the band, and in the Disney Channel reality TV series, *Living the Dream*. Questions over management of the band have never been raised in celebrity news and gossip outlets, as has been the case for Miley Cyrus, particularly at times of media “controversies” and considerations for how she is to make the transition from a tween star to one aimed at teenagers and adults. This highlights the very evident gender dichotomy in young celebrity: as the father of young *male* celebrities, there is not deemed to be a risk of Kevin Jonas Senior overstepping his “natural” roles of father and manager, and the brothers are not seen to require the close scrutiny over their management as they transition into young adulthood in the public eye that Miley Cyrus seems to require.

Kevin Jonas Senior’s public involvement with the band works in part to articulate the precedence of “authenticity” in the Jonas Brothers’ star personae. Across the Jonas Brothers franchise, both in their on- and off-screen personae, regular explicit reference is made to the band’s emphasis on “authenticity”, located in the site of the *family*: *Jonas*’s title song, which also features heavily in the series is titled “Keep It Real”,⁵²⁰ and many lyrics in the band’s album tracks including “That’s Just The Way We Roll”, in which they sing “I know we’re never gonna fake it”.⁵²¹ Like *Hannah Montana*, for the Jonas Brothers “keeping it real” refers most pertinently to centralising the *family* in one’s identity and sense of self. Whilst, as found in the texts across tween popular culture, the Jonas Brothers’ claims to “keeping it real” allude to

⁵¹⁹ See Cobb, “Mother of the Year”

⁵²⁰ Jonas Brothers, “Keep It Real”, *Lines, Vines and Trying Times* (Hollywood Records, D000440912, 2009) [on CD]

⁵²¹ Jonas Brothers, “That’s Just The Way We Roll”, *Jonas Brothers*, (Hollywood Records, 1773059, 2007) [on CD]

remembering where one came from and valuing friendship, it is the family that is most highly regarded; indeed, the centrality of the family to the “authentic” is more prominent in this tween franchise than it is in other examples. The focus on the family for the “authentic” within the Jonas Brothers is explicitly articulated in the bonus documentary, “Up Close & Personal: Inside the Lives Of The Jonas Brothers on Tour”, featured on *The 3D Concert Experience DVD*.⁵²² In it, footage captures the brothers meeting their tour personnel for the first time; Kevin introduces himself and his siblings whilst also thanking the crew: “our whole motto about everything is we’re one big family, no matter what; we like to keep it close, because that’s most important.” In the concluding shots of this short behind-the-scenes documentary, Joe states (in voice-over):

and with all that success, it can be pretty easy to let it get the best of you; but at the end of the day, we’re just a family. We may have our kitchen table on [a] tour bus, but we still all spend dinner with the family like everybody else.

In the official *Burning Up* tour book, an entire chapter is dedicated to the significance of family in the band’s image, which claims that family is the brothers’ “foundation” and that their parents are responsible for ensuring they “remain humble”.⁵²³ They claim then, that their family’s closeness and insistence on carrying out traditional familial rituals ensures the brothers do not fall into the negative “trappings” of celebrity of which Hannah/Miley is also seen to be at risk, as the previous chapter has demonstrated. However, this “risk” is merely implied (through the vague suggestion that “it can be pretty easy to let it get the best of you”) in the Jonas Brothers’ image. It is not explicitly articulated as it is in *Hannah Montana* (for example in *The Movie*, discussed in the previous chapter), and it is certainly not tied to their gender as it is in tween culture’s texts centring on *girls*. A familiarity with the narrative of “becoming”- celebrity in tween popular culture ensures an understanding within the tween audience that celebrity has with it such risks; this knowledge can then be brought to consumption of the Jonas Brothers, and does not require a gendered explanation – it is claimed to be an inherent part of being a celebrity.

⁵²² “Up Close and Personal: Inside the Live Of The Jonas Brothers on Tour”, *Jonas Brothers: The 3D Concert Experience Extended Movie*, (Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment, BUA0108001, 2009) [on DVD]

⁵²³ Joe Jonas, Kevin Jonas and Nick Jonas, *Burning Up*, p. 125, p. 130

Significantly, within the Jonas Brothers' personae, "family values" is predicated on Evangelical Christianity. Faith is foregrounded in the brothers' star personae, and thus becomes embedded within the brand. Kevin Jonas Senior's former role as a Christian musician and church pastor is highlighted in media coverage of the band, including in the 2008 *Rolling Stone* cover story, in which the author details the group prayer led by the brothers' father backstage, moments before a concert begins.⁵²⁴ This image is made visible in *The 3D Concert Experience*, and is repeated in numerous interviews and articles. *Good Housekeeping*'s interview with the brothers' mother, Denise Jonas, most clearly articulates the Jonas Brothers' investment in Evangelical Christian family values.⁵²⁵ Within the article is a sense of passing down these values to the next generation: Denise discusses her own relationship with the boys' father, detailing that they met at Christ for the Nations Institute, and became engaged within six months when they were both just 18 years old. Regarding her goals in raising her sons, she proclaims that it is her "purpose [...] to raise good, decent, loving men", and that she and her husband "try to prepare their boys for deeper success – a loving marriage – by modeling [sic] good behaviour."⁵²⁶ What is suggested here, then, is that whilst the Jonas Brothers' current success as a pop-rock band and tween pin-ups is something to be appreciated and applauded, the family also focus on "deeper" – that is "authentic" – success *beyond* this: now that their goals and dreams of being "achieved" celebrities are now accomplished, the next ambition is to become husbands and fathers following the Christian family values of Denise and Kevin Jonas Senior. Such a model of family is predicated on traditional, conservative gender roles, emphasised in the *Burning Up* tour book in which the brothers express that:

Sometimes you just need your Mom to make sure you're taking care of yourself, eating right, getting enough sleep – and staying humble. Even when we're in a hotel, we crave Mom's cooking for comfort. She does her best to make sure we get whatever nourishment we need – whether it's food or love.⁵²⁷

⁵²⁴ Gay, "The Teen Clean Machine"

⁵²⁵ The fact that the interview appeared in *Good Housekeeping* also supports and promotes traditional, conservative 'family values'.

⁵²⁶ Amanda Robb, "How To Raise Rock Stars", *Good Housekeeping*, July 2009, <<http://www.goodhousekeeping.com/family/celebrity/jonas-brothers-mom-denise-jonas>> [accessed 22 June 2011]

