

Yearbook 2007



CHILDREN, MEDIA AND CONSUMPTION



ON THE FRONT EDGE

EDITORS:
KARIN M. EKSTRÖM
& BIRGITTE TUFTE

**The International Clearinghouse
on Children, Youth and Media**

NORDICOM
Göteborg University

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**THE CLEARINGHOUSE
IS LOCATED AT NORDICOM**

Nordicom is an organ of co-operation between the Nordic countries – Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The overriding goal and purpose is to make the media and communication efforts undertaken in the Nordic countries known, both throughout and far beyond our part of the world.

Nordicom uses a variety of channels – newsletters, journals, books, databases – to reach researchers, students, decisionmakers, media practitioners, journalists, teachers and interested members of the general public.

Nordicom works to establish and strengthen links between the Nordic research community and colleagues in all parts of the world, both by means of unilateral flows and by linking individual researchers, research groups and institutions.

Nordicom also documents media trends in the Nordic countries. The joint Nordic information addresses users in Europe and further afield. The production of comparative media statistics forms the core of this service.

Nordicom is funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers.

The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media

A UNESCO INITIATIVE 1997

In 1997, the Nordic Information Centre for Media and Communication Research (Nordicom), Göteborg University Sweden, began establishment of the International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media, financed by the Swedish government and UNESCO. The overall point of departure for the Clearinghouse's efforts with respect to children, youth and media is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The aim of the Clearinghouse is to increase awareness and knowledge about children, youth and media, thereby providing a basis for relevant policy-making, contributing to a constructive public debate, and enhancing children's and young people's media literacy and media competence. Moreover, it is hoped that the Clearinghouse's work will stimulate further research on children, youth and media.

The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media informs various groups of users – researchers, policy-makers, media professionals, voluntary organisations, teachers, students and interested individuals – about

- research on children, young people and media, with special attention to media violence
- research and practices regarding media education and children's/young people's participation in the media
- measures, activities and research concerning children's and young people's media environment.

Fundamental to the work of the Clearinghouse is the creation of a global *network*. The Clearinghouse publishes a *yearbook* and a *newsletter*. Several *bibliographies* and a worldwide *register of organisations* concerned with children and media have been compiled. This and other information is available on the Clearinghouse's *web site*:

www.nordicom.gu.se/clearinghouse



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NORDICOM
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Yearbook 2007

Children, Media and Consumption

On the Front Edge

Editors:

Karin M. Ekström & Birgitte Tufte

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The publication of this book about children, media and consumption has been possible thanks to the support of The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media at Nordicom, Göteborg University. We would like to express our sincere thanks to them, and especially we want to thank Ulla Carlsson. Without her patience and support throughout the whole period of editing and publication the book would never have come out.

Furthermore we want to thank the contributors to the book for their interesting and relevant chapters and for meeting their deadlines in time.

Finally we want to thank Majken Lerche Møller, research assistant at the Center for Marketing Communication, Copenhagen Business School. She has read all the manuscripts carefully and been the anchor woman and central connection between the authors, the undersigned and Ulla Carlsson, Nordicom.

The Editors

Foreword

Children's and adolescents' importance as actors on the market has grown successively the past four to five decades. Young people are of great interest to commercial enterprises of many kinds. These companies are aware of the young people as consumers in their own right, persons with influence on the consumption in the family, and not least as future consumers. In order to reach this new target group they use new media as marketing tools.

Nowadays, young people are exposed to a steady stream of commercial messages directed specifically to them. Because of its powers of penetration, television still has a unique position as an advertising medium, but advertising directed to youthful viewers is more and more prevalent on the internet and mobile phones, as well. Many computer games, cartoons and programmes are a form of advertising in themselves inasmuch as they are the vehicles for 'merchandising', i.e., the marketing of toys, dolls, clothing, accessories, etc., to youthful viewers. Product trade-marks and logotypes are a nearly universal lingua franca today, a vocabulary shared by young of all classes in a good part of the world.

Children and young people of today are consumers at an earlier age than previous generations and they are heavy media users. The rapid pace of change in our societies regarding media technology, information processing, economy and consumption patterns are challenges for children and adolescents, while these changes often seem to be a threat to the older generation.

So far, the research often has focused on "traditional" advertising such as TV commercials and has not sufficiently considered that young people are exposed to new types of marketing such as product placement, advertising on the internet and mobile phones, and brands — in the public as well as in the private sphere.

The aim of the yearbook 2007 is to shed light on these new trends and global developments in relation to young people, consumption and media. The idea of producing a book on this theme saw day's light at *the 2nd International Conference on Pluridisciplinary Perspectives on Child and Teen Consumption* at the

Copenhagen Business School in April 2006. We at the International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media are most pleased to have been able to engage two of the research area's most noted scholars, Professor Birgitte Tufte, Head of Children Research at Department of Marketing, Copenhagen Business School, the principal host of the Conference, and Dr. Karin M. Ekström, Director of Center for Consumer Science at School of Business, Economics and Law at Göteborg University, to edit this volume.

Let me conclude by, on behalf of the Clearinghouse, thanking the editors and all the contributors who have made this yearbook possible and whose articles illuminate a most important area.

Göteborg in October 2007

Ulla Carlsson

Director

The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media

NORDICOM

Göteborg University

Introduction

Karin M. Ekström & Birgitte Tufte

The aim of this book is to present research and recent studies carried out by researchers working in the field of consumption and media in relation to children, in order to shed light on the relationship between consumption, media and communication in general and in particular in relation to children and adolescents. The idea behind the book came – among other inspirations – from the *2nd International Conference on Pluridisciplinary Perspectives on Child and Teen Consumption* which took place at the Copenhagen Business School in 2006. The authors of the articles express different disciplinary traditions and various perspectives on the above mentioned themes.

According to the French philosopher Jean Baudrillard (1998), we live in a society of learning to consume, of social training in consumption. This is, however, not a new phenomenon. Generally speaking consumer culture goes back to the 18th century and was part of the very making of the modern world rather than a consequence of industrial and cultural modernity (e.g., Slater 1997). Consumer and media culture related to the production and consumption practices was particularly noticeable in the development of industrialisation, the advertising industry and print media during the late 19th century.

Going further back and looking at literature as a seismograph of trends in society, one could say that the novel *Robinson Crusoe* (Defoe 1719) was a presentation of and a pedagogical introduction to *Homo oeconomicus*, a way of thinking, which has had influence on economic theory and on socialisation of children and adults. However, it is not merely a rational need for goods that determines consumption patterns, but psychological factors and influence from social surroundings are at stake as well. This is also reflected in research on consumption which over time has moved from a strong influence from economics to psychology and lately sociology and anthropology (e.g., Belk 1995; Ekström 2003). A stronger emphasis is today placed on consumption in a broad sense, involving usage, maintenance, repair, recycling, disposal, purchase, attitudes and dreams

rather than merely focusing on buying as early research did. If looking into the future, there is a need for interdisciplinary research, including a plurality of theories and methods. In order to understand children's role as consumers and as media users in particular, there is a strong need to cross the borders between consumption and media research. (Tufte 2007). A melody is more than the sum of its individual tunes. We are convinced that by being inspired by different ways of thinking and crossing disciplinary borders we can learn more and advance this field of study.

Consumer culture

A noticeable change in our society during the last years has been the progression of a society with a focus on consumption; a consumer culture. Consumption concerns not only the individual, but reflects social relations (e.g., families and peers) as well as relations to societal systems (e.g., markets where retailers, media, brands and advertising operate). Mike Featherstone (1991, p. 84) writes:

To use the term 'consumer culture' is to emphasize that the world of goods and their principles of structuration are central to the understanding of contemporary society. This involves a dual focus: firstly, on the cultural dimension of the economy, the symbolization and use of material goods as 'communicators' not just utilities; and secondly, on the economy of cultural goods, the market principles of supply, demand, capital accumulation, competition, and monopolization which operate within the sphere of lifestyles, cultural goods and commodities.

From a post-modern perspective, consumption and production, consumers and producers are not seen as isolated, dual entities, but interacting on a market together. In order to understand the complexity of consumer and media culture, it is relevant to try to understand how consumption and production interact. Children are not only exposed and interpreters of brand meaning, but co-creators navigating in a landscape consisting of media, companies, schools, the home etc. Brands are created and interpreted in a cultural context (e.g., Holt 2002, 2004; Muñiz & O'Guinn's 2001; Schroeder & Salzer-Mörling 2006). It is important to understand the role of consumption, brands and media in relation to the social relations, involving family members and peers.

Consumers, young as well as old, negotiate relations, identities and lifestyles through their consumption. By choosing to consume certain products or by not choosing to consume certain goods, consumers show their identity, who they are or who they would like to be. Consumers are participating in the 'catwalk of consumption' (Hjort & Ekström 2006), implying that consumers are judged by others based on what they consume. Consumption has become a way to be included and excluded in society. Children of today live in a global media world

and come across similar messages on the internet, but their opportunities to consume also differ (e.g., Hjort 2004). Aspects of consumption related to everyday life look different depending on family, school, country etc. Lack of opportunities to consume can result in exclusion in society. If you do not have the right products, you risk not being part of a social group, involving social and psychological risk taking. Moral dilemmas and the ambivalence between good and bad consumption depend on how consumption is viewed and differ for individuals and different societal systems. Don Slater (1997, p. 3) writes:

The great issue about consumer culture is the way it connects central questions about how we should or want to live with questions about how society is organized – and does so at the level of everyday life.

Consumption society can at surface look as if everyone can choose the style and identity they want, but free choice does not always exist (e.g., Gabriel & Lang 1995; Lodziak 2002).

Children as consumers and media users

Children and young people are increasingly considered as consumers due to the fact that they have their own money and influence the family's consumption. As a result, companies and advertisers have recently shown a growing interest in them as a consumer segment, and new and still more sophisticated methods for targeting this segment are being developed. Until recently focus has very much been on teenagers, but in later years still younger groups of children are targeted. The concept of KGOY is often mentioned (KGOY= Kids grow older younger), and the so called tweens (the 8-12 year olds) (Lindstrøm 2003; Mitchell & Reid-Walsh 2005; Siegel, Coffey & Livingstone 2001) have become an important target group. The interest for this special age group may be compared to the interest for 'teenagers' in the 1950's:

The post-war period also saw the rise of youth as a distinct market segment ... the teenager was invented in the relatively affluent period of the 1950's with stress on consumption and leisure. During this time and subsequently, childhood and youth came to be understood as fully separated categories to be expressed, in part through separate modes of consumption (Kenway & Bullen 2003:43).

The term 'teenager' thus connects to the commodity culture of the post-war period. A parallel to the concept of teenagers at that time can be seen in the concept of tweens today. According to Thomas Cook and Susan B. Kaiser (2004) the term 'tween' appears for the first time in 1987 in an article in the journal *Marketing and Media Decisions*. Children of today live in a *Consumer and Media Cul-*

ture, and one may ask how children construct their identity in this society – in general, and as consumers. Children play an important role as consumers as they have both their own money influencing their own purchases as well as a strong influence on the household purchases. The increasing interest in knowledge about children as consumers and their disposal of money can be found among researchers, advertisers and marketing and media specialists. Of course teachers and other educators, parents and not to forget politicians are also extremely interested in new findings and research results. However, these different parties have different interests and attitudes in relation to how, why and when children develop into economically active members of our society.

Children and young people of today become consumers at an earlier age than previous generations, and they are also much heavier media users. The rapidly changing pace in our society regarding media technology, information processing, economy and consumption patterns makes it possible for them to experience purchasing and consumption at a rate much faster than previous generations. Mead (1970) discussed the development of our society into a prefigurative culture; a culture in which adults learn not only from adults, but also from their children. In families, children sometimes share their consumption experience with their parents and parents learn different consumption roles from their children (Ekström 1995). This has been referred to as ‘keeping up with the children’ (Ekström 2007) or children as frontrunners (Tufte, Rasmussen & Christensen 2005). Relations to family members are continuously negotiated in relation to consumption as part of everyday life. Future research need to consider the plurality of family structures and to recognize that there exist a multitude of family types and different ways of being a family (Ekström 2004). By understanding family activities in relation to media, we can better understand the role media play in family life.

Children’s consumption preferences and patterns cannot be separated from their use of traditional and new media, and no matter where they live young people turn to new media and communication culture with the same curiosity, enthusiasm and will to master the technology. The culture of children and young people is global when it comes to media. To a certain extent we find the same patterns among young people all over the world. However, it should also be mentioned that there are nuances based on geography and economics as well as differences depending on whether the child lives in a country rich in media and having a high level of media and communications technology – or the opposite. TV is still the most used media, but the internet and mobile phones are rapidly increasing as communication tools among children and adolescents (Drotner 2001; Livingstone, Bober & Helsper 2005; Livingstone & Bovill 2001; www.mediapro.org).

A new media landscape and a new media order are emerging (von Feilitzen & Carlsson 2000), and the young people and the marketers are the frontrunners. Children are communicating and networking on the internet and on their mobile phones, and the marketers are following the path, developing new marketing strategies to reach children as consumers through the new media (Tufte 2007).

Research perspectives

Since the 1970s, there has been a general change within some scientific disciplines, from considering the child as vulnerable to a concept of the child as a competent actor in his/her own life. Childhood has increasingly been subject to international interest, illustrated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. When it comes to research, the following areas are of special importance when looking at the child as a consumer: childhood and media studies, as well as consumer and consumer socialization studies. These are described briefly below.

Childhood research

Childhood research has, for many years, been based on developmental psychology – on children's development from one stage to another – inspired by the theory of Jean Piaget (Ginsburg & Oppen 1988). These stages are defined in terms of cognitive structures. According to Piaget, the child is perceived as an insufficient being, which gradually – with assistance from teachers and parents – develops into a competent adult person. This concept defines the child as a 'social becoming'.

Recently more interest has been placed on the social interaction and negotiation processes that take place between children and adults in relation to consumption. In this type of research, the child is perceived as a competent actor, who – in dialogue with his/her environment – creates meaning and interpretation. In modern childhood sociology and ethnology (Alanen 2000; Brembeck, Johansson & Kampmann 2004; James, Jenks & Prout 1998), the child is considered to be a 'social being'. Within childhood studies, there has thus been a shift of paradigm as expressed by the Danish professor Jan Kampmann in the following way: *"The childhood research has been wrested from the iron grip of developmental psychology in which it has been kept"* (Tufte, Kampmann & Hassel 2003).

Media studies

Within studies of children and media, there has been a development very much in accordance with the above-mentioned development within childhood studies. In the early period of mass communication research, focus was on effect-studies based on the so-called 'stimulus-response thinking', i.e. seen from a sender-perspective. Gradually, focus moved away from the sender to the receiver perspective, which resulted in the so called 'uses and gratification studies'. In the 1970s, various content analyses – based on critical theory – were made, while during the 1980s, reception studies regarding adults' as well as children's perception and understanding of the media messages developed, and, lately media ethnography (Tufte 1998). Thus the understanding of the media recipient as a

tabula rasa held in the early days of media research has changed into that of a 'strong viewer' or a child with 'strong culture' (Drotner 1995; Rönnberg 1987). The concept of 'the strong viewer' can be seen as analogous to both the concept of the 'competent child' and theories on children as constructive actors presented in recent child culture research (James, Jenks & Prout 1998; Qvortrup 1993), as already mentioned.