⁵²⁷ Joe Jonas, Kevin Jonas and Nick Jonas, *Burning Up*, p. 130

The Jonas Brothers' investment in and promotion of Evangelical Christian family values as the focal point of the band's "authenticity" can be seen to belong to the broader increased social prominence and cultural visibility of the Christian Right in the US since the 1980s. The Christian Right's socio-cultural rise was part of the wider turn towards conservatism following the liberalism of the 1960s and 1970s; this turn is marked most significantly by the electing of Ronald Reagan as President in 1981, and whose administration remained until 1989.⁵²⁸ One cannot gain a comprehensive understanding of the Christian Right's ascension in the US, then, without a consideration of the "backlash" against feminism, which occurred as a result of this socio-political move from liberalism to conservatism (see Chapter 4). The increased voice and visibility of the Christian Right in the US from the 1980s onwards is indeed a part of the backlash against the advancements of second-wave feminism. The Christian Right's ideological influence on, or at least alliance with the Republican administration of the 1980s can be seen in the Reagan's pro-life, anti-abortion position; his consideration to reinstate compulsory prayer in schools; and his opposing the Equal Rights Amendment. The Christian Right's prevalence within policy making is particularly noticeable in the prominence of abstinence-only sex education in US schools: since the Reagan administration's authorisation of funding of pregnancy prevention programmes to those which offered abstinence as the only option, abstinence-only sex education has expanded, with such programmes receiving over \$1.3 billion dollars since 1996, and an allocated \$176 million of government funding in 2008.⁵²⁹ 35 per cent of US school districts requires abstinence to be taught as the *only* option for unmarried people, prohibiting discussion of contraception or limiting such discussion to that of its ineffectiveness; just five per cent of US schoolchildren are taught comprehensive sex education, which includes teaching of contraception and safe sex in addition to abstinence as an option.⁵³⁰ The backlash rhetoric of abstinence-only sex education is most vividly articulated by Jessica Valenti: "Abstinence-only education seeks to create a world where everyone is straight, women are relegated to

⁵²⁸ See for example Daniel K. Williams, *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); and Robert C. Leibman and Robert Wuthnow, *The New Christian Right*, (Hawthorne, NY: Aldine, 1983).

⁵²⁹ Valenti, *The Purity Myth*, p. 111

⁵³⁰ Planned Parenthood, *Fact Sheet: Abstinence-Only Programs*, (New York, NY: Planned Parenthood Federation of America, October 2007), <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/files/PPFA/AbstinenceOnly_10-07.pdf> [accessed 10 December 2012], p. 4

the home, the only appropriate family is a nuclear one, reproductive choices are negated, and the only sex people have is for procreation.”⁵³¹

Alongside abstinence-only sex education in schools emerged a wider “purity” movement in the US from the mid-1990s. Through school-based programmes, purity balls, church-based groups and websites, abstaining from sex until marriage is encouraged and valorised. When “pledging” one’s purity and promising to remain a virgin until marriage, adolescents (and preadolescents) may display their allegiance by wearing a “purity ring”. According to Silver Ring Thing (an Evangelical Christian abstinence-only programme and leading provider of purity rings in the US) a purity ring “is not a ‘piece of jewelry [sic]’. The ring is worn as the symbol and constant reminder of a commitment before God to walk in purity and wait until marriage.”⁵³² Such ideologies of the Christian Right are embedded in the Jonas Brothers’ star personae in their choice to wear purity rings, a fact that has been foregrounded in media coverage of the band.⁵³³ By publicly wearing purity rings, the Jonas Brothers reveal an investment in and implicitly promote the heteronormative values of conservative, heterosexual marriage, the only form in which sex – for reproduction – may occur. Whilst the brothers have not often spoken at any length about their choice to wear purity rings (they reportedly become uncomfortable when asked to comment upon the decision), Kevin Jonas states their reason for wearing them: “It means to try and live a life of *values*”.⁵³⁴ It seems here that “values” are synonymous with the band’s promotion of “keeping it real”, and refers to “family values” as defined by the Christian Right, and it is here that Jonas Brothers’ claims of “authenticity” are located. In her interview for the *Times*, Iley asks Kevin Jonas to expand upon this to which he responds, “it’s a personal decision and we would prefer not to talk about it. It was a personal decision that was made public.” However, as Iley notes, “I’m thinking that surely the fact they wear shiny silver rings means it’s public”,⁵³⁵ and therefore intimately tied to the Jonas Brothers brand. Disney Channel stars Selena Gomez and Miley Cyrus were also known to wear purity rings during this period, thus

⁵³¹ Valenti, *The Purity Myth*, p. 111

⁵³² <<http://www.silverringthing.com/howgetting.asp>> [accessed 2 June 2011]

⁵³³ The Jonas Brothers wore purity rings during the period discussed in this chapter. However, it was reported across the celebrity and tabloid news and gossip outlets in 2010 and 2011 that Joe and Nick (Kevin married in 2009) no longer wear their rings.

⁵³⁴ Kevin Jonas, quoted in Iley, “No Need to Lock Up Your Daughters”, my emphasis.

⁵³⁵ Iley, “No Need to Lock Up Your Daughter”

firmly placing the “family values” of the Christian Right within the wider Disney brand of tween popular culture.

Available to buy on the Jonas Brothers’ official online merchandise store is a silver-plated necklace containing what appear to be purity ring-style pendants, featuring each of the brothers’ names:



Figure 27: Official Jonas Brothers “Silver 3-Ring Necklace”.⁵³⁶

By purchasing and wearing this necklace, the tween effectively consumes and visibly displays on the body these values of purity, and by extension, the ideologies of the Christian Right. Again, it seems that “authenticity” can be *purchased*. If purity is the site at which the Jonas Brothers’ “authenticity” can be found, the fan can prove her own “authentic” fandom by consuming such products. To be “authentic”, according to the Jonas Brothers’ star personae, is to be “pure” – that is, a virgin. Herein lies, however, a contradiction. Official Jonas Brothers merchandise such as that shown above is aimed at a young *female* fan. The assumed consumer of the necklace and other similar items is a *girl*, and thus it is the *girl* who buys into and displays these ideologies. This highlights the gendered dynamic of the purity movement: whilst abstinence-only sex education and church-based purity missions claim to “to inspire, educate, and support generations of young people”,⁵³⁷ the cultural construction of

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<http://www.jonasbrothersmerch.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=7&products_id=64> [accessed 17 July 2011]

⁵³⁷ <<http://www.silverringthing.com/whatisrrt.asp>> [accessed 1 November 2012]

virginity – as similarly noted by Hanne Blank and Valenti – is female.⁵³⁸ Virginity is a female state.

This gender disparity within the purity movement is revealed in the *Good Housekeeping* interview with Denise Jonas: “Denise [Jonas] says the boys never meant to be standard-bearers for the premarital-chastity cause [...] She’s realistic about the challenges ahead: ‘They are men. They have desires. They have testosterone’”, and regarding the example she and her husband try to set for her sons, she states that “marriage isn’t 50/50 [...] Marriage is really giving 100 percent of yourself, and not expecting anything back.”⁵³⁹ This excerpt highlights the double-standard inherent within the ideology of normative heterosexual romance, and more specifically the institution of marriage: Denise’s description of marriage as “giving 100 percent of yourself, and not expecting anything back” can be read here as constituting the traditional ideal model of wifehood. Second, it makes clear the discrepancy in social and cultural understandings of sexuality: boys and men are seen to “have desires”, and there seems to be an expectation for her sons to “naturally” fail in their pledge of pre-marital abstinence. This gender disparity becomes more evident when visiting www.generationsoflight.com, the website for an annual Father-Daughter Purity Ball.⁵⁴⁰

The Father Daughter Purity Ball is a memorable ceremony for fathers to sign commitments to be responsible men of integrity in all areas of purity. The commitment also includes their vow to *protect their daughters* in their choices for purity. The daughters *silently* commit to live pure lives before God [...]. Because we cherish our daughters as regal princesses – for 1 Peter 3:4 says they are “precious in the sight of God” – we want to treat them as royalty.⁵⁴¹

According to the purity movement, then, girls must “silently” and passively be acted upon within such institutions and be desirable (indeed, be “princesses”). Whilst the website claims to include boys in its quest to promote abstinence until marriage, its

⁵³⁸ Hanne Blank, *Virgin: The Untouched History*, (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2007), pp. 10-11; Valenti, *The Purity Myth*, p. 21

⁵³⁹ Denise Jonas, quoted in Robb, “How To Raise Rock Stars”

⁵⁴⁰ Purity balls are formal ceremonies similar in style to proms and weddings, attended by fathers and daughters, in which the daughter publicly takes a pledge of virginity until marriage; they draw heavily on iconography associated with the lavish wedding, and involve religious rituals similar to those of a wedding ceremony. See for example Jennifer Baumgardner, “Would You Pledge Your Virginity to Your Father?”, *Glamour*, 1 January 2007, <<http://www.glamour.com/sex-love-life/2007/01/purity-balls?printable=true>> [accessed 18 May 2011].

⁵⁴¹ <<http://www.generationsoflight.com/html/index.html>> [accessed 2 June 2011], my emphasis.

page dedicated to boys within the purity movement only further highlights the female nature of virginity:

As with our daughters, we want our sons to guard their hearts and walk in purity and call them to live in wholeness and strength in mind, body, and spirit. We call them to *protect young women's hearts* by living lives of integrity, purpose, and purity.⁵⁴²

Boys, then, “naturally” have the strength required to *protect* girls’ purity.⁵⁴³ They provide the “natural” role, as future husbands, in guiding girls “becoming” sexual women; it is ultimately the *girls’* purity that needs to be protected; boys are not seen to be at risk of such a “loss”. According to the purity movement – or “virginity fetishism”⁵⁴⁴ – virginity is something which is taken from a girl, by a man.⁵⁴⁵ Purity rings and purity balls claim that control of a young woman’s sexuality lies with the male figure: first, the girl’s father, epitomised in the father-daughter purity ball; and second, by her future husband – to whom the girl’s father will give the daughter away in the purity ball’s successor, the wedding. Such a model of young female sexuality fits with tween popular culture’s claims that the father is “naturally” the ideal figure in guiding the girl in her “becoming”-woman (see Chapters 4 and 5).⁵⁴⁶ As argued by Valenti, such ideological messages of the purity movement “are part of a larger effort to roll back all women’s rights. The virginity movement is seeking a return to traditional gender roles, and focusing on purity is the vehicle toward that end.”⁵⁴⁷ This backlash rhetoric can be found in the Jonas Brothers brand image, in the brothers’ frequent offscreen references to the significance of their parents within their celebrity, and their repeated admiration for their parents’ relationship. Denise and Kevin Jonas Senior are “proof” of the success of the purity movement’s values and its ideal model of sexuality.

It is through the Jonas Brothers’ association with the purity movement that any risk of sexual threat from the brothers’ statuses as rock stars is made safe. As McRobbie and Frith argue, “the most important ideological work done by rock is the

⁵⁴² <<http://www.generationsoflight.com.html/boys.html>> [accessed 2 June 2011], my emphasis.

⁵⁴³ Valenti similarly notes this, stating that this also works to remove the risk of feminisation of boys by the purity movement, *The Purity Myth*, p. 25.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14

⁵⁴⁵ See also Blank, *Virgin*.

⁵⁴⁶ See also Anke Bernau, *Virgins: A Cultural History*, (London: Greta Books, 2007), p. 84.

⁵⁴⁷ Valenti, *The Purity Myth*, p. 39

construction of sexuality.”⁵⁴⁸ This could be seen as causing a contradiction in the Jonas Brothers’ star personae: as the analysis in this chapter demonstrates, the band is aligned with the rock genre, and yet they publicly assert their association with the purity movement. However, the Jonas Brothers brand does not deny sexuality; rather it constructs a sexuality informed and thus contained by the Christian Right, as this chapter has shown. Writing in 1978, McRobbie and Frith note that cock rock’s explicit male sexual performance can be “unfamiliar, frightening and distasteful to girls”;⁵⁴⁹ whilst girlhood and girl culture are perhaps understood to be less naïve and more active than they were thirty or forty years ago, any risk of anxiety amongst the tween audience, or rather any threat of sexual provocation amongst the tweens, is removed or at least diluted by the constant reminder of the brothers’ vow of abstinence. As the brothers energetically perform acrobatic moves on stage or pose broodingly in photos whilst wearing tight jeans and low-cut t-shirts that reveal their masculine form, their purity rings are always on display.

Whilst making claims to their rock star statuses, the Jonas Brothers’ star personae can be seen to continue the construction of male sexuality in the tradition of teenybop, whereby the texts within the Jonas Brothers franchise present the brothers as sensitive and easily hurt by *girls*. As McRobbie and Frith note of teenybop music, girls are claimed to be very much capable of breaking the boys’ hearts and causing them pain and upset.⁵⁵⁰ A significant number of the brothers’ own songs (the majority of which are written by Nick Jonas) centre on experiences of heterosexual romance and love, and often of heartbreak. “Still In Love With You” typifies this:

She was all I ever wanted
 She was all I ever needed and more
 She walked out my door
 Then she went away
 Left my heart in two
 Left me standing here
 Singing all these blues.⁵⁵¹

The song later reveals that the girl is now with another boy, causing the male subject of the song yet more pain. The lyrics to “Poison Ivy” further demonstrate the girl’s

⁵⁴⁸ McRobbie and Frith, “Rock and Sexuality”, p. 139, emphasis in original.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 140

⁵⁵⁰ McRobbie and Frith, “Rock and Sexuality”, pp. 141-2

⁵⁵¹ Jonas Brothers, “Still In Love With You”, *Jonas Brothers*

ability to cause pain and suffering for the boy, likening the girl to a poison ivy rash, “I just got back from the doctor/ He told me that I had a problem/ I realized it’s you”,⁵⁵² and describe the girl as deceptive. Regarding 1990s boy band the Backstreet Boys, Gayle Wald argues:

in addressing themselves to conventionally feminized fantasies of romantic intimacy, [such] songs [...] envision women’s and girl’s *social* agency primarily in terms of their ability to break boys’ hearts – a dubious power that hinges on their ongoing definitions as object of male desire.⁵⁵³

Thus power is claimed to be given to the girl in her potential to cause the Jonas Brothers heartbreak, yet this power is contradicted in that the definition of “appropriate” heterosexual femininity is defined by the band – and broader teenybop music. Such songs are emblematic of the Jonas Brothers brand more broadly, in their ideological requirement for the girl to be not simply *desiring*, but, as similarly argued by Wald, *desirable*.