A characteristic feature of research on advertising in general and in relation to children in particular is that it has taken place in the private as well as in the public sector. As early as in the 1920s and 1930s, private companies in the United States carried out large-scale market research. Public-sector research into advertising at universities and other institutions of education is more recent. Research into advertising has therefore always been characterized by different interests and resources (Adler 1980; Bjurström 1994; Brembeck & Johansson (Eds.) 1996; Martensen & Hansen 2002; Schultz Jørgensen (Ed.) 1992; Seiter 1995; Tufte 1999; Ward, Wackman & Wartella 1977; Werner 1994; Young 2002). Many of the studies carried out on children and media, including advertising, have ended up by pointing to the necessity of what is called *advertising literacy or media literacy*. It is today still lacking in educational curricula in the schools of most countries. We find this surprising considering that we are living in a consumer and media culture.

Consumer and consumer socialization studies

Socialization is important for understanding how consumers regardless of age relate to culturally determined norms and adapt to changes in society (e.g., Ekström 2006). Over the years, a significant amount of research has been generated, a majority focusing on children and adolescents (e.g., John 1999). A review of 25 years of research on consumer socialization of children by John (1999) reports findings about children's advertising knowledge, transaction knowledge (products, brands, shopping, and pricing), decision-making skills and strategies, purchase requests and negotiation strategies. A significant number of studies and books based on different theoretical approaches and using different methods have been published recently within the area of children, adolescents, consumption and consumer socialization (Brusdal 2005; Drischoll 2002; Gunter & Furnham 1998; Hansen et al. 2002; Kenway & Bullen 2001/2003; Kline 1993; Lindström 2003; Mc Neal 1992; Mitchell & Reid-Walsh 2005; Montgomery 2001; Seiter 1995; Siegel et al 2001; Ville 2005). A majority of research on consumer socialization has been based on developmental psychology. In order to advance the field of study, there is a need to employ socio-cultural theories and ethnographic methods capturing the dialogs and negotiations occurring in the social context in which consumers are socialized (Ekström 2006), also recognizing media as being an important socialization agent, apart from families, peers etc.

The structure of the book

As mentioned in the beginning of this article the aim of this book is to present research and recent studies in the area of consumption and media in relation to children, and to shed light on the relationship between consumption and media. The authors of the chapters of the book represent a wide variety of disciplines focusing on different perspectives of consumption and media in relation to children. We have decided to present the chapters in the following categories; *Media Culture*, *Brand and Advertising Cultures*, and *Family Culture* even though we are aware that some of them are overlapping.

Media Culture

David Buckingham discusses the emerging edutainment market, a hybrid mix of education and entertainment and focuses on new media, in the form of CD-ROMs, games and websites. The rise of this market reflects a broader preoccupation with the importance of home learning. An expansion of national testing has created an atmosphere of growing competition, not only between schools, but also among parents and children themselves. Parents are concerned about their child's ability to pass the tests and pay for educational goods and services. The chapter is based on two empirical projects. One project consists of interviews with industry personnel and analysis of selected products. The industry is facing competition with the internet and in Britain the retailing and distribution of educational software are limited. The school market is lucrative and companies have found it easier to target the home through the school. Another project consists of surveys and interviews with parents and children showing that the majority of parents experienced a pressure to support their children's school work at home, and to invest in home tutoring, home computers and educational materials, an option not available for these with fewer economic resources. Many parents buy computers in order to support the children's education, but they are mainly used for non-educational purposes. Some parents also invest considerable amounts of money in educational software, but it is often left unused. One reason is that much of the educational material is of poor quality and children find it significantly less engaging than most of the other things they can do with computers. Another reason is that the children do not wish to spend their free time engaging in things that resembles school work and many parents resist the idea that they should be regarded as surrogate teachers. In some families, there was a struggle between new and old media, which reflects generational and gender differences. The author concludes that there may be a danger of an educational gap emerging along the lines of gender and social class.

In the beginning of the chapter *Pål André Aarsand* discusses that the constructions of children and computer games is often seen either as a futuristic opti-

mism or as a form of moral panic. The focus of his chapter is to describe what children are actually doing when they consume computer games in their everyday life. Two studies are presented, one conducted in a school class where he spent a year. The school class consisted of 18 pupils in a Swedish seventh grade, 13-14 years old, equally divided between boys and girls. The focus was on a group of four boys very interested in computer games. Field diaries, tape-recorders, video-recordings and interviews were made. In the other study, which is part of an international project, the author has been investigating children's use of digital technology in eight Swedish families, each family consisting of two working adults, and at least two children, where the target child was between 8 and 10 years old. The families were video recorded, they were asked to fill in questionnaires, and the family members were interviewed.

The results show that consumption of games seems to happen in two steps, the gaming and the talk about the game and that children talk about gaming with friends, siblings and parents. Even when participants were placed in front of the computer, the main activity was talking about computer games, so consumption was definitely not restricted to hands-on activities. The author emphasizes that it is not possible to make a clear distinction between home and school regarding consumption of computer games. Another interesting aspect was that children's use of media products such as for instance *The Lords of the Rings* and *Star Wars* involved consuming different media. The children had not only seen the films and played the games, but also read the books, collected collector cards, and listened to soundtracks from the films.

The author of the chapter concludes by saying that computer games as a hands-off activity differs depending on the social environment. Through hands-off use of computer games, consumption is not restricted to the hands-on activities. It is rather a process in which the line of consumption is prolonged into follow-up discussions among children.

Ian Grant explores young people's attitudes towards, and experiences of, online privacy. 175 adolescents between 13 and 17 years old took part in the study, encompassing three school types, an urban private school, a sub-urban state school and a rural state school. 97.2 percent of the participants from the fee-paying urban school and 91 percent from the rural state school had household internet access, whereas in the state suburban school 41.7 percent had access. Only 19.4 percent of the total sample had access to internet in their own bedroom reflecting that internet is a shared media in the family. Interviews with in total 45 pupils in groups of three self-selected friends reveal divergent viewpoints towards online privacy and three groups were identified, the naive dabblers (less knowledgeable and/or interested when conversations turned to the subject of online privacy), the open-minded liberals (higher level of openness and confidence in dealing with issues of online privacy), and the cynical concealers (very concerned about issues of privacy and personal identity online). The cynical concealers were most common among older students. A majority of the adolescents showed skepticism

towards commercial practices which dampened their overall enthusiasm towards internet consumption. The author suggests that schools and parents play an important role in educating and guiding young people online. However, parental involvement may be seen as an unwelcome intrusion for older children. The author argues that young people are unlikely to rely on online interactions for identity development if their concerns about privacy intrusion are not remedied.

Andrew Burn and *Sue Cranmer* start out with a description of a study (MEDIAPPRO) encompassing nine European countries designed to explore how young people between the ages of 12-18 appropriate digital media, including the internet and mobile technologies. The chapter focuses on the United Kingdom, where a survey was completed by 865 young people, and 24 interviews were conducted. The results show that there is a gap between home and school. It is discussed how schools privilege information retrieval over communicative functions of the internet. The authors emphasize that schools and colleges need to develop the potential of these technologies. It is discussed how UK perspectives and approaches to children and young people's safety online often reflect an opposition between those who advocate protectionist approaches and those who promote the development of young people's media literacy skills. The authors suggest that teachers and parents work together to develop methods for moderating online technologies within schools and colleges which allow for more positive and developmental approaches. The chapter points to the need to include media education/literacy in schools. Without a proper understanding of children's media culture the divide between young people's actual use of the internet and schools' pedagogic use of it will continue to grow. According to the authors it is central that schools redress the digital divide and equalize consequences of inequalities in resources at home. Schools have to develop ways to teach critical understanding of the internet.

Birgitte Tufte discusses the focus on tweens as a new segment. Companies and advertisers have shown a growing interest in this segment recently, and this also applies to other parties such as teachers, politicians, parents and others working with children, but from different points of view. The definition of the concept of "tweens" is discussed, as there are various definitions going from the 8-14 year olds to the 8-12 year olds.

A two year study "Tweens – between media and consumption" (2004-2006) is described. The project is a study of 10-12 year old children's use of media, focusing on the interplay between different media – in relation to the children's identity formation and socialization as consumers. Theoretically the project is based on theory from consumer, media and gender research. The data include quantitative and qualitative data such as questionnaires and interviews as well as children's drawings and lists of Christmas wishes.

The results show that these 10-12 year olds are very active young beings with many leisure time activities in general and belonging to families that have access to a huge variety of media. TV is still the most popular media although there is

an increasing interest in using the internet. They are familiar with a great number of websites.

The author concludes that the tweens toggle between kid and teenager behaviour and do not define themselves as tweens. They are both competent and vulnerable consumers and media users, depending on the context. On one side they are educating themselves as consumers through shopping, websites, TV, friends and family. On the other hand they have almost no knowledge about the relationship between price and value, budgeting, marketing, the right of the consumer etc. i.e. economical and financial insight in general.

The chapter concludes by pointing at the need for future research regarding new marketing strategies and the use, perception and understanding of these strategies by young people.

Anne Martensen examines tween's (8-12 year old children) needs and motives for acquiring a mobile phone. A segmentation tool is developed based on a means-end-chain. More than 50 qualitative interviews with tweens were conducted and 647 children in the age of 8-12 answered a questionnaire. A cluster analysis resulted in four tween segments. The first segment, the self-assured and socially strong, consists primarily of 11-12 year old boys. These tweens are very interested in mobile phones and their functions and they believe that the phone should have all the latest features. This group can be characterized as innovative and frontrunners and they would rather have a mobile phone different from what they see in their social circle. The second segment, the identity making mobile freaks, consists of a mix of 8-9 year old girls and boys who have acquired their mobile phone from a family member. The mobile phone plays an important role to these tweens. They feel that they get teased if they don't have a mobile phone and get envious at their class mates if they have a 'cooler' phone. They can be characterized as followers and have a great need for a mobile phone because it helps them get accepted among their friends. They are interested in the more abstract product attributes. The third segment, the followers without clear-cut attitudes, consists primarily of girls in the age of 10-12 years old. These tweens have a mobile phone to be accepted by their friends. Spending time with friends gives them self-confidence and self-esteem. They want to be like others and rarely have their own opinions about things resulting in vague or non-existing opinions or attitudes on mobile phones. The fourth segment, the passive, consists of a mix of 8-9 years old boys and girls. They are not at all interested in mobile phones, the design or the latest technical features.

Vebjörg Tingstad argues that new technologies such as the internet and mobile phones, requires a rethinking of how to approach research and how to represent the audience. Children's on-line communication and staying in touch on the mobile phones may supply the researcher with data about everyday practices that are difficult or perhaps impossible to obtain in other ways, for example, by interviewing or by conducting a questionnaire. The chapter deals with methodology

in relation to three main issues. First, the need for media research to seriously consider methodology and to explicitly describe the process of doing research, including reflections on ontology and epistemology is emphasized. Secondly, the question of how children are represented in research as well as changing constructions of children and childhood in contemporary societies is discussed. Finally, methodology related to two empirical examples based on ethnographically inspired studies of children's online and SMS activities are described, focusing on procedures and questions of reliability and validity and ethical considerations. The chapter emphasizes that the dynamics and convergence of new media technologies and changing constructions and perceptions of children and childhood must continuously be reflected in order to encourage methodological creativity and maintaining epistemological standards. The author argues that this should all be discussed across disciplines as well as within different research communities.

Jeanne Prinsloo discusses in her chapter youth media consumption in South Africa. She starts with a short description of the political situation in South Africa since the 1980s with focus on black youth pointing at the fact that during the struggle period a strong sense of identity emerged among township youth as South Africans. However, the discomfort felt in various quarters about their actions gave way to an opinion about this youth as an angry 'lost generation'. And still today, township teens are frequently considered deficient.

Regarding research the article points at the lack of studies regarding youth, especially audience research. The article presents research tendencies and distinguishes between administrative and critical research. She presents examples of education entertainment studies, one of these being the Soul City TV series, the purpose of which is to focus on health promotion and social change. The findings show – among other things – that the respondents focus very much on learning. They answered for instance that it was important to learn about AIDS and about South African cultures, and they enjoyed TV shows that encouraged them to learn.

The author says that the administratively driven studies which has been conducted on teen consumption to a large extent has focussed on how young people engage with media, with special interest in particular groups of teens in specific sites.

The chapter concludes by saying that the so-called administrative research tends to evaluate education entertainment in relation to learning and social change, but – in spite of the amount of research that evaluates education entertainment – these campaigns often seem to fail to change behaviours, and there is a danger to attribute too much direct power to the media alone. The critical research described in the chapter probes ways in which the media are deployed by teenagers to constitute and enact their identities and insists on the fluid nature of this. It is finally emphasized that the analyses of media engagements resulting from the critical research proposes insights of youth engagements that might usefully inform the education entertainment initiatives.

Brand and Advertising Culture

Simona De Iulio and *Nicoletta Diasio* describe the progressive spread of fun foods from the festive domain to more everyday contexts. By fun food is meant the kind of food that can be manipulated by children in a ludic context, the food-stuffs sold together with gadgets, games, figurines, or products, whose packing can be used for play, either directly or indirectly by evoking a fantasy world or association with traditional toy brands. Their anthropological analysis shows that the association between play and food has ancient origins in ritual and festive practices centered on childhood. There is a dual relation of the correspondence and opposition between ritual and play: both are tied to the calendar and to time, but they are tied to it in opposite ways: ritual fixes and structures the calendar; play conversely alters and destroys it. The chapter includes an analysis of the television advertising campaigns for the Kinder Sorpresa product, which is a chocolate egg containing a small toy in an assembly kit form, launched in 1974. An analysis of the television advertising campaigns between 1975 and 2006 shows the rapid and profound strategies used to promote the product. The authors illustrate that changes in targeting and positioning of the product as well as in persuasion strategies and tone of the messages have both reflected and accelerated the evolution in the role of children as consumers and the growing importance over the years of the interaction between nutrition and play in childhood habits and practices. Scene and chief characters remain unchanged; in the commercials, these are set in a domestic context and present a *mise-en-scène* of family roles centered on mother-child relationship. Since the middle of the 1970s, Kinder Sorpresa commercials assigned tasks and roles according to traditional gender differences. The mother is at the core of the campaigns whereas the fathers are absent. The hierarchical allocation of gender roles is also underlying the siblings' relationships: in most of the campaigns, the mother's privileged interlocutor is the son. The chapter concludes that fun food has been gradually removed from the festive sphere and incorporated into the everyday diet of children.

In the beginning of the chapter *Kathryn C. Montgomery* and *Jeff Chester* describe the growing health problem caused by excessive weight and poor nutrition among children worldwide, emphasizing that while the role of advertising and marketing in exacerbating this problem has been duly noted, most of the public policy debate, research, government regulation, and industry initiatives have focused primarily on TV advertising. According to the authors this is a problem as television is now only a small part of a rapidly exploding "marketing ecosystem" that encompasses a variety of digital devices and applications. For the most part, academic and policy research has not been able to keep pace with the rapid changes in the media and marketing environment.

The forms of advertising, marketing, and selling that are emerging as part of the new media depart in significant ways from the more familiar advertising on children's television, and the authors give a description of the new interactive

software systems which makes it possible for marketers to track a user's every move, online and off, compiling elaborate personal profiles in the process. With the growth of the internet and other new technologies, a host of trend-analysis companies, consultants, and digital strategists have moved into place, making today's young people the most intensely analyzed demographic group in the history of marketing.

The authors argue that the international food and beverage industry is at the forefront of innovation in digital marketing to young people, employing a variety of interactive techniques for reaching and engaging youth – through mobile technology, instant messaging, and social networking platforms, etc., and they have identified 10 techniques that are emblematic of contemporary digital marketing trends. Taken together, these practices constitute a new and fundamentally different direction for advertising.

The conclusion of the chapter is that while the growth and expansion of the interactive marketing system will continue unabated, there is still time for interventions that can help the twenty-first century media culture serve the health of children rather than undermine it.

Agnes Nairn and *Christine Griffin* discuss in their chapter the role of advertising and brands in the everyday lives of junior school children. They maintain that the developmental psychology paradigm is unable to capture the complexity of the relationships between brands and children in contemporary society. In their study, they try to capture the child's experience of advertising and brands from the child's point of view. They want to find out how children construct meaning from consumption objects rather than testing whether they can interpret the adult world or whether there are age differences in ability to assign fixed meaning to a brand. 72 children age 7-11 were recruited to participate in small group sessions, more specifically twelve discussions with 6 children at a time. The results show that the children interviewed enjoyed adverts for beer and financial services, which were appreciated for their entertainment value rather than any effect they might have on product choice or usage. The authors point out that brands are deeply embedded in commercial media culture. Among the 7-8 year olds, the specific names of brands were not salient in their minds and many were very unsure what was meant by the term 'brand'. It was also found that misattribution of brands to product categories was prevalent among younger as well as older children. The researchers were struck by the highly gendered nature of the discussions. The findings of this study imply a future research agenda which examines in detail the interaction between children and the multi-faced brand world. This would involve for the marketing research community to embrace new paradigms and to develop an understanding of the way in which children have their own interpretation of the brand world.

The objective of the research described in the chapter by *M^a Teresa Francés Barceló* is to determine the demand for branded products among Spanish children. In the beginning of the chapter the author gives a short description of the transition from "a kid customer" to "the brand consumer kid" and she emphasizes that this transition will be more important in the coming years. With a reference to Lindström and Seybold (2004) the author argues that the period of childhood has become shorter due to the teenage and even adult models. A new consumer kid has emerged i.e. the brand-consumer kid. Therefore, kids probably recognize brands at an earlier age, and the demand for and consumption of brand starts earlier than some years ago.

To determine the demand and knowledge of brands by children letters written by Spanish kids to the Three Wise Men at Christmas were collected. These letters are the equivalent to those sent to Father Christmas or Santa Claus in other countries. Two schools in Alicante (Spain) were chosen at random. One was a state school located in the surrounding suburbs of the city and the other one was a state subsidised private school located right in the centre of Alicante. The children chosen were 3-4 year olds, 7-8 year olds and 11-12 year olds. The 3-4 year olds were asked which presents they would ask for for Christmas, and the older children were given 15 minutes to write down their wishes.

The results show that age is a factor that really determines the level of knowledge of brands i.e. the older the child is the higher the wish for and consciousness of brands. The type of school also plays a very important role, especially among the 3-4 year olds. The chapter concludes that age and type of school are important factors when it comes to demand of brands among the children.

Lars Pynt Andersen's chapter is about Danish tweens (10-12 years old) reception and conception of TV advertising. Rather than simply asking: Do tweens understand TV-advertising? The main question is: How do tweens understand TV-advertising and what meanings do they find relevant when interpreting TV-advertising? In total, 48 children were interviewed in pairs by two researchers. The interviews focused on specific TV-ads or websites and were conducted in front of a TV or a computer connected with the internet. The study shows that the children are very skeptic, mostly disinterested and highly selective when appreciating TV-advertising. Almost all the children in the study showed very good understanding of the advertisers' persuasive strategies, and some revealed impressive knowledge of the conventions of TV-advertising. The interviews show that the tweens do not want advertising to be obscure, rather they want products to be presented as loudly, clearly, and as truly desirable as possible. It was also found that TV-advertising and internet pop-ups are experienced as intrusive communications that are forced upon you, a form of advertising which is deliberately avoided, while billboards are experienced as communications chosen by your own free will. According to the chapter, advertising is no longer just 'hard sell', but is increasingly being replaced by what might be termed 'small talk' of entertaining comedy or symbolism and irony. The author argues that understanding the many persuasive strategies of advertis-

ing is good, but without a sense of economics (e.g., a family economy), the social token (and social-anxiety) nature of brands, and other complex issues of consumption and marketing, tweens are hardly competent consumers.

David Marshall, Stephen Kline and Stephanie O'Donohoe discuss in their chapter television promotion of children's snacks. They review the obesity panic surrounding food marketing to children, seeking to offer a more nuanced and contextualized account of the relationship between children and food promotion on television. Their accounts draw on marketing, communications and health-related literature and results from studies in Canada, America, Great Britain and New Zealand. More specifically, food promotion in children's time and prime time TV are compared based on one study in the USA, one study in Canada and two studies in the United Kingdom. The chapter also includes results from surveys and focus groups/interview dyads involving children aged 8-11 in Canada and New Zealand, regarding their experiences of snack food marketing on television. The authors suggest that national culture and policies do imply differences in food marketing practices between countries. This was evident both in the weight of different categories advertised and the representational practices identified in British and North American advertising. The results point to a degree of advertising literacy, especially amongst the Canadian children, where some deeply skeptical views were expressed. In both New Zealand and Canada, there was also evidence of high brand awareness of heavily promoted products such as cereals, confectionary and fast foods. The authors argue for a middle ground position between the manipulated and savvy theories of young consumers. In both countries, children took advertising for granted, as part of the commercialized mediascape they grow up with. They did not really understand much about how the commercial media work, and certainly did not pay attention to all ads. For future research, the authors suggest more detailed analysis of the power dynamics involved in negotiating food consumption within the family and to pay attention to the distinction between mandated, negotiated and discretionary domains of consumption in children's lives and to begin to map more carefully children's path towards more empowered consumption.

Sabrina M. Neeley starts with an overview of the current understanding and concerns about adolescents' nutritional knowledge. It is argued that if federally-mandated nutritional information is supposed to increase consumer knowledge and assist in making better consumer choices, more facts are needed about how children and adolescents access and use nutritional information. The media are often blamed for the influence on children's attitudes, opinions and behaviors. The author presents a study of 7-12 years olds' knowledge of nutrition information, trying to identify the various sources from which they get nutrition guidelines and information and exploring how they make nutrition inferences and decisions when choosing which foods to consume. Four focus groups and ten individual interviews were conducted. The results show that children seemed to have varying levels of understanding of what the term nutrition means. In general, the children had some understanding of

basic nutritional concepts and guidelines, their food choices were primarily made on what they liked to eat. They did not use nutrition information on a product package to make food choices; they only read the information when they were bored and already eating. Their parents or other family members had great influence on their nutrition knowledge. And some parents were strict about foods purchased and consumed. The parents validated often nutrition information learned at school, but sometimes these validations from parents took the form of statements meant to scare the children. Children whose parents had nutrition-specific discussions with them, and engaged in nutrition education activities, appeared to be more knowledgeable than their peers and more conscientious. The children said that peers did not really influence their nutrition knowledge or behavior because they only ate what they liked. However, schools seemed to have an influence on children's nutrition knowledge, as teaching of nutrition concepts may be incorporated into different subjects. Collaboration between marketers, researchers, the food industry, health officials, and the government is also suggested to discern whether or not the current labeling regulations are appropriate for children. The question is posed whether there are other alternatives, such as other visuals or graphics that could be developed, that provide representative information to comply with government regulation, but does so in a format that is easier for children to understand and apply to their daily food choices.

Brian Young discusses the need for theoretical development in the field of advertising to children by using concepts drawn from communication theory and developmental psychology. He uses experiments to report on the use of celebrity endorsements among children and his study shows that at some point in the middle childhood (usually 7-8 years of age), an understanding of the role of celebrity endorsement develops and celebrities are perceived as being there not just to entertain, but as having been chosen to promote the product. One experiment showed that a full understanding of celebrity endorsement only emerged in 10-11-year-olds. If further research bears this out, then the consequences would be that the case for regulating advertising to young children needs to be strengthened. The author emphasizes the necessity to embed research in a sophisticated set of theories of communication and psychology. Research will only progress if theories and hypothesis emerge from advanced theory and subsequent research informs the body of theory. Otherwise, researchers will be at the mercy of the demon of 'common sense' and will be subject to attacks from zealots of all persuasions.

Family Culture

Jan Phillips discusses how family is "accomplished" through toy consumption. She suggests that "doing" family around the consumption of children's playthings is not just about bending to the pressures of established social structure, it is also about defining important social-cultural sites as needing the upkeep of recurring

and everyday work, family accomplishment and by way of consumption practices. She emphasizes that families are what families do and what they consume. Her study is based on 141 retrospectively elicited memory texts based on a prose or poetry ode to a favorite child toy written by college students in the United States. The results indicate that childhood memories involve childhood desire and possession practices, inter-generational gifting practices, practices constructing the idealized family and constraints and resistance in family enactment practices. Consumption practices are family practices reflecting reality as well as ideals. Also the consumption practices of families can be a way to detect and understand social changes in our society

Anna Sparrman's chapter on visual artefacts in children's rooms is based on eight interviews conducted with 6-8-year-old children. She has used video recordings and critical discourse analysis. Crossing the threshold into young children's rooms is like entering a bricolage of visual as well as material culture. The study shows how children express themselves visually in their rooms and that they do not differentiate between high and low culture and that idol posters do not preclude pictures of Jesus or grandmother's embroidery. There are differences between motifs of the wall decorations as well as colour settings in boys' vs. girls' rooms. Also, most of the pictures in the children's rooms have not been purchased by the children themselves, but have been received as gifts. The chapter demonstrates how the children's own opinions and reflections on wall decorations in their rooms are negotiated. The act of purchase, gift-giving, own image production and the everyday practice of decorating bedroom walls generate connections between parents and children, objects, cultural values of childhood and gender.

Alice Grønboj's chapter deals with how adolescents conceptualize environmental issues. She has asked 175 Danish adolescents, (16-22 years old), to write essays during school hours focusing on their environmental concern and learning about these issues in a family context, as well as expectations of a future consumer life. The results indicate that girls displayed more pro-environmental attitudes than boys. Also, the results indicate that mothers are particularly important in transmission of pro-environmental practices. Regardless of gender, the adolescents generally hold a shared understanding of environmental consumerism as being abstinence, to refrain from doing something, e.g., to refrain from throwing garbage in undesirable places, and to use less water and electricity. The most frequent suggestions were saving energy and environmentally friendly transport modes, such as using a bicycle. Buying green products was less of an option and more radical behavior (such as consumer boycotts, a general reduction of consumption, changing lifestyles) was generally non-existent. From a consumer policy perspective, it may be an advantage that environmental consumerism is not conceived as an exotic activity, but that it enjoys a broad appeal among young consumers. The author points out that it may be difficult to mobilize the present generation of young consumers for collective action in favor of radical environmental improvements.

Karin M. Ekström discusses the roles of children and parents living in consumer culture. It is argued that not only are young as well as old consumers exposed to the “catwalk of consumption”, they also participate by negotiating identities, relations and lifestyles through consumption. By choosing to consume commercial as well as cultural products, children as well as parents show who they are or who they would like to be. Some decisions involve a higher degree of social comparison than others, in particular products visible to others. There is no way to avoid participating, because choices to resist also reveal preferences and identities. The degrees to which consumers take part differ depending on interest and opportunities.

Children as well as parents learn to be consumers, acquiring skills and knowledge to function as consumers in a continuously changing consumer culture. They need to develop skills to become critical consumers when choosing and interpreting products, services, advertisements, brands and media. Rather than seeing children or parents as either victimized or competent consumers, it is argued that the focus should be put on the development of consumer literacy. All agents of social change being consumers as well as educators, producers, marketers, media and advertising agencies, have a role in the development of consumer literacy. A non-antagonistic discourse is advocated where they are seen as parts in a network of linkages and assemblages. It must also be recognized that different agents have different powers. Overall, there is a need to listen to the voice of the consumer, the child or the parent, in order to understand what it means to be a consumer.

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Media Culture

That's Edutainment

New Media, Marketing and Education in the Home

David Buckingham

The marketing of educational goods and services to parents is by no means a new phenomenon. As Carmen Luke (1989) and others have pointed out, the modern 'invention' of childhood in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was accompanied by a whole range of pedagogic commodities aimed at parents and children, including primers, advice manuals and instructional books and play-things. Authors such as Ellen Seiter (1993), Stephen Kline (1993) and Gary Cross (1997) have traced the growth of the toy market in the early twentieth century, which was partly founded on beliefs about the developmental and educational value of play; and a sub-sector of the publishing and media industries has always subsisted on appealing to parents' educational aspirations for their children.

However, in recent years there has been a significant expansion in the market for broadly 'educational' toys, software, books and magazines targeted at the domestic consumer. Thus, there has been a proliferation of educational magazines, particularly aimed at pre-school children and their parents; the market for popular information books has become crowded with increasingly glossy and attractive new products; the sets of encyclopaedias countless children were bought in previous decades have now been largely superseded by CD-ROM versions; and, building on the faltering home software business, we are now seeing the emergence of a significant new market in online learning for domestic consumers (Buckingham and Scanlon, 2003a).

Perhaps the most remarkable manifestation of this phenomenon has been the boom in materials aimed at very young children. In addition to books, magazines and educational toys, there is now a large range of DVDs, CD-ROMs and educational websites targeting the parents of pre-schoolers, and even of babies. One market leader is *Baby Einstein*, a range of 'developmental' DVDs aimed at under-twos, which has now generated a series of sub-brands in the form of *Baby Shakespeare*, *Baby Newton*, *Baby Mozart* and (implausibly enough) *Baby Van*

Gogh. (Significantly, the company has recently been bought by Disney.) More recent entrants to this market include *Brainy Baby*, *Brilliant Baby* and *Smart Baby*; while a practical guide to using such approaches is symptomatically entitled *Baby Power: Give Your Child Real Learning Power* (Wade and Moore, 2000). Such materials typically emphasise 'curiosity' and 'discovery', and seek to distance themselves from negative associations of 'hothousing'; but nevertheless, their pedagogic intent is quite tightly defined. As Majia Nadesan (2002) has shown, such products are typically marketed on the basis of claims drawn from a popularised version of so-called 'brain science' (infant neurological research). Such research is certainly questionable; yet these claims undoubtedly appeal to middle-class parents anxious that their children should not merely reach developmental norms, but significantly exceed them.

The rise of this market reflects a broader preoccupation with the importance of home learning that is apparent in many industrialised countries. In the UK, for example, Tony Blair's New Labour government has placed a central emphasis on parental choice and involvement in schooling; and it has promoted an educational 'work ethic' that children are expected to carry with them from the classroom into the home. Thus, it has repeatedly emphasised the importance of homework, and funded a whole range of new initiatives that seek to extend the reach of schooling into children's leisure time, such as 'summer universities' and homework clubs. Meanwhile, the continuing expansion of national testing has created an atmosphere of growing competition, not only between schools but also among parents and children themselves.