Whilst girls’ potential to break boys’ hearts is not new in teenybop music as McRobbie and Frith’s article demonstrates, it is made more pertinent in the Jonas Brothers through the emphasis on their “authenticity”, located in the Evangelical Christian family and their association with the purity movement. Their “authenticity” proves that the brothers are “new men” of the postfeminist – or rather backlash – era (see Chapter 4); they *really are* sensitive and vulnerable to pain caused by “inauthentic”, “bad” girls. To further highlight girls’ capacity to treat boys badly and cause them pain and heartbreak, the Jonas Brothers perform several songs that pit the “bad” girl against the “good”, ideal girl, perpetuating the longstanding Madonna/whore dichotomy prevalent throughout popular culture. “Australia” typifies this model of the “inappropriate” female heterosexual partner versus the “appropriate” partner:

You never listen to me
I know I’m better off alone
Everybody knows it’s true
Yeah, we all see through you
No it won’t be hard to do

⁵⁵² Jonas Brothers, “Poison Ivy”, *Lines, Vines and Trying Times*

⁵⁵³ Wald, Gayle, “‘I Want It That Way’: Teenybopper Music and the Girling of Boy Bands”, *Genders* 35 (2002), <http://www.genders.org/g35/g35_wald.html> [accessed 1 December 2009], emphasis in original.

Throw away my stuff from you.

So I'll wait for her to come
 She won't break my heart
 Cause I know she'll be from Australia
 She is so beautiful
 She's my dream girl.⁵⁵⁴

“Lovebug” provides further description of the “appropriate” girl as defined by the Jonas Brothers: “You’re beautiful but you don’t even try/ Modesty is just so hard to find”.⁵⁵⁵ I would suggest that the striking use of the word “modesty” here is inextricably tied to the Jonas Brothers’ association with the purity movement. That “modesty is just so hard to find” suggests a nostalgic yearning for a model of femininity that no longer exists – that is, a traditional, conservative version of femininity that fits with the ideologies of the Christian Right. In lyrics such as these, the Jonas Brothers actively define their “appropriate” type of girl. The modest, or rather *pure*, girl is “authentic” and seen as desirable to the Jonas Brothers. Such lyrics support McRobbie and Frith’s argument that (with regards to teenybop music), “It is men who are soft, romantic, easily hurt, loyal, and anxious to find a true love who *fulfills their definitions of what female sexuality should be about*.⁵⁵⁶

The Jonas Brothers brand dictates what is seen as an “appropriate”, *desirable* form of femininity. Whilst the analysis in the chapter demonstrates that the tween is encouraged to identify and align herself with the hysterical crowd of Jonas Brothers fans – that is, that she should *desire* the Jonas Brothers – the brand claims that to be a hysterical fan is not sufficient to attract a heterosexual male partner like a Jonas Brother – it will not allow the girl to be seen as *desirable*. The Jonas Brothers brand, then, fits with wider tween popular culture’s neoliberal ideology in its teaching of the importance of self-surveillance and self-transformation. Texts within the Jonas Brothers brand such as *Jonas* act in much the same way in the tween girl’s “becoming” as romance novels do for the adolescent girl, as argued by Linda K. Christian-Smith, whereby it “prepares young women for entry into heterosexuality”,⁵⁵⁷ helping girls construct their desires and gender subjectivities, and

⁵⁵⁴ Jonas Brothers, “Australia”, *Jonas Brothers*

⁵⁵⁵ Jonas Brothers, “Lovebug”, *A Little Bit Longer*, (Hollywood Records, 8712991, 2008) [on CD]

⁵⁵⁶ McRobbie and Frith, “Rock and Sexuality”, p. 142, my emphasis.

⁵⁵⁷ Linda K. Christian-Smith, “Constituting and Reconstituting Desire: Fiction, Fantasy and Femininity”, in *Texts of Desire: Essays on Fiction, Femininity and Schooling*, Linda K. Christian-Smith, ed., (London: The Falmer Press, 1993), p. 6

their awareness of social differences and power relations.⁵⁵⁸ The tween is addressed by the Jonas Brothers brand as requiring self-awareness with regards to her feminine sexuality, teaching her that in order to be desirable to the ideal heterosexual romantic partner, embodied by the Jonas Brothers, a transformation of the gendered self is necessary. Ideally, it is claimed, the tween should fit the definition of femininity defined by the Jonas Brothers if she is to be seen as “appropriately” sexually desirable. As Christian-Smith found with popular romance novels aimed at adolescent female readers, “heroines are the ones who must continually compromise and adapt themselves to boys’ needs.”⁵⁵⁹ In the *Good Housekeeping* article and interview with Denise Jonas, Joe Jonas states, “People always ask, ‘What’s a girl have to do to get your attention?’ [...] She has to be good to Mom”.⁵⁶⁰ To be desirable to the Jonas Brothers, then, the girl not only needs to fit their definition of feminine sexuality, but she must also fit with the brothers’ family values, securing the approval of their mother, the upholder of these values. This is emphasised in the lyrics to “Video Girl”: the song’s narrative describes an “inappropriate” girl who is pursuing the male subject of the song for the fame and attention, and we are told “You know it’s bad when your mamma doesn’t like her”.⁵⁶¹

This promotion of the ideal *desirable* girl is put forward under the pretence of acknowledging the girl’s sexual desire and addressing her as a *desiring* subject. Available to purchase from the official online Jonas Brothers merchandise store is a purple fitted t-shirt with the slogan “future Mrs Jonas” across the chest:

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 2; see also Christian-Smith, *Becoming a Woman Through Romance*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 1990), p. 29.

⁵⁵⁹ Christian-Smith, *Becoming a Woman Through Romance*, p. 27

⁵⁶⁰ Joe Jonas, quoted in Robb, “How to Raise Rock Stars”

⁵⁶¹ Jonas Brothers, “Video Girl”, *A Little Bit Longer*



Figure 28: Official “Future Mrs Jonas” t-shirt.⁵⁶²

By purchasing and wearing the t-shirt, the girl is claiming – and visibly doing so – that she fits the ideal desirable feminine identity as defined by the Jonas Brothers. Within this identity are assertions of modesty and authenticity – both of which are required in order to be seen as heterosexually desirable by the ideal boy type signified in the Jonas Brothers. Of course there are contradictions within such claims: that “authenticity” can be bought, and that “modesty” can be boldly and publicly declared on one’s body.

Garratt argues that:

Falling in love with posters can be a way of excluding real males and of hanging on to that ideal of “true love” for just a little longer. It is a safe focus for all that newly discovered sexual energy, and a scream can often be its only release.⁵⁶³

She goes on to state that the Cinderella fantasy of dreaming of being a pop star’s girlfriend is played out in this teenybopper culture. Similarly, McRobbie and Garber argue that “The fantasy boys of pop make no such [threatening sexual] demands. They ‘love’ their fans without asking anything in return”, and go on to say that teenybopper culture can be seen as a way of buying time within the safe space of female friendship before real sexual encounters, yet whilst imagining such encounters.⁵⁶⁴ Jonas Brothers merchandise such as the t-shirt above arguably support these arguments of safely allowing tweens to make sense of their emerging

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<http://www.jonasbrothersmerch.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=2&products_id=326> [accessed 18 July 2011]

⁵⁶³ Garratt, “Teenage Dreams”, p. 401

⁵⁶⁴ McRobbie and Garber, “Girls and Subcultures”, p. 112

sexuality.⁵⁶⁵ Moreover, such products promote an understanding of tween feminine “becoming” in terms of the girl’s role as future wife, thus conceptualising ideal femininity in relation to the man. Furthermore, the t-shirt is designed to fit closely onto the body (unlike many of the other t-shirts which are looser and less shapely in style), with the slogan on the breast area, therefore not only linking femininity to the future role as wife, but to the feminine body and female sexual and reproductive capacity. Another t-shirt available to purchase further highlights this understanding of the tween’s “becoming” a young woman as linked to her future role of wife:



Figure 29: Official “Property of Jonas Brothers” t-shirt.⁵⁶⁶

The t-shirt contains – in “hot pink”,⁵⁶⁷ – the slogan “property of Jonas Brothers”, thus not only playfully imagining being romantically desired by a Jonas Brother, but imagining oneself as a possession, belonging to a man.

In her rather cynical and sarcastic article featuring an interview with the Jonas Brothers for the *Times*, Iley says of their choice to wear purity rings:

Of course it’s personal if you decide not to have sex, or if you do, that it will be with one person for the rest of your life. It’s a fairy tale. Perhaps that’s what

⁵⁶⁵ *The 3D Concert Experience* features young female fans dressed in t-shirts similar to these, complete with toy veils.

⁵⁶⁶

<http://www.jonasbrothersmerch.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=2&products_id=315> [accessed 18 July 2011]

⁵⁶⁷ See Ariel Levy’s understanding of the term “hot” in “raunch culture”, which is bound up with sex, *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture*, (New York, NY: Free Press, 2005), p. 31.

drives the fans to tears. They want to be that one, that very special one, and it will last for ever.⁵⁶⁸

What is significant here is the Jonas Brothers' association with the purity movement being likened to a fairy-tale. Indeed, the model of transforming one's feminine self to fit the desirable definition dictated by the Jonas Brothers, with the goal of attracting the ideal boy type typified by the brothers, is presented within the brand (and across wider tween popular culture) in the form of the fairy-tale. What makes this particularly compelling within the Jonas Brothers' star personae was the "proof" and fulfilment of this fairy-tale narrative when Kevin Jonas married Danielle Deleasa in 2009. In a mediated heterosexual romantic narrative that seemed to mirror that of his parents, at the age of 22, Kevin Jonas married 23 year old "Jersey Girl"⁵⁶⁹ Deleasa, who, in celebrity news coverage of the event, filled the Cinderella role of the "ordinary", "real" girl who attracts the attention of and successfully marries her prince charming.



Figure 30: "Kevin Jonas marries Danielle Deleasa in a lavish fairy-tale wedding", *People*.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁸ Iley, "No Need to Lock Up Your Daughters"

⁵⁶⁹ Sharon Cotliar, "Kevin Jonas Says 'I Do'", *People*, January 11 2010

⁵⁷⁰ *People*, 11 January 2010

Media coverage of the couple's engagement and wedding highlighted Danielle Deleasa's "ordinary" status.⁵⁷¹ Her "ordinariness" – that she was not a celebrity, but of course was now "becoming"-celebrity – provided the site for her "authenticity" and therefore desirability. People magazine's coverage of the wedding emphasises the couple's (and indeed their families') shared religious Christian beliefs and values, reporting that they "crossed paths at church events [...] as children".⁵⁷² Such details are significant in constructing Deleasa's feminine identity as fitting the ideal as defined by the Jonas Brothers' brand, and the association with the Christian Right and purity movements. She is "ordinary" and "pure", therefore "authentic" and highly desirable.

Coverage of the wedding in celebrity and tabloid news drew upon the narrative and iconography of the fairy-tale, as demonstrated on the front cover of *People* magazine (to whom Kevin and Danielle Jonas sold the rights to their wedding photos); in the cover article, Sharon Cotliar reports that "this Prince Charming sent his "princess" an unforgettable gift: a real pair of glass slippers".⁵⁷³ Similarly, eonline.com's announcement of the wedding was even more explicit in its linking of their romance to classic Disney fairy-tales: "Kevin Jonas Gets His Perfect Disney Princess Fairy-Tale Wedding",⁵⁷⁴ firmly solidifying purity, lavish weddings, and the Jonas Brothers within the Disney brand. The implication here is that according to the Jonas Brothers brand, by transforming her feminine sexual identity to that of "purity" – the "true" self – the girl can be seen as desirable and could potentially secure the ideal male heterosexual partner, with whom she can share a lavish, fairy-tale wedding,⁵⁷⁵ and go on to uphold traditional "family values". Kevin and Danielle Jonas are presented to be deserving of this ideal wedding, following their successful fulfilment of their pledge for purity and pre-marital abstinence.⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷¹ Amy Eisinger, "Who is Danielle Deleasa? Meet the Jersey Girl Next Door Who's Getting Married to Kevin Jonas", *NY Daily News*, 2 July 2009, <http://articles.nydailynews.com/2009-07-02/gossip/17929134_1_kevin-jonas-danielle-deleasa-jonas-brothers> [accessed 4 June 2011]

⁵⁷² Cotliar, "Kevin Jonas Says 'I Do'", p. 62

⁵⁷³ Ibid., p. 60

⁵⁷⁴ Jennifer Cady, "Kevin Jonas Gets His Perfect Disney Princess Fairy-Tale Wedding", [E!Online.com](http://uk.eonline.com/unberblog/b159853_kevin_jonas_gets_his_perfect_disney.html), 29 December 2009, <http://uk.eonline.com/unberblog/b159853_kevin_jonas_gets_his_perfect_disney.html> [accessed 4 June 2011]

⁵⁷⁵ See Otnes and Pleck, *Cinderella Dreams*.

⁵⁷⁶ Following their fairy-tale wedding, Danielle "achieved" celebrity through her maintenance of "authenticity": the couple now appear in their own reality TV series currently broadcast (at the time of writing) on E!, *Married to Jonas* (E!, 2012-). Due to this falling outside of the period of study, discussion of the television series will not be included here.

The association of the purity movement – more specifically, purity balls – and the lavish fairy-tale wedding is made clear in the media coverage of Kevin and Danielle Jonas's engagement and wedding. Journalists stated that Kevin Jonas would now be able to replace his purity ring with a wedding band.⁵⁷⁷ According to the Jonas Brothers' personae, then, a lavish Cinderella wedding is most deserving and fulfilling to those who remain pure. What we see at work here is Chrys Ingraham's notion of the "heterosexual imaginary",⁵⁷⁸ and the Jonas Brothers brand (and the coverage of the wedding in particular), "prevent us from imagining childbearing and childrearing as legitimate without state-regulated marriage",⁵⁷⁹ and teaches us that "it is unimaginable to have feelings of love and desire for commitment without investing in marriage and the expensive white wedding",⁵⁸⁰ a rhetoric visible within the purity movement as this chapter's analysis shows.

The Jonas Brothers rose to fame in a socio-cultural context, particularly since the mid-1990s, in which it is believed that girls are in need of protection.⁵⁸¹ This apparent need is a protection against what is seen primarily to be the sexualisation of girls and the wider anxiety of "kids getting older younger" and "too much too soon" debates.⁵⁸² Such anxieties are part of the broader discourse defined by Ariel Levy as "Raunch Culture", who argues that for women, within our culture, sexiness (in the adult entertainment form) is equated with empowerment.⁵⁸³ The Jonas Brothers can be seen as offering a "safe" site in which girls may make sense of, and to which they may direct their developing sexuality. The brand – and tween popular culture more broadly – offers a negotiation: on the one hand girls' sexuality is acknowledged, and normative heterosexual romantic desire is encouraged; on the other, such sexuality is

⁵⁷⁷ Breanne L. Heldman, "Kevin Jonas Trades Purity Ring for Wedding Band", E!Online.com, 20 December 2009, <http://uk.eonline.com/uberblog/b158792_kevin_jonas_trades_purity_ring_wedding.html> [accessed 3 June 2011]; Georgina Littlejohn, "Kevin Jonas – With a Different Kind of Commitment Ring – Enjoys a Sun-kissed Honeymoon After His Wintry Wedding", *Daily Mail*, 22 December 2009, <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-1237747/Kevin-Jonas--different-kind-commitment-ring--enjoys-sun-kissed-honeymoon-wintery-wedding.html>> [accessed 4 June 2011]

⁵⁷⁸ Ingraham, *White Weddings*

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 120

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 137; see also Geller, *Here Comes the Bride*, p. 39.