In this new climate, education has become a source of growing anxiety for many parents. Parents are increasingly concerned about their child's ability to pass the tests, and to gain entry to a 'good' school or a 'good' university. For some, this is about the aspiration to move up the social ladder, but for others it reflects an anxiety about the possibility of falling back down. Furthermore, the demand for parental involvement in education has arisen at a time when mothers are increasingly working outside the home, and when the form of family life is changing (via the rise in divorce and single parenthood). For those in employment in the UK, working hours appear to be rising; and for parents, there is accordingly a premium on 'quality time'. Particularly for parents who lead pressured lives, one solution is to throw money at the problem: paying for educational goods and services offers the promise of educational advantage which they may feel unable to secure on their own behalf, or in their own time.

In seeking to capture this market, educational publishers and media companies typically seek to appeal to parents' 'better nature' – their sense of what they *should* be doing in order to qualify as Good Parents. This is perhaps most transparently the case with the marketing of home computers, which frequently involves claims about how they can 'help your child to get ahead' in the educational race (Nixon, 1998). Information technology, it is typically argued, will give children an 'educational edge' on the competition and help them 'move to the front of the class'. Likewise, the marketing of educational software to parents

emphasises its ability to 'make homework fun', and thereby enable the child to achieve better results at school (Buckingham, Scanlon and Sefton-Green 2001). Such packages frequently contain 'assessment technology' that will enable parents to measure their child's progress in acquiring 'essential skills' and 'mastering fundamentals' – although this often sits awkwardly alongside claims about the 'magic' and 'enchantment' that such software affords.

Nevertheless, as this implies, companies are having to target a dual market here. Such material has to satisfy parents' expectations about what counts as valid education, and hence as a worthwhile way for their children to spend their time; and yet, if children are to be persuaded to use it in preference to other leisure pursuits, it also has to qualify as pleasurable and entertaining. To some extent, this accounts for the emergence of 'edutainment', a hybrid mix of education and entertainment that relies heavily on visual material, on narrative or game-like formats, and on more informal, less didactic styles of address. These new forms of 'edutainment' are offered both as an acceptable leisure-time activity, and as a glamorous alternative to the apparent tedium of much school work. Children, it is typically argued, will gain a competitive edge on their peers – and yet they will not even know that they are learning.

My aim in this article is to outline some of the characteristics of this emerging market, focusing particularly on new media, in the form of CD-ROMs, games and websites. I focus in turn on the production of such media, and the changing strategies of the educational software industry; the design, form and pedagogy of these digital texts; and the ways in which they are used by consumers, both parents and children. The material here is drawn from two substantial empirical projects, which involved interviews with industry personnel, analysis of selected products and surveys and interviews with parents and children¹.

Selling learning: commercial strategies

The market in educational software needs to be understood in relation to broader tendencies in the media industries. The contemporary media environment is one of increasing commercial competition. There has been a concentration of ownership, both in production and distribution; and a degree of technological convergence, largely as a result of digitisation. Companies increasingly have to think on a global scale, and to develop properties that can be marketed across a range of media platforms. While successful companies are generating much increased profits, the pace of change has also created a considerable degree of instability and uncertainty. In many ways, the key imperative is one of *risk management*: strong branding, series publishing and promotion across a range of media are key means of regulating demand and ensuring a degree of predictability in the marketplace. In the field of education, however, provision is also directly affected by government policy. National curricula and testing provide very clear indica-

tions of what 'counts' as valid learning, and hence a powerful means of regulating and predicting consumer demand. This is the case in well-established areas such as book publishing (see Buckingham and Scanlon, 2003a), as well as in new media.

In fact, the market for educational CD-ROMs, which expanded rapidly during the late 1990s, has now effectively stagnated. Part of the reason for this is obviously to do with competition from the internet; but there are other reasons too. As in print publishing, the overriding tendency within the educational software industry is towards monopoly, or at least oligopoly. For example, the UK's four leading educational software companies are now all owned by major multinationals, as smaller family-owned companies have fallen prey to global corporations. The scope for innovation in the field of software publishing is less than in the case of books, since the costs of entry into the market, and the costs of production, are much higher. Here, smaller companies are significantly more vulnerable. Because of the high production costs, software must be even more clearly designed for a global market than is the case with books. Changing the language on a CD-ROM is relatively straightforward, although accents may also have to be changed (most American CDs are 're-voiced' for the UK market); but the cost of changing the visual design of an interactive product is generally prohibitive.

The general uncertainty within this sector has of course been accentuated by the rapid pace of technological change. During the 1990s, the market in reference books was severely hit by the advent of CD-ROMs, and particularly by the practice of 'bundling' *Encarta* and other reference works with the purchase of home computers. However, the market in CD-ROMs is now in turn being undermined by the popular dissemination of the internet, which is arguably much more effective both in terms of the quantity of information and in terms of searchability. Several software publishers have responded by attempting a 'multi-platform' approach, for example by linking books or CD-ROMs with selected sites, or using a CD-ROM purchase as the basis for a limited-time subscription to dedicated sites from which additional material can be downloaded.

As in book publishing, the logic here is to capitalise on existing successes rather than to take the risk of new or one-off products. CD-ROM series such as *Reader Rabbit*, *Adi*, *Learning Ladder* and (formerly) Dorling Kindersley's *Explorer* have a defined brand identity that – among other things – can provide a substantial visual presence in shop displays. Publishers also seek to build long-term brand loyalty through offering a range of titles that progress up the age range; and this also offers economies of scale in terms of production costs. Although brand identities can become stale, the inevitable result is a form of conservatism: texts are produced according to a formula which can be applied to a range of subject matter. Here again, the companies that are best placed to benefit from this situation are those that already have well-established brand identities; and as a result, the scope for innovation on the part of smaller companies or new entrants to the market is bound to be reduced.

These tendencies have been accentuated by the retailing of educational software – which, at least in Britain, has proven to be particularly problematic. Very

few high-street stores specialise in software, and most of their business is in games. Large computer stores tend to focus primarily on hardware, and are notoriously alienating for female customers (who may be more likely than fathers to be looking for educational packages for their children). There are multi-purpose high-street outlets, which tend to have very limited display space and can only stock a small range of titles; and in Britain – unlike, for example, in France – specialist book-stores have generally been reluctant to stock software. In comparison with books, software packages are also quite highly priced, and are unlikely to be seen as an 'impulse buy'. In general, it is impossible to try out such programs before you buy, which means that the packaging is vital; but the fact that the boxes are therefore relatively large inevitably reduces the range of titles that can be stocked or displayed. Finally, there are few sources of independent advice about available titles – or even advertising – available to potential consumers: few consumers know what is available or where to go in order to buy it.

To some degree, government policy on education would appear to offer software publishers and retailers a degree of predictability and security. At least in the UK, the market is heavily dominated by the imperatives of national testing and the National Curriculum. The packaging of educational software frequently includes prominently displayed claims about its relevance to national tests; and some packages make great play of their 'state of the art assessment technology', which enables parents to test their children's progress against SAT targets. As a result, the range of educational material available on CD-ROM is dominated by reference works and drill-and-practice packages; and it is likely to become even narrower in the future. There is limited scope for innovation within the industry, as smaller producers are being marginalised and larger companies are concentrating on 'safer' material.

When it comes to the internet, economic uncertainties also exercise considerable constraints on the kinds of material that are available. One of the main issues facing commercial companies is how to make a return on their investment. While some providers have offered subscription-based services, consumers have become so accustomed to free content on the internet that it appears increasingly difficult to persuade them to pay directly. Other companies have developed sites which can only be used in conjunction with other media, either print or digital – for example, by getting parents to purchase an online testing package which is linked to a web site. Advertising and sponsorship raise different problems. Although the internet is increasingly being used as a means of advertising to children (Seiter, 2005), it is generally considered far less acceptable to advertise on *educational* websites, and marketers have needed to find less immediately 'visible' ways of introducing advertising, product placement and company branding into educational sites.

Given the difficulties in generating revenue from the internet, companies with interests in other areas are currently at a significant advantage – as are publishers in other media, who have libraries of available content that can be transferred to the new medium, often with minimal interactivity. Established media companies

also have a huge advantage in terms of reaching their target audience. For example, broadcasters will advertise their own web sites, or provide programmes which are linked to web sites; and the sites can also serve as a means of selling merchandise related to programmes. For smaller companies, targeting the larger and more amorphous home market is significantly more difficult than the more predictable market of schools. There is relatively little market research, and little or no advertising of websites in publications aimed at the home market, for example parenting or computer magazines – which may reflect the fact that this market is seen to be difficult to reach.

In practice, producers argue that the way to reach the home is through the school, particularly if schools give a direct endorsement of a particular site – thereby indicating yet another way in which private companies are using public institutions as a means of commercial marketing. The advent of 'learning platforms', which allow children to have access at home to material they use in school, may also enable some companies to target both the home and the school market. Here again, smaller companies are bound to find it harder to survive, and may have little option but to work with larger conglomerates.

As this implies, there is a significant gap between the emerging reality of e-learning and the rhetoric that has often accompanied it. The notion that the web would result in a decentralised communication environment, and the rise of an artisanal 'cottage industry' of producers – envisaged by, among others, Nicholas Negroponte (1995) – has not been borne out. Ultimately, as is also the case with book publishing, the tendency may be for the home market to be led by developments in the schools market. The schools market is more predictable and more easily reached; and at least in the short term, it is also more immediately lucrative. Yet the consequence of this is that the available content necessarily comes to be dominated by priorities of assessment and the formal curriculum. In all these respects, the combination of market forces and the influence of government policy is bound to result in a narrowing both of the available content and in terms of what *counts* as meaningful learning.

The limits of interactivity

The marketing of educational media is often characterised by strong claims about the value of 'interactivity'. It is in this respect that new media are seen to have the advantage over older media – and it is this quality of interactivity that is often seen guarantee 'fun' and to ensure children's motivation to learn. Yet to what extent are such claims justified?

Advocates of digital technology in education are often dismissive of the majority of commercially-produced CD-ROMs, and of the 'marketing hype' that surrounds them. For example, Aldrich et al. (1998: 321), claim that such packages are 'poorly constructed, consisting simply of a mishmash of images, sounds and

video that offer little more than light entertainment'. Lydia Plowman (1996: 263) argues that educational packages are often no more than 'electronic books... betraying the material's origin in a different format and failing to maximise the potential of a new medium'. John Robertson (1998) argues that the multimedia encyclopaedias and edutainment packages that now dominate the market have a degree of superficial sophistication, but are much less 'interactive' and 'empowering' than the software tools that were available in the 'golden age' of educational computing in the 1980s.

To some degree, this is a matter of economics. The production budgets of most educational software packages are miniscule compared with those of the majority of commercial games. The gap between such packages and commercial games are glaringly apparent to most children, however much their parents may encourage them to play educational games on the computer. To move from entertainment games like *Tomb Raider* or *The Adventures of Zelda* to educational packages such as *Become a World Explorer* (Dorling Kindersley) or *Adi's Attic* (Knowledge Adventure) is to move from a world that is challenging and compulsive to one that must quickly seem impoverished and constraining. While the graphics and sound environments of educational packages are much more limited, it is the lack of profound interactivity that is particularly striking.

Researchers have outlined several dimensions or levels of interactivity in educational packages (e.g. Sims, 1995), but the fundamental variables are to do with the degree of control offered to the learner and the nature and extent of the feedback that is provided. These dimensions vary between different 'genres' of CD-ROM packages. For example, in the case of so-called 'living books', much of the interactivity is relatively superficial. As Aldrich et al. (1998) suggest, the interactivity here is largely a matter of 'physical activities at the interface': the user 'acts' (for example, by clicking on an object or an icon) and the computer responds. This kind of 'reactive interactivity' can often be quite gratuitous: the user clicks aimlessly, more or less at random, and is rewarded with 'humorous' noises and pieces of animation – albeit at the expense of becoming distracted from the ongoing narrative. Likewise, the 'drill-and-skill' packages that dominate the market tend to employ very limited forms of interactivity. Most of these packages focus on providing practice in decontextualised 'skills' (for example in literacy and numeracy), or on fact-based subject content (such as science or history). The learner can adjust the level or pace of questioning, but their input is generally confined to selecting from a range of multiple-choice options. In fact, such packages rarely attempt to *teach*: they are more likely to confine themselves to *testing* skills or knowledge that learners are assumed to have already acquired.

By contrast, 'exploration' packages do provide a greater degree of control for the user. These packages typically invite the user to find their way through a particular landscape or location, in which a range of different types of information or activities may be embedded. Even so, the feedback to the user is often minimal, and the material is largely in the form of decontextualised 'facts'. The key activity is more like *browsing* than purposeful information retrieval; and in

this sense, the learning that occurs here is akin to a game of *Trivial Pursuit*. Richer forms of interactivity can be found in some educational simulation games. *Sim Town*, for example, a 'junior' version of *Sim City*, is a town planning simulation that allows users to create their own town using a 'tool box' consisting of roads, buildings, utilities and so on; and animated people then appear to occupy the town, multiplying seemingly uncontrollably. In this sense, the game provides both a high degree of control, or at least a great many choices, and a developed form of feedback – in that the user sees the consequences of those choices, for example in the form of overcrowding, pollution, floods or fires. Such packages provide a simulated context in which performance (skills, recall of knowledge) is made to *matter* at a level that goes beyond simply getting a score on a test; and in this respect, they avoid the largely decontextualised approach of the other genres discussed above. In general, however, 'interactivity' often seems to amount to little more than a marketing promise, or a superficial ornament. Compared with the experience of many computer games, the interactivity afforded by most educational software is ultimately quite impoverished.

Similar criticisms apply to educational websites (Buckingham and Scanlon, 2004). Such sites typically seek to adopt a more 'informal' and 'interactive' – and more visual – approach to learning. As with the CD-ROMs discussed above, much of the educational content is provided by means of multiple-choice quizzes, 'drill-and-skill' activities and basic information retrieval. Many such sites also incorporate simple games, mostly in a simple drill-and-practice format or using elements of the action-adventure genre.

However, such sites rarely manage to integrate the 'entertainment' and 'education' dimensions. For example, our analysis of the use of mathematical games on such sites (Scanlon et al., 2005) shows that the mathematical content is often divorced from the game-play: progress in the game is typically based on answering decontextualised arithmetic questions that have no relevance to the scenario or the narrative of the game. As with the 'drill-and-skill' packages described above, the user is given no credit for knowing how to approach the problem, even if they get the answer wrong, and no support or feedback beyond being told whether or not they are correct. In this respect, the sites appear to reinforce a dominant view of mathematics as a matter of mastering disembodied skills, and as a subject of absolutes in which the learner is either right or wrong.

Furthermore, the 'entertainment' elements of these games are typically contained in the visual mode, whereas the 'educational' elements are contained in written text – which further reinforces the detachment between them. In terms of game theory, the 'ludic' elements of such games (that is, their challenges and rewards) are largely extraneous to the learning: they provide only *extrinsic* motivation, rather than motivation that is intrinsic to the main activity at hand. As a result, the incentives to play are quite limited. When we discussed these games with children, they were predictably scathing about their limitations when compared with 'real' computer games; and if they played them at all, they would set them to the easiest setting, enabling them to bypass most of the educational content

and go directly to the game. As this implies, such attempts to 'make maths fun' by means of computer games are at best superficial and at worst self-defeating.

There are various reasons for the limitations of this material. To some extent, they are technical and economic – to do with constraints on bandwidth, and the lack of investment that is needed to create highly interactive packages. They might also be attributed to a failure of imagination – an inability to recognise the unique 'affordances' of the new medium (Livingstone, 2002: 245), or indeed to take the pleasures of popular culture sufficiently seriously. However, they are also symptomatic of the broader difficulties in seeking to combine 'education' and 'entertainment'. Indeed, in some respects it is the very formulation of the problem in this way that causes the difficulty. It seems to rest on an assumption that we need to sugar the pill – that learning is somehow inherently unpalatable, and that it has to be disguised with a coating of pleasure. Yet dressing up SAT tests or multiplication tables with a veneer of 'fun' is a strategy that most children quickly see through.

Learning comes home

To what extent, and in what ways, are these kinds of 'edutainment' materials actually used in the home? A great deal of research suggests that, while many parents buy computers in order to support their children's education, they are predominantly used for 'non-educational' purposes; and likewise, while some parents invest considerable amounts of money in educational software, it is often left unused. While some parents are keen to monitor their children's activities on the computer – particularly on the grounds of 'safety' – few spend significant amounts of time collaborating with their children in using software or the internet. Children's uses of computers in the home are dominated by playing games, by information-seeking related to hobbies or other media enthusiasms, and (increasingly) by instant messaging and participation in social networking sites. While children do use computers for specific homework assignments, the spontaneous use of educational software remains very limited (Facer et al., 2003; Giacquinta et al. 1993; Kerawalla and Crook, 2002, 2005; Livingstone, 2002).

This gap between the educational aspirations that surround home computers and the realities of everyday use was also apparent in our own research, which involved a fairly large-scale survey of parents (with around 800 respondents) and a series of interviews and observations with families in their homes (28 families across two projects) (Buckingham and Scanlon, 2003a, 2003b). These parents often cited education as a key reason for buying the computer in the first place; yet they had mixed feelings about whether it was being used in the manner originally intended. Some parents found that their children were only willing to use the computer for games, and complained that educational software was 'boring'; while others were concerned because their children seemed to be abandoning books.

Ultimately, however, most parents seemed unwilling to force the issue: they accepted that their children were unlikely to enjoy a didactic approach to education in the home, and that they would often leave materials unused for this reason.

Our research suggests that there is a clear 'educational divide' between parents who are able to invest in such resources and those who are not. In line with other large-scale surveys, we found that personal computers and internet access were more likely to be available in middle-class families, and significantly less available in single-parent families and in families where parents were unemployed. The latter were also less likely to buy educational software, to use educational websites, or to buy information books. Middle-class parents were also more likely to say that they helped their children with their homework (although of course that does not necessarily imply that they did so).

However, class was not the only factor in play here. In our in-depth interviews with parents across a range of social class backgrounds, we found quite different orientations to education, which were only partly to do with parents' own class 'trajectories'. While some parents were quite assiduous in supporting their children's homework, others resisted the idea that they should be seen as surrogate teachers. Even so, the majority of parents experienced a degree of pressure to support their children's school work at home, and to invest in home tutoring, additional private lessons, home computers and educational materials. Obviously, for those who have fewer economic resources, this option is less available, and to pursue it may require some difficult choices; and as such, the commercialisation of out-of-school learning seems almost bound to exacerbate educational inequalities.

In some families, there was an ongoing struggle between 'new' and 'old' media, which partly reflected generational and gender differences. The older children (aged 11-13), particularly the boys, expressed considerable enthusiasm for the internet in preference to books as a source of information. However, several mothers expressed a personal preference for books, and regret or discomfort regarding computers. Fathers tended to be seen as experts on computers, although mothers were still primarily responsible for their children's learning in the home. As this implies, there may be a danger of a new 'education gap' emerging here, along the lines of gender as well as social class.

Having bought a computer, however, several of the parents in our sample found that it was not being used in the way they had hoped. They reported that their children were unwilling to use educational software packages more than once because they found them repetitive and simplistic. Few families were making extensive use of educational software. Parents did not necessarily know about the software that was available, or where to obtain it; and the fact that it cannot generally be previewed prior to purchase was a significant disincentive, as compared with books. Several of the parents and children whom we interviewed had invested in software that turned out to be of poor quality, or did not live up to the promises of its packaging. Most had bought little beyond the packages that came 'bundled' with the computer itself.

We found similar responses when it came to educational uses of the internet (Buckingham and Scanlon, 2003b). Here again, parents reported that their children tended to use the internet for entertainment rather than education. Some argued that this was because their children were too young to be using it on a regular basis for education: when computers were used in this way, it was usually for school assignments in subjects like history or geography. Broadly speaking, children appeared to be accessing sites which were little more than books in digital form – thereby providing support for parental complaints that the internet does not provide anything which children could not get from books. Nonetheless, children generally preferred using the computer to reading books for information: although they did not always seem to know where to go on the internet to find the information they needed, they still preferred this method to using catalogues and book indexes in the library. Their schools did not often recommend sites, and children generally found sites by using search engines, or confined themselves to a limited range of well-known 'branded' sites (such as the BBC).

Although all the families in our study had good internet access, we found little evidence of intensive use of educational sites. There were several reasons for this: parents' lack of knowledge of the sites available; the limited nature of homework assignments; the greater appeal for children of other (entertainment) uses of the computer; technical difficulties in accessing sites; and the lack of engagement offered by the sites that were known to be available. Here again, it would seem that the educational promise of home computing is still a long way from realisation.

Conclusion

The domestic market in 'edutainment' media has significantly expanded in recent years. This has partly been a result of the industry's continuing drive to generate new sources of profit, although there have also been specific government initiatives designed to stimulate the educational software industry (Scanlon and Buckingham, 2003). More broadly, government policies on education have placed a growing competitive pressure on parents and children; and one response to this is to spend money on goods and services that appear to guarantee educational advantage – although of course this is an option that is not equally available to all. Yet despite their aspirations and good intentions, there is little evidence that parents are actually supporting their children's educational uses of computers in the home. One key reason for this is simply that much of the educational material available is limited and of poor quality – and children find it significantly less engaging than most of the other things they can do with computers. As I have suggested, these limitations can at least partly be seen as a consequence of the constraints imposed by the commercial market.

However, the most significant reason for this failure may be to do with the inherent differences between the social context of the home and the context of the school. The idea – promoted by some enthusiasts for educational computing – that new technology will automatically result in new, more liberating styles of ‘informal learning’ in the home seems somewhat questionable. To say the least, such expectations may be out of step with the everyday realities of family life. The ‘ecology’ of the home is very different from that of the school – and, many would argue, necessarily so. By and large, children do not wish to spend their free time engaging in anything that closely resembles school work; and many parents also resist the idea that they should be regarded as surrogate teachers. Indeed, as the kinds of learning that are promoted within formal education become narrower and more reductive, it may be that children will be more and more inclined to resist the pressure to learn outside school. Anxious parents may represent a ‘soft touch’ for marketers, but children may not be so easily persuaded.

Note

1. Both projects were conducted with Margaret Scanlon, and were funded by the Economic and Social Research Council UK: ‘Changing Sites of Education: Educational Media and the Domestic Market’ (R000238218) and ‘Learning Online: E-Learning and the Domestic Market’ (R000223819).

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Children's Consumption of Computer Games

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The current economic impacts of the computer gaming industry is commonly the reason given for studying computer games (Williams 2006), and there can be no doubt that computer games are big business. Computer games are produced as spin-off products of films and the major sport leagues in the US, such as the NHL (National Hockey League) and the NBA (National Basket League), and they are also products in their own right. Sports and film are examples of two cultural arenas that play an important role in young people's everyday lives, of which computer games have also become a part. In short, computer games are hardcore commercial products that are related to and/or integrated into more traditional media and cultural arenas in society (cf. Bolter and Grusin 1999). However, instead of discussing the economical consequences of computer games as such, I will instead focus on how children consume computer games.

When the relation between computer games and children is discussed, two main constructions can be seen. First, there is the idea that children's consumption of computer games will enable them to meet the demands of postmodern society. This idea rests on technological optimism (determinism) – a utopian idea implying that the child will become digitally literate just by consuming computer games (e.g., Papert 1993; Tapscott 1998; Gee 2003). Second, there is the idea that consuming computer games will have negative influences on children; this can be seen as the dystopian reverse image of the first idea. According to the latter idea, consumption of computer games is seen as producing the unhealthy child, who is, presumably, both fat and criminal (Ellneby 2005). This latter view has been called moral panic (Holloway and Valentine 2003; Critcher 2006), and has often been observed in the past when new media (e.g., motion pictures, TV) were introduced into people's everyday lives (Cuban 1986). These constructions of children and computer games, either showing optimism for the future or moral panic, rest on the idea that children are shaped by their surroundings, and that technology works in the same way in all settings. What I find more interesting is

to look at what children are doing when they consume computer games in different arenas.

Children as consumers of computer games

Consumption of information and communication technology (ICT) is often presented as something that promotes consumers' independence and freedom (Punie, Bogdanowicz et al. 2005). This can be seen in light of notions of interactivity, where users of ICT are seen as actors in a digital landscape. The deterministic view of children and ICT can be problematized along the lines of consumers' independence and freedom in relation to new technology. It could be claimed that this is done through criticism of diffusion studies published in the 1980s and 1990s, which show how users of new technology, like computer games, do not necessarily follow recommendations from commercials, instructions or producers (Punie et al. 2005). Rather, it is often observed that users find areas of application other than those producers and designers had in mind when the product was launched. This means that understanding how children consume computer games becomes an empirical question, which must be studied in their everyday life.

North European studies have investigated children's general use of digital technologies at school and at home (Livingstone and Bovill 2001; Kløvstad 2004; Erstad, Kløvstad et al. 2005). Among the different uses of digital technology, playing computer games seems to be the most popular activity, and homes seem to be the main place for children's gaming¹. Examples of questions that have been posed to children are: What kinds of games do you play; do you play online; what kind of game console do you use and how much time do you spend on playing games? These studies tell us a great deal about how game consoles and computer games are distributed among children, but nothing about how children are actually consuming their computer games. Several qualitative studies have focused on how children play computer games, particularly on the interaction with and in front of the screen (e.g., Vered 1998; Johansson 2000; Linderöth 2004; Ljung-Djårf 2004). A common argument brought forward by these studies is that the social dimension is of importance for how gaming is done. Both the surveys and the qualitative studies focus on what can be called "hands-on activities" – on the interaction between game technology and children.

Gaming as a social activity makes relevant a focus on the relation between the participants and the game. This can be discussed in terms of *ratified* versus *non-ratified* participants (Goffman 1974), which are useful concepts for understanding a person's status in relation to an activity. With respect to relations between participants, this can be understood in terms of *positioning*, which highlights how participants continually position themselves and others in the ongoing activity. This means, "people *produce* one another (and themselves) situationally as *social beings*" (emphasis in original) (Bamberg and Wetherell 1997:

336). The production of positions is not something participants themselves invent in that particular conversational context, but is part of the subjects' social and cultural surroundings (Wetherell and Edley 1999).

The sites in which gaming occurs make certain positions available and others less likely to occur (e.g., Bovill and Livingstone 2001; Holloway and Valentine 2003). For instance, being positioned as a student rests on the fact that a child is situated in relation to school, and when a child is positioned as daughter or son, this is likely to happen in a family setting. Other positions may be, for instance, the game expert, the expert on books, the clever schoolboy, the tough girl, the obstinate teenager or the expert on scary movies. The consumption of computer games may look completely different depending on which position the participants enter. If someone enters the position of a clever schoolboy while gaming in school, there is reason to believe that he will avoid activities the tough girl would not avoid. It is assumed that relations between participants have consequences for how consumption of computer games takes shape.

In the present study, the focus is on how children use computer games in their everyday lives. Playing computer games can be seen as an activity in a socio-cultural network, where home and school are "two" out of several geographical sites in which media-based entertainment takes place. The reasons for investigating children's use in these settings are, first, that children spend most of their daytime in school and, second, that the children in the present fieldwork often discussed and talked about gaming that took place at home. In short, this text investigates the patterns of children's consumption of computer games.

Method and research sites

I spent one year in a Swedish seventh grade class (age 13-14). The class consisted of eighteen pupils: nine boys and nine girls. I have focused on a group of four boys known for their interest in computer games. They reported that they were heavy users, which made their patterns of consumption interesting to study. Field diaries have been written, a tape-recorder has been used during lessons, in the corridors during breaks and at the youth recreation centre, which is located near the school. Furthermore, situations in which the pupils used computers have been video recorded. The video recordings amount to about 35 hours. In addition, I have conducted two interviews with every child in the study. During my stay in the school, it became obvious through interviews and observations that much of the children's self-initiated computer activities took place at home. As a member of an international research project on the everyday lives of dual-earner families ('Everyday lives of Working Families'²), I have access to data on family life settings. As part of this project, I have been investigating children's use of digital technology in Swedish family life. The study includes video recordings of mundane work and play activities in 48 homes in Italy, the US and Sweden. The

Swedish material consists of eight families who had two working adults and at least two children, where the target child was between 8 and 10 years of age. This means that there are age differences between the children focused on in the school setting and in the children focused on in the family setting. The families were video recorded, asked to fill in questionnaires, and the family members were interviewed. Two video cameras were used for simultaneous recordings of the family life. One of the cameras followed the target child, while the other camera followed one of the adults. The recordings took place in the families' homes and went on for one week, starting when the first family members got up in the morning and continuing until they left for work/school. Then, the recordings started again when they came back home and until the children went to bed. The total amount of video recordings from the families is about 300 hours. Informed consent was obtained from all of the children and their parents. For the children I studied in school, informed consent was also obtained from the head teacher of the school as well as from the teachers responsible for this class. All names have been fictionalized.

All chosen sequences have been transcribed using a simplified version of conventions employed within conversation analysis (for the transcription system, see Appendix 1). The sequences were initially transcribed and analysed in Swedish before being translated into English.

The present work is influenced by what has been called *multi-site* or multilocal ethnography (Marcus 1995; Hannerz 2003). This means that the researcher follows, for instance, an artefact, an idea or a practice, but that this is not restricted to a particular place (Marcus 1995). In the present study, children's consumption of computer games has been followed in sites where these activities occurred, whether it was in corridors, classrooms or living rooms. Ethnographic work has informed my choices during work in the field (Thorne 1993; Duranti 1997; Goodwin 2002) and has inspired the way practices have been described, illustrated and analysed in the present article. In the analysis, (i) the participants are seen as agents through their acting in and construction of reality. (ii) I have paid particular attention to how details in language use orient to a range of actions, and (iii) this has been accomplished in relation to what have been called 'naturally occurring' data (e.g., Edwards 1997). In the present data, this can be seen in the fact that I have not initiated the children's interactions.