⁵⁸¹ For example Pipher, *Reviving Ophelia*; Levin and Kilbourne, *So Sexy So Soon*; Hamilton, *What's Happening to Our Girls?*; Carey, *Where Has My Little Girl Gone?*; Tankard Reist, ed., *Getting Real*.

⁵⁸² See for example Reg Bailey, *Letting Children be Children: Report of an Independent Review of the Commercialisation of Childhood*, (Department for Education, June 2011), <<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/Bailey%20Review.pdf>> [accessed 7 December 2012].

⁵⁸³ Levy, *Female Chauvinist Pigs*, p. 26

claimed to need containment (through transformation of the self), and patriarchal control. If it is allowed to be freely and fully explored unprotected and uncontrolled, girls' sexuality could cause boys pain, or bring shame upon the girls through "bad" choices.

A response to the socio-cultural anxieties of girlhood and sexualisation, particularly in the US, is to promote and valorise the notion of virginity and purity, through abstinence-only education and purity movements. Khrystian A. Wilson (daughter of Father-Daughter Purity Ball founder Randy Wilson) states on www.generationsoflight.com that:

It's a startling picture of the bondage of sexual "freedom" that's become common in our culture. The burden of misplaced sexuality weighs heavy on too many of us women. But God offers us real freedom, and a confidence through the pursuit of purity we can yet enjoy becoming everything that God intends for us.⁵⁸⁴

Whilst Levy's position is that of a feminist, and Wilson's is of the Christian Right, both use strikingly similar language in their descriptions of this apparent sexualised culture in which young women need to be "saved". Although accounts such as these draw upon and perpetuate the Madonna/whore dichotomy, presenting a context in which young women have the choice between two polar opposites – that of overt sexualisation, and that of purity – these two apparent binary types are in fact working on the same principle: both situate the definition of woman or girl onto her body, reproductive capacity, and desire. Valenti similarly notes this ambiguity: "By focusing on the virginity of young women and girls, the [purity] movement is doing exactly what it purports to abhor – objectifying women and reducing them to their sexuality."⁵⁸⁵

Tween popular culture's construction of young feminine sexuality depends on a neoliberal model of feminine selfhood. By consuming the Jonas Brothers as pin-ups, the desiring tween is required to turn to *herself*, to transform her feminine sexual identity to meet the requirement of the *Jonas Brothers'* desires – to become "authentically" desirable. The consequence of not achieving "purity" in one's feminine sexuality is *shame*. The tween therefore depends on a male heterosexual partner for her sense of a sexual self; that is, it is the male's definitions of feminine

⁵⁸⁴ Khrystian A. Wilson, "Purity that Sets Captives Free", www.generationsoflight.com, <<http://www.boundless.org/2005/articles/a0001743.cfm>> [accessed 2 June 2011]

⁵⁸⁵ Valenti, *The Purity Myth*, p. 62

sexuality to which she must transform herself, and it is the male finding her *desirable* that proves she has successfully achieved an “appropriate” feminine sexual identity. Furthermore, the Jonas Brothers brand claims that there is a mutual dependency between the girl and the boy; as argued by McRobbie and Frith:

In teenybop, male sexuality is transformed into a spiritual yearning carrying only hints of sexual interaction. What is needed is not so much someone to screw as a sensitive and sympathetic soulmate, someone to support and nourish the incompetent male adolescent as he grows up.⁵⁸⁶

Mirroring the father-daughter relationship analysed in Chapter 4, here it is claimed that the boy and the girl in a romantic heterosexual relationship depend on one another for the maintenance of purity which will allow the transformation of “authentic” selves. The relationship between Mitchie and Shane (played by Joe Jonas) in *Camp Rock* certainly supports this model (see Chapter 3).

Indeed, following the mutually dependent relationship between the father and daughter, the girl’s transformed self (transformed through this relationship with the ideal figure of guidance in her “becoming”-woman) will allow her to be desired by a male suitor, who will replace the role of the father and continue the cycle of mutual dependency for the transformation of the “authentic” self. The reward for such an achievement of purity is the lavish fairy-tale wedding, with its precursor of the purity ball. The tween is encouraged, and constructed as entitled to, such a wedding, if, as a neoliberal subject, she works hard to transform herself and continually maintain an “authentic” desirable self. Such encouragement and entitlement is promoted through assertions of “princesshood” in both the purity movement and in wedding culture. The “pure” abstainer and the bride are frequently referred to as princesses, and conceptualising the tween “becoming”-woman (including developing a sexual identity) in terms of princesshood proves useful here. As Chapter 2 argues, the “princess” of tween popular culture stands for the ideal neoliberal female subject who must simultaneously work on her self, *and* learn the role as heterosexual partner to another.

Thus, the purity movement, with its end goal of the lavish Cinderella wedding, upholds, as Jaclyn Geller notes, the wider cultural “notion of marital femininity that

⁵⁸⁶ McRobbie and Frith, “Rock and Sexuality”, p. 141

we can only envision women in terms of wedlock or its opposite”,⁵⁸⁷ teaching tweens to understand their “becoming” young women in terms of their relationship to significant men in their lives: firstly their fathers, and then their ideal heterosexual romantic partner. As Geller says of the wedding, both the purity ball and later lavish wedding ceremony announces the girl’s “new status as Mrs Attached-to-Somebody Else”.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁷ Geller, *Here Comes the Bride*, p. 10

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 336

CONCLUSION

At this age, girls are trying to find their position in society. The development from child to young adult is accompanied by exploring and experimenting with different identities. [...] However, although this age allows for some experimentation, they must keep up a veil of “trueness”. *Thus the need for authenticity limits the available range of identities.*⁵⁸⁹

Whilst I have already cited the excerpt above in Chapter 2, it is fitting to draw upon it here as I come to close this thesis. Duits and van Romondt Vis’s words articulate the contradictions that this thesis has revealed within the construction of and address to the tween by tween popular culture. That is, the tween is understood to be defined by her transitional status; as such, the texts that make up tween popular culture can be seen to guide the tween in her development of an “appropriately” feminine and (post)feminist identity through a rhetoric of “choice”. Alongside such “choice” of feminine and feminist identities, however, is the instruction that the girl must reveal and maintain her “authentic” self (which accordingly already exists “inherently” within the girl and merely needs to be brought to the surface). Thus, and somewhat paradoxically, the need to sustain one’s “true” self radically restricts any real “choice” of identities. Ideologically, then, in its construction of tweenhood’s transition into young womanhood, tween popular culture seemingly seeks to produce female subjects who are all the same, or at least variations of the same identity.