In the present article, I have chosen to describe children's consumption of computer games in two settings. To illustrate in detail this consumption, I will present an in-depth analysis of two excerpts. But what do a few sequences tell us about the everyday lives of children in school and in families? The answer could be that this phenomenon is just one among many that make up children's lives, and as Jackson (1990 [1968]: 177) writes in relation to the classroom: 'considered singly many aspects of the classroom look trivial. And in a sense they are. It is only when their cumulative occurrence is considered that the realization of their full importance begins to emerge'. The present study can be seen as a contribution to this cumulative work on children's everyday life.

Patterns of game consumptions

In the present article, I will focus on children's consumption of computer games in different socio-technical and geographical sites. First, with regard to socio-technical sites, a distinction between "hands-off" and "hands-on" activities is discussed and challenged. Second, with regard to geographical sites, a division is often made between home and school (e.g., Kløvstad and Kristiansen 2004; Erstad et al. 2005). As will be shown, this division is far too rough and imprecise in the sense that we cannot make a clear-cut distinction regarding consumption of computer games in homes versus schools. This calls into question the importance of sites in relation to consumption patterns.

Talking computer games in school

The group of boys I focused on in the school all came from the countryside. The fact that they came from the countryside meant that none of them had access to high speed internet at home, which had implications for their possibility to game online. These boys were placed in the same classroom area and stuck together during breaks, usually in places where they could be left alone. They were known in particular for playing computer games or, actually, they were known for talking about computer games at school (cf., Aarsand 2007b). During the first six months of observation, I never saw them use the computers at school. There may be several reasons for this. One reason, which was often mentioned when we discussed the computers, was that they were lousy, slow and did not support good graphics. Another possible explanation could be that the school computers were not primarily used for gaming, but for schoolwork. Note that these boys came from the countryside, which meant that they did not have a high-speed internet connection at home. This may explain why they paid no attention to online game sites during their first month in the school. Yet another explanation, on a speculative note, could be that the pupils in seventh grade arrived at this school when they started in the late summer. Thus, it may have taken some time to get to know the local norms and rules regarding activities such as playing computer games. This explanation is supported by the fact that the boys start playing computer games in school just after Christmas. In any case, they did not play computer games in school during the observation months, but instead talked about computer games, about *Battlefield*, *Grand Theft Auto*, *The Lord of the Rings* and *Star Wars*, almost every time I observed them. Their talk about computer games took place in the group and they seldom had the company of other classmates. The discussions usually concerned graphics, characters, weapons, story line and how they dealt with problems while they were gaming. Some of these discussions were related to releases of new games they had read about in game magazines.

Computer games based on newly released films, such as *Star Wars* and *The Lord of the Rings*, were often discussed. These discussions included comparisons of the

story line in the books with the storyline in the movies and in the games. Not all of them had read these books, but this did not stop them from having an opinion about the topic. It could be claimed that the boys in the group used different media as a resource in their talk about games. For instance, they used the movie in their discussion of how to defend "Helm's Deep" (The Lord of the Rings, Two Towers), which was one way of understanding how to complete the game. The intertwining of content and different media genres in discussions indicates that what is consumed can only be understood by studying consumption in its social setting. One way to resolve this dilemma is to focus on the act of consuming.

A different but reoccurring theme in the boys' talk about computer games in school was the idea of creating computer games from scratch. The first time I heard them discuss this issue was just before Christmas, and it continued until the end of the school year (in June). They planned the storyline of a game and discussed potential characters. During school lessons, these boys often continued their game discussions. In handicrafts, they made models of scenes from computer games. The scenes were built out of cartons, painted and different figures were glued onto it. This way of using computer games is not connected to consumption of a particular game, but to the computer game as an idea. The consumption of computer games goes beyond hands-on gaming; it also includes experiences, ideas and visions expressed while talking computer games.

One aspect of the present computer game consumption is the boys' display of knowledge. These children displayed to each other, as well as to those around them, that they know how different components of a computer game work. They displayed their knowledge of how to create a game and showed that they can master such a process. The displayed knowledge of computer games and gaming worked as a tool for creating situations in which they had influence. This can be seen with respect to two phenomena: First, these boys used computer games according to their interests and wishes, and not as the game designers had intended (cf., Steinkuehler, 2006). By using the games in their own way, they positioned themselves as computer game literate (Gee 2003). Second, displayed knowledge was of importance regarding who could be a ratified participant and, thereby, who was able to influence ongoing as well as future activities in the group. Thus, computer games were used as resources to negotiate positions and influence in the group as well as to exclude others from their activities.

Talking computer games at home

Consumption of games also occurred as hands-off activities at home. Children discussed with friends which computer games they preferred. Some of these discussions occurred while they read advertisements or computer magazines, and they concerned what games they had played and what games they were going to buy. The Lord of the Rings was popular while I was doing my fieldwork, and some of the children had collector cards from the films as well as the soundtrack.

Both the collector cards and the music were often used as an introduction to talk about the films before the talk turned into comments on the computer games based on the films. However, in the present material, the discussions at home are similar to the discussions in school, though they do differ with respect to the size of the groups as well as the accessibility of artefacts such as music, films and collector cards. Talking computer games not only occurred among peers in the homes, but also as discussions between adults and children. These discussions concerned games that friends had and the children wanted as well as the content of certain games.

In the excerpt, we meet a family at the breakfast table on a Saturday morning while they are discussing *The Sims*, a popular game in which gamers are able to create their own identity and life. The present episode is similar to much of the hands-off consumption talk in the school, but differs when it comes to the presence of adults. This family has been studied because talk about *The Sims* occurred frequently. However, not once did I see any of the family members actually playing *The Sims*. The family consisted of two parents and two girls.

Excerpt 1. Talk about The Sims

Participants: Mother, Father, Linnea (10), Emilie (8) (Madelen, classmate of Linnea)

- 1 Linnea And every time Madelen is out in the bathroom then we start cheating
- 2 (2)
- 3 Father Oh yeah why's that? (.) is it to see if she notices anything?
- 4 Emilie [No!]
- 5 Linnea [It is to get more money because Madelen knows how to cheat but she does
- 6 not use the cheat and before that she has deactivated the cheating
- 7 Father M::: so now you are using it, to get it
- 8 Linnea If I'd been able to cheat I would have cheated a whole lot
- 9 Emilie Then I would have gotten a whole lot of money
- 10 Linnea They have a two-storey house full of things [and
- 11 Mother [I don't get the thing with cheating
- 12 Father What do you do to get more money?
- 13 Emilie Xxx
- 14 Linnea Then you push on that the sum before big letter L alt and C then a grey
- 15 square comes, where you should write in something later on and then you
- 16 push enter, then you are supposed to bring the square back again and then
- 17 you should push exclamation mark comma exclamation mark and then you
- 18 could push enter at any time, whenever you want, but when it says dunk
- 19 dunk then you have to push (.) push enter
- 20 (3)
- 21 Mother Like I don't understand a thing e:: I don't understand what you do
- 22 Linnea You get more money
- 23 Mother Really?
- 24 Father The others get money when they work and depending on what kind of work
- 25 they've got
- 26 Mother Yes
- 27 (2)
- 28 Father There's a little profile at the bottom where you can see
- 29 Linnea How big your house is and that stuff
- 30 Father Yes all the facts they [about
- 31 Linnea [On Madelen's game you can look at interests and so on
- 32 Father There are small columns and such that you can choose certain characteristics
- 33 and so

Linnea introduces a discussion on cheating in gaming (line 1). This is followed by a two-second pause before the father asks for the reason, and then suggests that the reason may be to check whether or not she (Madelen) would notice it (line 3). Instead of treating Linnea's story as an ethically questionable one, the father displays an interest in how they are gaming and the reasons why they cheat. Linnea and Emelie give two arguments for why cheating is a relevant topic in gaming. First, this is a way to get more money, which improves their possibilities to act in *The Sims* (for instance to buy things for the house). Second, Madelen knows how to play *The Sims* and she therefore also knows the cheat codes (lines 5-6). The father displays his understanding of the function of cheating and even asks how this is done (line 12). The mother displays no understanding of why they cheat (line 11) or what this is all about (line 21). The father then explains to the mother that this is about increasing the income of the characters in *The Sims* (lines 24-25). He also explains some of the technicalities of *The Sims*, showing the mother and the girls that he knows this game. The father shows that he is not just an adult who asks "unqualified" questions about *The Sims*. Rather, he knows something about how this game works (lines 28, 30, 32), and Linnea confirms this by overlapping his telling and relating it to Madelen's version of *The Sims* (line 31).

Talk about *The Sims* occurred in situations like the above, where the computer game was used both by the girls and by the father as a resource in creating a conversation in which both adults and children participated. As can be seen, the computer game is turned into a common topic for discussion, where Linnea is positioned and enters the position as the most knowledgeable. She is the one who introduces the topic and deepens it regarding technical aspects. Emilie supports Linnea's position by confirming her story (lines 9) and by being quiet and listening to her while she explains for the father how this works. The father also positions her as the expert by directing questions to her and by relating to what she said before. Linnea's position as an expert can be seen in that she displays knowledge that none of the others do and that she directs the discussion by introducing new topics. When the father asks what they do to get more money (line 12), Linnea could have said that you just have to know a code. However, she provides a detailed and rather technical description of how to accomplish this in the game (lines 14-19).

The present example of talk about computer games in a family shows how computer games are turned into a topic of discussion for the whole family (e.g., Aarsand & Aronsson 2007). Not only do the children participate in the discussion about cheating codes, but the parents join in on this discussion as well. It could be argued that, in the present example, there is no competition about who is allowed to be the expert. Rather, it seems as though the father knows, or at least is interested in, how *The Sims* works (lines 28, 30 and 32). Thus, talking computer games becomes one way for family members to socialize on the children's terms.

The present discussion differs in content from the discussions among the boys in the school. Among the boys, there seems to be a great deal of telling each other how they have dealt with difficulties in games as well as discussions about

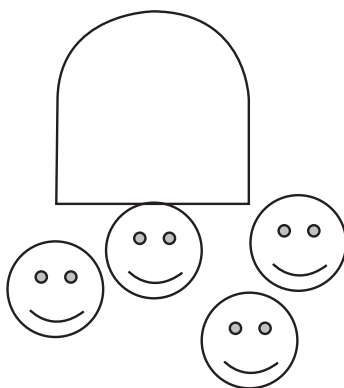
technical details involving graphics and weapons available for the avatar. The games also seem to be known to everyone, while the discussion with the parents seems to involve explaining what kind of activity gaming can be. In relation to parents, the children enter the position of the most knowledgeable without any competition (Aarsand 2007c), while among peers displaying relevant competence seems to be of importance (Cromdal, 2001, Goodwin, 1990).

Gaming in the classroom

As has been shown, talk about computer games was a regularly occurring activity in the school as well as in the homes. In the following section, I will once more look at the group of boys in the school, this time focusing on their talk in front of a computer in the classroom.

After Christmas, the boys in the peer group suddenly started playing computer games in the school during breaks. From being the boys who talked about computer games, they could now be identified while they were gaming. When the boys got the opportunity, they stayed in the classroom gaming on the website www.newgrounds.com. According to them, this was a non-commercial site in the sense that the games were “home made” and free. In the present excerpt, I will focus on how the pattern of consumption is created through the relation between the boys. Joel is the one in control of the keyboard, Anders is placed to the right of him and Johannes to the left, while Mathias is seated behind Anders and Joel (see Figure 1). All of them have their backs to the classroom and the other classmates.

Figure 1. Placement in front of the computer



Johannes, Joel, Mathias, Anders

Excerpt 2. Gaming in the classroom

Participants: Joel (13), Johannes (14), Mathias (13) and Anders (13)

- 1 Mathias Alien Homid you can play
2 Anders Play xxx ((points at the screen))
3 Joel It's so boring ((scrolls down on the web page))
4 Mathias That chicken o::: I think we should play that
5 Anders No:
6 Mathias No no that penguin that has a snowball machinegun
7 Anders No
8 Johannes Look Smasher is CP* (.) take it it is sacks smash (.) it is totally CP
9 Mathias Sacks smash is CP that's for sure
10 Johannes Ha ha it's fucking sick really
11 Mathias Yes isn't it sick on a scale from one to ten?
12 Johannes Really sick [at least
13 Mathias [Eleven
14 Anders In that case it's not xxx
15 Joel [Yeah
16 Johannes [Yeah
17 Mathias [Oh yeah *smash don't smash* ((in English))

*CP is an abbreviation for Cerebral Palsy.

When we enter the episode, the boys have just ended a game and are discussing what game to play next. Mathias suggests Alien Homid (line 1), but is ignored. Anders suggests a different game by leaning forward and almost touching the screen with his finger (line 2). Joel turns down Anders' suggestion and presents an account in which he explains why he does not want to play that particular game. So far, no decision has been made concerning which game to play next. Then Mathias comes up with two suggestions, first in line 4 and again in line 6, both of which are turned down by Anders without any further explanation (lines 5 and 7). When Johannes enters the scene, he does so in a slightly different way, starting by evaluating a game; 'look Smasher is CP' (line 8). CP indicates that something is not perfect, that there are some flaws. CP is a label these boys used for things they saw as weird, strange and/or cruel, and it is something beyond what can be accepted, yet something kind of cool as well. Johannes' labelling of Smasher as CP is supported by Mathias (line 9) and deepened by Johannes who says: 'ha ha it's fucking sick really' (line 10). Mathias holds on to the description of the game as sick, and even wants the others to make an evaluation, on a scale from one to ten, of how sick they think it is. Before anyone is able to answer, he claims that the game actually goes off the scale of sickness by suggesting eleven (line 13). Joel follows Johannes' suggestion to play Smasher and they enter the game (lines 15-17).

It could be argued that displaying computer game knowledge is an important part of the consumption of computer games. If we look at the negotiation around what game to play, all participants in the group, except Joel, suggest which game could be of interest (lines 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8). These suggestions do not only concern a common activity, but are also displaying knowledge of particular games on the present website. Through several suggestions, Mathias tells us not only that he has

been on this website before, but also that he has played several of the games and is able to evaluate them as preferable or not. Despite Mathias' displayed knowledge, his suggestions are turned down. Johannes uses more or less the same strategy when he starts by evaluating the game that he indirectly suggests. The difference is that Mathias supports Johannes in his evaluation of the game, though both display that they know the game and its content. It may be that Joel does not suggest any games because he controls the choice by controlling the keyboard and therefore does not need to suggest a game. He also demonstrates his game literacy by being the one who has his hands on the keyboard.

If we look at the relationship between participants in the group, different subject positions become visible in their discussion of what to do next. First, Mathias has many suggestions, but little influence over the choice of game. Mathias' suggestions are either turned down with no accounts or simply ignored. Mathias is a ratified participant, but is not able to "seize" the power and change the situation in the directions he proposes. Anders, on the other hand, obviously assumes the right to turn down Mathias' suggestions twice. Anders also suggests a game (line 2), but as can be seen, his suggestion is turned down by Joel (line 3). It is not until Johannes suggests a game that there seems to be some kind of agreement in the sense that Mathias is supportive and Joel executes the choice. Anders, however, does not participate in the decision that is made. As such, it could be claimed that, in terms of power, there is a situated hierarchy in the group concerning the decision of what game to play. In this hierarchy, Mathias is at the bottom, followed by Anders, who turns down Mathias' suggestions, Johannes and, in the end, Joel, who by controlling the keyboard also controls the choice. This hierarchy is fairly stable when this social constellation occurs in other activities. It is Joel and Johannes who seem to decide the discussion topics as well as what is considered good.

Gaming in groups also occurs in the families. When this happened, the children usually played with siblings or parents, and only once in a while did they play with friends. Whereas gaming in the school included several participants, as in the above example, gaming with siblings or parents usually involved only two persons. In addition, there were material differences. For instance, in three of the homes, computer games were played on X-box or PlayStation 2, which allows several persons to be hands-on simultaneously.

Consumption of computer games in groups has been illustrated by investigating two sites: the school and the home. If we look at the boys in the school, only one of them was hands-on in his gaming. The other participants talked about the ongoing game, as well as other games, while the one controlling the keyboard took the gaming decisions. Gaming in homes often offered other possibilities regarding the kind of game technology presented, which also meant that other positions were available for participants. For instance, if the boys in the school setting had been using a game console such as X-box or Playstation 2, all of them could have been hands-on. Because they used a computer in school, this was not an option. As such, the pattern of computer game consumption in the school

seems to be largely dominated by hands-off activities, even when the activity of gaming is in focus. When gaming is described as a hands-off activity, then it appears to be highly social, quite the opposite of the stereotype of the lonely gamer in his/her bedroom. But this does not mean that gaming alone does not occur.

Gaming alone at home

In research on gaming, the social dimension is often emphasized (Vered 1998; Johansson 2000; Holloway and Valentine 2003; Linderoth 2004). In the school material, gaming never occurred as a solitary activity. In the data on the families, the most striking thing about gaming was that the children did it as a solo activity. Gaming often occurred while they were waiting for something, such as meals, a children's television show or for a friend to arrive. In these cases, computer games were used to combat boredom. But gaming was also a main activity in its own right, in which the child investigated a new game or tried to enter new levels in familiar ones. In these cases, the child sometimes expressed that s/he wanted to be left alone. Some of the children even had the opportunity to play computer games with others online. However, I saw only one child, Fillip, gaming online. He played on the website www.hogwarts.nu (a site founded on J. K. Rowling's books about Harry Potter), but these were not multiplayer games. In relation to the "theme" Harry Potter, I observed that Fillip had some books from the series.

As can be seen from the discussion about the boys in the school, gaming alone does not necessarily imply a solo activity. Rather, it could be seen as a way to investigate the games before one participates in talk about computer games. This knowledge can be used as a resource when talking and discussing with friends, a way to show that one is up-to-date and knows what is worth knowing. As such, consumption of computer games can be seen as an activity in two steps, first the gaming, then the talk about the computer games (and gaming).

What about the consumption of computer games?

It has been claimed that new technologies, such as access to the internet at home, have blurred the boundaries between work and home (e.g., Punie et al. 2005). Computer games in schools work in a similar way, as part of a redefinition of the boundaries between school and home. The main difference with regard to computer games and gaming is that these are activities and artefacts that come from home (cf. Kryger 2001). Computer games work as boundary objects (Bowker and Star 1999), as artefacts that appear at the intersection of home and school, but are used somewhat differently in these settings. This can partly be explained by the fact that the practice of gaming across situations shows both similarities and

differences. On the one hand, the computer games are similar across the situations. On the other hand, the practice of playing these games differs, not only with regard to the technology available, but also with regard to the positions offered to participants in the social setting.

Children's use of highly profiled media products such as *The Lords of the Rings* and *Star Wars* involved consuming different media. The children studied here had not only seen the films and played the games, but also read the books, collected collector cards, and even listened to soundtracks from the films. Playing computer games was only one activity among others related to the same storyline and characters. In this social process of hands-off gaming, everyone did not have experience of all the different media, but together they developed knowledge of a "cultural field". This intertwining of media, as well as the ongoing discussions about gaming, can be seen as examples of how consumption of computer games involves distributed knowledge. As such, computer games can be the entrance into a cultural field that also consists of books, films and music. This was not restricted to children's consumption in the school, to seventh graders or to groups with a particular interest in, for instance, the *Lord of the Rings*. Rather, it could be seen across the sites, age, peer groups and institutional settings. If we see the consumption of computer games as a collage of knowledge and activities, it also becomes problematic to determine the origins of consumption. The fact that the book happened to be published first, does not mean that it is the primary source. In the practice of consumption, the primary source differs across consumers depending on what they laid their hands on first (Buckingham 2000; Sparrman 2002).

The distinction between hands-on and hands-off gaming shows that consuming computer games is much more than a hands-on activity. In the text, I have shown how children talk about gaming with friends, siblings and parents. In the school, we have seen examples of how children's consumption of computer games is a social activity. When gaming in groups is examined as an activity with several different positions, it can be argued that the main activity is talking computer games even when participants are placed in front of the computer. One reason for this may be the technological infrastructure in the school, which restricts the number of hands-on gamers. But as I have argued elsewhere, being an active participant in gaming in a group is not restricted to 'doing' and the hands-on activities, but it also consists of meta-talk, that is reflections on the next move as well as the frames of the game (Aarsand 2007a).

The main difference between gaming at school and at home was that adults were present in gaming activities in the homes, while they were never present in the school, except when they asked pupils to turn off the games before they started lessons³. Furthermore, in the school data, friends were always present as co-players, while in the homes, the co-players were usually siblings or parents. Once in a while, children and their friends played together at home. This tells us that gaming as a hands-off activity differs depending on the social environment. Despite the differences, there were similarities as well. In short, hands-off activities were

important parts of the consumption of computer games in the school as well as in the homes. The computer games were used in discussions, in establishing and sustaining groups and as personal identity markers. Through hands-off use of computer games, consumption was not restricted to the hands-on activities. Rather it was a process in which the line of consumption was prolonged into follow-up discussions among the children. Situations of consumption were created and recreated each time the game was played or talked about.

Notes

1. Gaming is a notion used to denote activities related to a computer game in front of the screen.
2. The Swedish project is collaborating with the UCLA Centre on Everyday lives of Families (CELFI) and the Italian Centre on Everyday lives of Families. The research project is founded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.
3. There were occasions when the pupils played during lessons, but during my stay with the class they were never discovered by teachers or other staff members.

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Appendix 1. Transcript conventions

Symbol	Meaning
?	Inquiring intonation
!	Raising intonation
(5)	Pause 5 second
:	Prolongation of preceding vowel
((comment))	Comments made by the researcher
ha ha	Laughter
[	(Bracket) Simultaneous or overlapping speech
Word	Speech in English
xxx	Unclear utterance

Online Privacy – An Issue for Adolescents?

Ian Grant

Almost a decade ago, Katz declared that young people were:

... at the epicenter of the information revolution, ground zero of the digital world... children have the chance to re-invent communications, culture, and community. To address the problems of the new world in new ways (Jon Katz 1996 cited by Sefton-Green 1998: 1)

The words of Katz almost a decade ago epitomized a viewpoint that young people were the catalyst for social change affecting many aspects of contemporary living. Central to this thesis was the way in which new media such as the internet is used by young people to actively influence everyday lives of those around them. Almost ten years on, new forms of media such as the internet and mobiles phones have indeed become naturalised, almost taken for granted aspects of contemporary youth lifestyles (Livingstone and Bober 2004). Livingstone and Bober found that 75% of 9-19 year olds have at some point accessed the internet at home in the UK, rising to 80% for older adolescent audiences. New forms of media offer tantalizing prospects for commercial practitioners seeking new ways to target youth audiences. Kline (1993) highlighted the growing influence of marketing practices across the digitalised worlds of communications, culture and community. Such practices do not however exist in isolation. They exist within the context of young people's everyday lives: the activities they enjoy, their domestic, school, work and social lives.

Recent studies amongst youth audiences have highlighted a wide range of positive gratifications young people receive from internet consumption, spanning cognitive, affective, integrative and escapist needs (see La Ferle *et al* 2000, Alberos-Andrés 2004, Grant 2005). Young people are assumed to be the most enthusiastic, flexible and adept to the constantly changing demands of the digital world (Tapscott 1998). There is however growing recognition that the unique charac-

teristics of this 'virtual world' pose a range of socially constructed issues impacting on the nature of youth internet consumption. One issue spanning the commercial and private worlds of youth people is online privacy. Back in 2002, Lindstrom argued that a loss of privacy was the most significant factor inhibiting adolescent trust when using the internet in the US. A Pew internet study (Lenhart 2005) suggested that more than half of American families use filters to protect teenagers from harmful online content. Much of the concern has centred on the negativity of media effects when dealing with commercial content. Montgomery and Parsnik (1996: 19) concluded that "if the [marketing] practices go unchecked, they will sharply erode the privacy of children and their families, transform the online experience for most children into one of seductive and incessant hucksterism, and subject them to new forms of manipulation and exploitation". Cai and Gantz (2000) argued that children are not well protected from commercial efforts to collect information without proper disclosure or efforts to elicit parental involvement. An opposing viewpoint has however argued that young people are "competent and creative agents...whose 'media savvy' skills tend to be underestimated by the adults around them" (Livingstone: 2004:6). Livingstone (2004) provided a detailed account of the issues concerning youth online privacy, focusing on non-commercial privacy concerns resulting from the negotiated relationship between young people and their parents.

The 'adult' commercial literature concerns itself with definitions of online privacy primarily related to organisational interaction with personal consumption. O'Malley *et al* (1997) for example argued that privacy embodies issues of *information* (control over personal information), *physical/interaction* (control over marketing intrusion) and *accuracy* (control over data accuracy), each one a facet of the marketed relationship between individual and organisation. The internet is assumed to serve as a platform for online companies to create 'favourable relations' with consumers (Brown and Muchira 2004). But researchers suggest that privacy concerns extend from new digital technology's ability to provide virtually unlimited exchange of information (Lester 2001). Berman and Mulligan (1999) argue that privacy means different things to different people, in different contexts; but there exists an expectation of anonymity, fairness and control over personal information and confidentiality. Online privacy concerns the moral rights to exclude and repel outside interference (Miller and Weckert 2000) and an accompanying legalistic framework in the case of children. This legal framework remains more tightly regulated in Europe through EU initiatives than the more *laissez faire* policies in the US. Turow (2003: 33) argued that the system in the US has been poorly legislated, resulting in ignorant consumers "fundamentally unaware" of what happens with their personal information, manipulated by increasingly sophisticated companies.

The conflicting positions over online privacy was amply illustrated in 1999 when Scott McNeally, CEO of Sun Microsystems argued it was an irrelevance, a "red herring" to be ignored (Sprenger 1999). Since then, the issue of online consumer privacy has become recognised as one of the most important consumer concerns

relating to 'new-media' consumption. Fletcher (2003) suggested that the growth of the internet and direct marketing has "sensitised" consumers towards threats to their personal privacy.

Research is needed which explores the fullness of young people's experiences of online privacy, incorporating an understanding of online privacy through the eyes of young people. This article argues that issues of online privacy are best understood if rooted in the contextual, everyday lives of young people (Graue and Walsch 1998), rather than isolated and open to misinterpretation or exaggeration. This assumes that methods of enquiry are designed to elicit an understanding of internet use within a socio-cultural background, using a range of quantitative and qualitative methods which help the investigator make links between the lives and lifestyles of young people and internet use, rather than relying on a narrow and arguably artificial picture, typically derived from single method, survey or experiment based design.

Research aims and methods

This study forms part of a larger study investigating young people and contemporary media choices in the digital age. The specific aim of this chapter is to explore young people's attitudes towards, and experiences of, online privacy. Older adolescents were an appropriate group to study for a number of reasons: their semi-autonomous position in the household, desire for greater independence, increased decision-making capacity and consequently their exposure to commercial influences (see Grant 2005). A diverse sample of 13-17 year olds was accessed through schools in the east coast of Scotland. Three school types were selected to achieve this criterion: an *urban private* school, a *sub-urban state* school and a *rural state* school (Table 1). The sample was not designed to be representative but to access a diverse range of viewpoints on contemporary media consumption. Fieldwork was conducted in schools after careful consideration of a range of methodological issues including gaining access, negotiating with gatekeepers, the school context, the role of teachers, the research environment and related ethical issues (see Morrow and Richards 1996). A total of 175 pupils participated in the study, completed in 2004.

Of the 175, 60 came from the '*state rural*' school, 60 from '*fee-paying*' urban school and 55 from the '*state suburban*' school.

Multiple methods of enquiry were chosen to allow for *complementary* forms of data to emerge (Green *et al.* 1989). This was designed to ensure that a more holistic picture, in this case for online privacy, emerged. The first stage involved all participants filling in a self-completion questionnaire, covering attitudes towards media, marketing and technology. This provided the bedrock of data for initial analysis. The second stage then involved an exploration of key issues using qualitative methods informed by phenomenological principles (Thompson

Table 1. Schools by selection criteria

Selection criteria	School a: 'rural state'	School b: 'urban fee-paying'	School c: 'suburban state'
Region	Borders	Lothian	Lothian
Type of area	Rural	Urban	Sub-urban
Type of school	State	Fee-paying	State
Est. social grade	Mixed	Middle class	Working class
DEPCAT Score (1991)*	3	1	4

* 1 = postcode with lowest level of deprivation, 5 = postcode with highest level of deprivation
DEPCAT is a measure of social deprivation combining car ownership, male unemployment, overcrowding and social class (Mcloone 1997)

et al. 1989). This was an attempt to explore older adolescents' everyday, new-media stories including personal concerns about online privacy. Rather than studied in isolation, such experiences were placed within the context of their daily lives. A total of 45 participants aged 13-17 took part in this second stage, or 15 for each of the three school types. Groups of three self-selecting friends known as 'friendship triads' were chosen as the optimum qualitative method: this provided the ideal compromise between the intimacy of individual interviews and the interaction of standard focus groups. Each of the fifteen 'triad' groups met three times with the researcher, encouraging rapport between interviewer and interviewee.