Alongside its narrow scripts of femininity, tween popular culture claims that the tween may construct her own feminist identity, yet such claims are necessarily marginalised by the ways in which the texts put forth a *postfeminist* identity as the “natural” choice for the tween. The narratives discussed in the chapters here are conscious of second-wave feminism, and acknowledge the gains achieved by the movement; the girls are encouraged to take up non-traditional roles (such as a medical doctor like *The Prince & Me*’s Paige, or a footballer like *She’s The Man*’s Viola). At the same time, however, the girls (both onscreen and off) are pushed towards “choosing” postfeminist restrictions of femininity. In this way, and at a textual level, popular culture works to ensure that the status quo remains intact and requires no interrogation. The media found across tween popular culture openly acknowledge feminism whilst simultaneously rebutting the movement, proving that its job is done,

⁵⁸⁹ Duits and van Romondt Vis, “Girls Make Sense”, p. 54, my emphasis.

and unproblematically putting forth a conventional feminine identity alongside its “feminist” one.

The figure of the princess is central to tween popular culture. As this thesis has argued, the princess does not stand for actual royalty; rather, she stands for neoliberal and postfeminist feminine selfhood – the ideal girl. The common themes and values of tween popular culture (authenticity, neoliberalism, postfeminism, celebrity, the makeover and the fairy-tale) come together within this figure, which epitomises the ideal way to “become” a young woman. The princess is required to both selfishly work on the self to be “appropriately” feminine (which involves constant self-surveillance), whilst simultaneously selflessly care for others and be an “appropriately” heterosexual partner and “true” friend, sibling and/or daughter. The princess signals the highest form of celebrity in tween popular culture,⁵⁹⁰ and an “achievable” form of celebrity for the tween due to the tween’s “inherent” authenticity required in order to gain princess status. The tween’s transitional status, as one of “becoming”, in part defines the way she is constructed and addressed by tween popular culture. As such, the narrative of becoming a princess (and therefore celebrity), articulated through the narrative of the *makeover* speaks directly to this theme of aged transition and gendered development. In tween popular culture, the fairy-tale, the makeover, and the narrative of celebrity are paralleled with one another, and each articulate the process of the tween “becoming”-woman

The princess and the makeover articulate a model of tween selfhood that is reflexive and self-surveilling. In this way, tween selfhood can be seen to extend, indeed epitomise, the model of selfhood developed by cultural theorists from the 1990s onwards.⁵⁹¹ When such models are placed onto tweehood, however, they take on a gendered (female) and age-specific (young) dynamic, articulated in the common themes, character types and narratives discussed in this thesis, including the makeover, narratives of celebrity, and the father-daughter transformation. The specifically young, female nature of this reflexive tween selfhood is most visible in the figure of the princess. However, it is also within this figure (whether a literal princess such as *Princess Protection Programme*’s Rosalinda, a “pop” princess such as Hannah Montana/Miley Cyrus, or a potential future “princess” bride such as Mrs

⁵⁹⁰ See also Couldry, “Everyday Royal Celebrity”, p. 223

⁵⁹¹ See for example Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*; Adams, *Self and Social Change*; Kellner, “Popular Culture and the Construction of Postmodern Identities”; and Rose, *Governing the Soul and Inventing Our Selves*.

Kevin Jonas, Danielle Deleasa) that the contradictions of tween popular culture's values become evident. Tween popular culture is heavily invested in authenticity and selfhood; as the chapters here have demonstrated, according to tween media, authenticity is found to have various nuances depending on the narrative, character and thematic circumstances. In this emphasis on authenticity, tween popular culture can be seen to employ celebrity as an allegory for growing up female, paralleling the values of the "authentic" celebrity and the "authentic" young feminine self. This thesis has argued that an "authentic" self (which exists "inherently" within the girl) needs to be revealed and maintained if the tween is to successfully "become" "appropriately" feminine, and "authenticity" with regards to tween selfhood is not tied down to one specific site. Rather, it is found in the girl's role as same-sex friend, daughter, sister, and heterosexual partner, and she must fulfil each role as "true". In the girl's quest to bring (back) to the surface her "real" self, authenticity is commonly situated in the family and one's geographic, ethnic and familial roots. Authenticity is thus collapsed with originality, uniqueness, and talent (each of which are themselves ideological abstract concepts).

I have acknowledged the impossibility of "inherent", "natural" authenticity; that is, authenticity is a context-specific, cultural construct. Nevertheless, according to tween popular culture, authenticity is an inherent part of the tween self. However, the figure of the princess complicates this: whilst achieving princesshood signals that the girl has proven her authentic self (authenticity is required to "achieve" celebrity, of which princesshood is the highest form), the figure of the princess is at odds with the very notion of authenticity as it is claimed in tween popular culture. The princess is a cultural construct which relies on artifice for its recognisability and meaning. The markers of princesshood (grand gown, jewellery, conventional femininity, and exceptional beauty) are all highly constructed, surface attributes; none are "natural" or found within the *self*. This contradiction of tween popular culture can be extended beyond princesshood to femininity more broadly, which has been seen by feminists as constructed and dependent on artifice – indeed, diametrically opposed to the concept of authenticity.⁵⁹² Such a disparity between authenticity (nature) and princesshood (artifice) is not explicitly dealt with by the texts of tween popular culture; what is implied, however, is that the ideal postfeminist, neoliberal young female subject is

⁵⁹² See for example Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*; Brownmiller, *Femininity*; Ussher, *Fantasies of Femininity*; Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*; and Tseelon, *The Masque of Femininity*.

she who manages the tension between valorisation of one's "true" self, and the need to conform to the scripts of femininity – a paradox clearly articulated in Duits and van Romondt Vis's work cited at the beginning of this concluding chapter.

One way to make sense of this contradiction in the tween popular culture's construction of and address to the tween could be to carry out research with *actual tweens*. I have not in any way attempted or claimed to speak on behalf of tweens in this research – a mistake made too often by journalists, cultural commentators and childhood advocates. In this thesis I have analysed the tween as a figure *constructed* by the texts that make up popular culture; I have discussed the *ideal tween consumer* as projected by the films, television programmes, celebrities and extra texts. In doing so, I cannot know (and would certainly avoid presuming) whether or not actual tweens read the messages and values in the way that I have suggested. This is of course the limitation of textual, discursive and ideological analysis. When discussing my research with fellow academics, I have often been asked (particularly in interdisciplinary settings) how actual tweens respond to the texts, and whether the texts offer them agency. Answers to such questions are beyond the scope of the methods used in this thesis (and indeed go beyond the research questions set at the beginning of the project). I can only argue in what ways tween popular culture *claims* to empower the tween.

As stated in the Introduction to this thesis, the subject of the tween and tweenhood is still largely absent from academic studies, particularly from the fields of film, television, media, celebrity, and more broadly cultural studies. Where the subject has appeared in girlhood studies, authors tend to recycle anxieties and concerns regarding tweenhood found across childhood advocacy, the internet, and popular news and magazine articles. The same is found in children's media studies and work on children and popular culture, which add fuel to "media effects" debates. More research is needed which explores the tween as a discursive construction and tween popular culture in their own right, rather than as an extension or subcategory of children's or teen media. Such work needs to go beyond redundant debates regarding the "too much too soon" concerns of tween culture. This thesis has begun somewhat to redress this lack of attention and has initiated the kind of research that now needs to continue. Furthermore, this thesis has drawn attention to a subject which is judged to be of little academic value, particularly in the coming together of *two* culturally

devalued subjects: children's popular culture and the feminine.⁵⁹³ By providing such lowly judged subjects with the academic attention they deserve, the cycle of continued research can hopefully be set into motion.

An expanding area of research on the tween and tweenhood comes from the social sciences involving empirical research with tweens themselves, regarding their relationship to tween popular culture. It is here that we could see valuable insights tending to the unaddressed questions left by film, television, media and celebrity studies research. Indeed, I would hope that the social sciences and media and cultural studies will join forces to allow for a fuller discursive understanding of the contemporary tween and tweenhood. Recent interdisciplinary work combining a critique of girls' popular culture with interviews and creative tasks with actual girls include Rebecca C. Hains's *Growing Up With Girl Power*.⁵⁹⁴ Edited collections within the field of girlhood studies are emerging, with ethnographic research into girlhood and popular culture in various global contexts, with particular attention paid to ethnic and cultural specificities (and as my analysis in Chapter 3 revealed, ethnicity in tween popular culture is a subject ripe for further research); Mary Celeste Kearney's edited collection *Mediated Girlhoods* is innovative in this regard.⁵⁹⁵ The new journal *Girlhood Studies* is a valuable site for research of this kind. However, such work tends to ignore the tween and tweenhood as a *discursive construction*.

As such, the most constructive research currently emerging comes from the social sciences, in empirical research into preadolescent and adolescent girls' position in relation to their popular culture, in particular with regards to their consumption of celebrities. Work such as that of Lumby and Lowe goes beyond the common cultural assumption of girls' irrational and hysterical fandom and passive consumption of "inappropriate" popular culture, instead revealing through interviews girls' active negotiation of celebrity culture and judgement of celebrities' constructed personae.⁵⁹⁶ More recently, Sue Jackson and Tiina Vares have sought to close the gap between media and cultural studies' research on tweens and tweenhood and that of the social

⁵⁹³ See also Mitchell and Reid-Walsh, *Researching Children's Popular Culture: The Cultural Spaces of Childhood*, (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 10; and Steinberg and Kincheloe, "Introduction: No More Secrets – Kinderculture, Information Saturation, and the Postmodern Childhood", in Steinberg and Kincheloe, eds, *Kinderculture: the Corporate Construction of Childhood*, (Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), p. 6.

⁵⁹⁴ Hains, *Growing Up With Girl Power*

⁵⁹⁵ Kearney, ed., *Mediated Girlhoods*

⁵⁹⁶ Lumby, "Doing It For Themselves"; and Lowe, "Colliding Feminisms"

sciences. Through focus group interviews they reveal the ways in which tweens make sense of the contradictory images of femininity (that is, the “slut” versus the “good girl”) within celebrity personae. Jackson and Vares observe a number of the same paradoxical scripts of femininity in tween popular culture noted throughout this thesis; however, what is fascinating in their research is their findings that tween girls themselves *acknowledge* and carefully *negotiate* these conflicting “choices” of femininities, in their consumption of young female celebrities.⁵⁹⁷ Allen’s research, cited in Chapter 3, and her work with Mendick provides a bridging of celebrity and cultural studies with social sciences which is needed in order to gain a more complete view of the discursively constructed tween; their research reveals the ways in which adolescent girls use celebrity in their everyday identity work.⁵⁹⁸ Whilst their work draws upon empirical research with British teenage girls, the research methods could prove incredibly constructive to a study of the tween, tweenhood and tween popular culture. Allen, Mendick and Laura Harvey’s research project, which has only recently begun (“The role of celebrity in young people’s classed and gendered aspirations”)⁵⁹⁹ will no doubt provide fascinating and valuable findings which will prove beneficial in gaining a fuller, discursive understanding of the contemporary tween.

At the time of writing this concluding chapter and coming to the end of the research project, [E! Online](#), the website for the E! Entertainment network, posted an image via its official facebook page (www.facebook.com/eonline), featuring five combined mugshots of Lindsay Lohan, placed in date order of arrest.⁶⁰⁰ The caption reads: “Check out a timeline of Lindsay Lohan’s arrests (Warning: There’s a lot of ‘em) [...] Thoughts on her latest run-in with the law?”:

⁵⁹⁷ Sue Jackson and Tiina Vares, “Media ‘Sluts’: ‘Tween’ Girls’ Negotiations of Postfeminist Sexual Subjectivities in Popular Culture”, in Rosalind Gill and Christina Scharff, eds, *New Femininities: Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); see also Emma Renold and Jessica Ringrose, “Regulation and Rupture: Mapping Tween and Teenage Girls’ Resistance to the Heterosexual Matrix”, *Feminist Theory* 9.3 (2008); and Vares, Jackson and Gill, “Preteen Girls Read ‘Tween’ Popular Culture: Diversity, Complexity and Contradiction”, *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics* 7.2 (2011).

⁵⁹⁸ Allen, “Girls Imagining Careers in the Limelight”; Allen and Mendick, “Young People’s Uses of Celebrity”; see also Allen and Mendick, “Keeping it Real?: Social Class, Young People and Authenticity in Reality TV”, *Sociology* 0.0 (2012).

⁵⁹⁹ See <<http://www.celebyouth.org/>> [accessed 4 December 2012].

⁶⁰⁰ <<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10151080471595736&set=pb.89033370735.-2207520000.1354691718&type=3&theater>> [accessed 5 December 2012]



Figure 31: “Check out a timeline of Lindsay Lohan’s arrests (Warning: There’s a lot of ‘em) [...] Thoughts on her latest run-in with the law?”

Facebook users are invited to participate in judging the images – indeed, users are *expected* to want to voice an opinion on the matter. Such expectation is based on Lohan’s former status as a tween star (she features in *Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen* and *Mean Girls*, discussed in this thesis); that is, her previous status as a signifier of young, female transition. Users can follow the link to the news story on [E! Online](#), and once one has navigated to the website, one finds that Lohan features prominently in news, photographs and videos, most of which centre on her criminal incidents and partying.⁶⁰¹ At the time of writing, the photograph had been shared on facebook 511 times, had been “liked” by 4,443 people, and had received 934 comments. What this highlights is the pervasiveness of girls in popular culture, and the intense public policing of young femininity, and indeed the acceptance of such public scrutiny. Popular culture, in particular celebrity culture and young female media culture, provides sites for which such policing is carried out, and in which the scripts of femininity are displayed. As this example demonstrates, regulation of femininity continues after a female celebrity has made the transition out of tween stardom (if indeed completion of this transition is possible). Strict rules exist regarding how girls should successfully “become” “appropriately” feminine, as do rules regarding “wrong” and “inappropriate” “becoming”. These rules are visibly enforced in popular culture for young girls in this transitional stage, and as such, in order to understand who the tween is as she is discursively constructed, one must continue to look to the films, television programmes, celebrities, and extra texts used by the tween to guide her in her “becoming”-woman.

⁶⁰¹ <http://uk.eonline.com/news/lindsay_lohan> [accessed 5 December 2012]

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