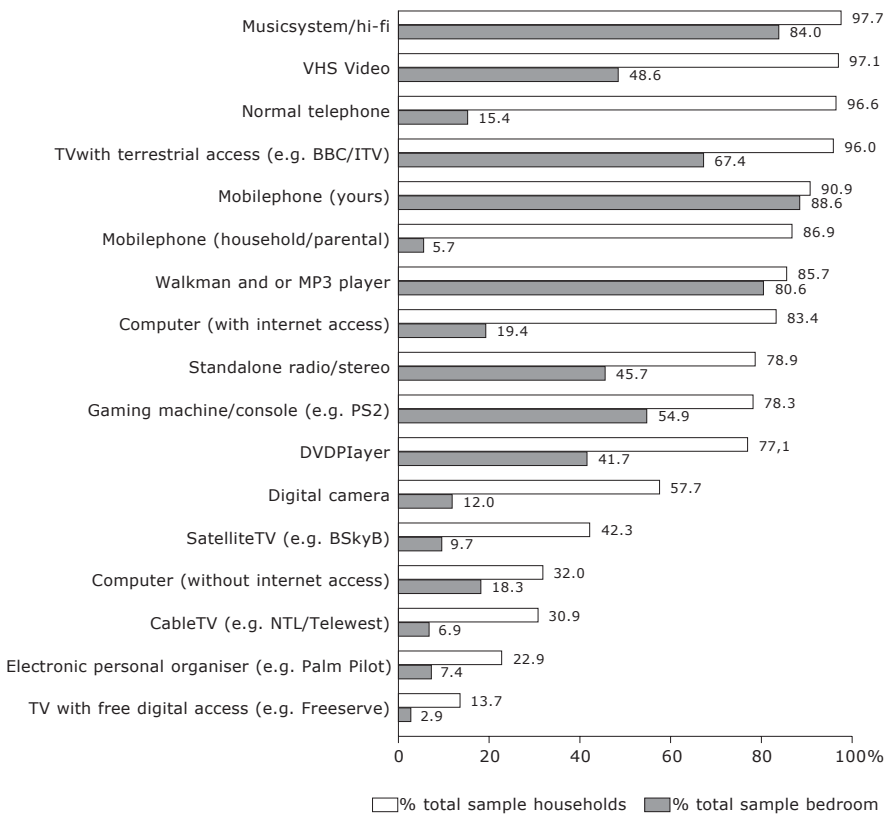
Participants were asked during the initial 'briefing' session to record a week in their lives, principally through the use of a disposable camera. Using a projective technique known as 'auto driving' (Heisley and Levy 1991), participants were then asked during the second session to introduce and discuss the photographs collected the previous week. This provided a way for participants to link themes of internet consumption back into their own socialised and personal experiences from that week. The analysis from this second session was used to supplement and enrich the data derived from the self-completion questionnaire, helping to better understand how internet consumption fitted into the everyday lives of young people. The final third session moved more specifically into issues concerning young peoples' uses of new media such as the internet. A second projective technique known as psycho-drawing (Gordon 1999) encouraged participants to conceptualise and reveal how they felt about the internet, providing both positive and negative experiences. It was during this session that the subject of online privacy (amongst a number of concerns expressed about internet consumption) emerged in some detail. Each of the sessions were recorded and then fully transcribed using NVivo according to phenomenological analysis principles (Thompson *et al* 1989). From these interviews transcripts and associated coding using NVivo, three distinct attitudinal types emerged from the qualitative data, illustrating divergent viewpoints and consumption behaviours towards online privacy. These were labelled *naïve dabblers*, *open-minded liberals* and *cynical concealers* and will be described later in the article.

Research findings

Internet access and use

As a precursor to exploring the concept of online privacy, it was important to obtain a sense of levels of internet access and competing media choices. Figure 1 illustrates that across this Scottish sample of older adolescents, gaining internet access was unproblematic; 83.4% of adolescent households had internet access (although a single connection without broadband often meant a shared family medium). There were however important variations in access, linked primarily to socio-geographic background of participants.

Figure 1. Comparative levels of household and bedroom media access



97.2% of participants from the *fee-paying urban* school had household access, 27% participants having that access in their bedrooms. This contrasting with only 41.7% from the *state-suburban* school (falling to 11.1% for bedroom access) highlighting the continuing issue of the digital divide across less privileged communities. Those from the more ruralised state school also had very high levels of household internet

access (91.0%) suggesting geographic isolation as well as social deprivation play a role in determining internet use. The significantly lower figures for bedroom culture illustrate that internet access for most young people remains a shared family media, accessed in areas of public rather than private space. As Livingstone and Bovill (2001) remind us, this means that internet consumption is a 'negotiated' family activity which complicates issues of online privacy.

Differences in internet access by gender and age group were far less prominent. It should be noted that this study did not seek to establish causal links between such variables as the study was primarily interpretive by design.

Recognising the importance of bedroom culture in media consumption, adolescents were also asked about access to the internet in the privacy of their own bedrooms. In this study, bedroom access to the internet remained a minority activity with only 20% of the sample having direct computer access. This reflected the fact that the internet remains a shared media for adolescents, negotiated between each member of the family. Inevitably, the shared nature of online consumption generated significant dialogue in discussion groups and became a central theme concerning issues of personal privacy to follow.

Broad attitudes towards computers and the internet

All 175 participants were asked for their level of agreement to a number of attitudinal statements, using a conventional five-point scale (see Table 2 for selected statements). A number of observations can be interpreted from the findings. Firstly, this group of adolescents appeared open-minded about the importance of the computer and internet to their everyday lives. 83.4% had access to the internet somewhere at home, 19.4% in their own bedroom. Virtually all had exposure to the internet at school. Over 40% used the internet 'daily', over 85% using it 'at least once a week'. Therefore, they were very familiar with internet consumption, viewing it as an important use of their activity-intensive time. In tandem, computer use was not seen as anti-social providing illustration of broadly positive attitudes towards computer-related consumption and social relations. Finally, the findings suggested an indifferent attitude towards one aspect of online privacy, personal information held by others. Given this 'collective' indifference, qualitative research was used to deepen the investigation, exploring what online privacy meant to young people and whether a spectrum of viewpoints existed, given the divergent positions highlighted in the literature.

The issue of online privacy and internet consumption provoked stronger reactions in the discussion session to follow than the quantitative findings might indicate. It was clearly an issue many had reflected on; some participants taking very deliberate steps to protect what they perceived to be their own "personal world" on the internet. This private world encapsulated a number of intertwined areas including personal identity, socialised behaviour and relationships with organisations. Three distinct attitudinal types emerged from the analysis, illus-

Table 1. Selected attitudes towards new media, marketing and technology

Attitude Statement	Mean*	S.D.
Computers and the internet are now an important part of everyday lives	1.86	0.970
I worry about the amount of personal information that could be held on computers about me	2.79	1.143
Computers are anti-social and take away interaction with other people	3.68	1.271

*A low mean score indicates a high level of agreement with the statement and vice versa.

Sample: 175

trating divergent viewpoints and consumption behaviours towards online privacy. These were labelled *naïve dabblers*, *open-minded liberals* and *cynical concealers*. A brief explanation of each is provided below.

Naïve dabblers

'Naïve dabblers' were participants less knowledgeable and/or interested when conversations turned to the subject of online privacy. They accounted for an estimated quarter of the sample and were more frequently found amongst the female sample, across all school types.

Few respondents would openly admit to being completely ignorant about issues of internet privacy particularly concerning 'informational privacy' (Westin 1967). Given that all adolescents experience at least occasional internet use through school work, all participants had at least a basic level of knowledge about what might be construed as concerns about internet privacy. It should also be noted that few would openly admit to being completely ignorant when discussing such matters with their close friends. Those happy to acknowledge a level of ignorance tended to be the less frequent internet users, and less enthusiastic about the role of the internet in their daily lives. Wyatt *et al* back in 2002 identified a similar group of young people in the UK, less likely to embrace the digital revolution. Statements in this research such as 'Computers and the internet are now an important part of everyday lives' received a more negative reaction amongst this minority group. The following quote illustrates the symptomatic indifference articulated by S:

S: I just don't care enough about it – I know I should find out more but I guess I just don't go on the internet that often, I'm not that interested really. And when I do, for school work and stuff, I tend to stick to the sites I always use (*female, fifteen, fee paying urban*)

Naïve dabblers were not completely ignorant concerning problems of internet use. Discussions centred on whether individuals or organisations might be tracking their online communication, accessing their personal details or simply holding personal details online. In the example below, E. highlighted that he was at the very least aware of the dangers:

E: I am not really that safety conscious on the internet, though I probably should be. But if I am filling out a form, if I am stupid enough to do it over the internet....I always wonder if they check it out or if it just goes through the database system or where it ends up (*male, sixteen, state rural*)

For E., the internet did not represent the optimum place to exchange information, particularly when dealing with personal details. His natural instincts were to use other, more traditional forms of communication such as paper-based questionnaires when dealing with commercial organisations. These he felt offered a higher level of security and reduced chance of outsider interception.

Open minded liberals

'*Open minded liberals*' were participants who exuded a higher level of openness and confidence in dealing with issues of online privacy. They accounted for under a quarter of the sample with no obvious gender orientation although they did not include many of the younger respondents. For some such as R. below, the issue of online privacy was an irrelevance, not worthy of serious consideration:

R: I think most people are not that bothered about it, most people I know think they are quite safe on the internet and think it is getting better (*male, fifteen, state suburban*)

This kind of comment suggests there is a minority of adolescent internet users who believe they possess the skills and online media literacy advocated by internet evangelists such as Tapscott (1998). They represent a more confident generation of internet users, seemingly unconcerned about potential dangers therein. Buckingham (2000: 41) suggested that some young people have inherent characteristics such as aptitude for change which are somehow "uniquely related to the characteristics of new media". Tapscott argued that for many young people, their use of new technologies such as the internet is "as natural as breathing", displaying a level of confidence and expertise beyond the comprehend of older generations. R. appears also to be reassured that many of the problems associated with internet use are now in the past, and the internet now represents a safe place to interact with peers, organisations and companies.

Participants fitting this user group suggested that they were generally aware of the many problems of online privacy. When dealing with commercial companies for example, two respondents were happy to reveal their true identity to commercial organisations, seemingly unconcerned about any potential intrusions it might encourage:

B: There's nothing that I would say on the internet that I wouldn't want to say elsewhere. I've got nothing to hide ... I certainly wouldn't dream of making up a fake name just to avoid detection

E: I type in my name into the 'little section' sometimes. I can't remember the last thing I did but they ask for your name, address and country. I have done it loads of times, and nothing has come of it (male[s], sixteen, state rural)

B. in particular articulated what he thought was a healthy attitude towards internet use. The internet was an important but not dominant facet of his daily life. Taking time to conceal identity online was seen as time wasting and ultimately pointless. Despite these participants' outward confidence concerning issues of personal identity and disregard for privacy, there was tacit acknowledgement that they did not know the full extent of what happened to their personal information when passed on. Their enthusiasm was not strong enough however to provoke a more negative reaction. This user group were very much in the minority as the final dominant attitudinal group illustrates.

Cynical concealers

The most common attitudinal type, accounting for over half the participants, '*cynical concealers*' depicted participants most concerned about issues of privacy and personal identity online. This majority grouping was the most opinionated; their comments littered the transcripts, from participants across gender and socio-geographic/school backgrounds. There was however an age effect; '*cynical concealers*' were more prevalent amongst the experienced, older participants.

Cynical concealers believed parents, outside individuals and organisations (to varying degrees) each sought to intrude into young peoples' private (online) worlds. Protecting their privacy, often through the use of hidden identities or clever software manipulation, was a reaction to fears of surveillance and even intrusion. Further analysis of this group revealed that *cynical concealers* were concerned with two distinct agents. Parents represented a 'known' entity young people were keen to conceal their internet use from. Organisations in contrast were an 'unknown' entity. *Cynical concealers* sought to hide from both groups.

(i) 'Hiding from the known': parents

For some, the concept of protecting their personal privacy meant the desire to evade parental scrutiny. Arguably, this need for online privacy from parents can be understood in the wider context of adolescents seeking to establish their own personal identities through online use (Facer *et al* 2003), unfettered from parental interference. The simplest examples concerned minimising screens when parents were close by or quickly switching off the computer to avoid closer scrutiny:

Moderator: Is privacy an issue for you?

S: Yeah, you see that's why I was minimising things cause it felt like my mum was coming up purposefully and watching over me to read my conversations. Sometimes I close down my chatroom when I hear her coming (*female, sixteen, state rural*)

Although S. did not feel she was doing anything wrong, she resented the fact that she might have to disclose her personal conversations to her parents. Livingstone (2004: 21) suggested that such actions offer young people a degree of “modest privacy and freedom online”.

Young people were also concerned about the outcome of releasing their personal information after purchasing online. Goods requested over the internet for example might fall into their parents hands should they be purchased over the internet using their personal details. This provided another barrier, stopping them from greater use of the internet for information and purchasing reasons. One example given concerned teenage pregnancy. One fourteen year old girl feared that if she used an online website for accessing advice, the website company might then send her details through the post, thereby risking parental intervention. She did not appear to fully understand permission rights and feared that even if she did not request it, it might be sent anyway.

(ii) 'Hiding from unknown': organisations

Fears over privacy were not restricted to concerns close to home. Privacy concerns were also attributed to the strategies and tactics of online organisations. D. described his feeling of helplessness when he was automatically “moved” from one part of a website to another, without his permission:

Moderator: What about privacy online?

D: Yeah, well when I am on the internet and sometimes it says you have been moved to a separate location, a remote computer or something like that. I don't like that, I don't like when that happens.... It concerns me also when you give out details...I will never type in my address or my real name if I do not trust the people. Or when you have to access a site and they say 'please make your account with us to go onto our site', yeah, I wouldn't do that (*male, fourteen, state rural*)

This example mirrored fears over a perceived loss of control conceptualised by researchers such as Nowak and Phelps (1992). D's fears resulted in a high level of distrust towards the practices of online organisations. This manifested itself not just through his raised awareness of online navigation problems but also in his more proactive behaviour. He frequently withheld personal details from online organisations, particularly his correct name, address and postcode. He went on to describe how he often entered false details onto websites for fear of being bombarded with junk mail/advertising:

D: I have a few names. I was once called Gene. If I have just got to give my name and postcode or something like that, I just put in my name and then just type in a whole load of numbers, and then it accesses you anyway, they don't check up. So I just type in 11111111 at the beginning and then enter. It gets you anywhere (*male, fourteen, state rural*)

On another occasion an older boy outlined his evasive tactics for ensuring organisations could not track him down:

E: I give companies my address but never my full postcode because they can get information from that. And I never give them my telephone number anymore, I just make up one if they say they need one. I often give my school e-mail address so that if the site is dodgy, then they, the school can deal with it. They have lots of anti viral things (*male, sixteen, state rural*)

Later in the discussion, he finished the discussion with the words “they’ll never track me down”, a digital evolution of Coupland’s (1992) ‘I am not a target’. This sentence encapsulated his feeling of being hunted, of being personally tracked down and targeted for the gains of the organisation or company. Again, such strong use of language illustrated the depth of resentment some young people reserved for such tactics. Some ‘*Cynical concealers*’ were well aware of organisations’ abilities to ‘data mine’ personal details, deriving very personal depictions of individuals from details such as personal address and postcode. This example highlighted the growing awareness and reaction against the increasingly sophisticated and intrusive online practices of certain organisations.

O’Malley *et al.* (1997: 55) defined the intrusion of marketing communications into the daily lives of consumers as “physical or interactional privacy”. Examples of inappropriately sent communication did include pornography. Some females interviewed interpreted as this an invasion of their personal rights. More typical of such perceived intrusion however was the use (and possible misuse) of personal information for more mundane commercial purposes:

D: A lot of people, if they get sent messages, you can find it a bit intrusive. It reduces your privacy. It’s like you’ve set up this account to communicate with other people and then all of a sudden, you are getting bombarded with ‘buy this’ or ‘if you have a Hotmail account, you can get this’ (*male, sixteen, state suburban*)

This highlighted the problems arising from conflicts of interest between the motivations of the individual (unconnected to commercialisation) and the aggressive marketing interests of companies concerned. Occasionally, fears of privacy invasion extended to a fear of being personally monitored and watched, with overtones of ‘Big Brother’:

A: There is always the chance someone is watching you what ever you are doing. I don’t know how they do it (*female, fifteen, fee-paying urban*)

Discussions also centred on the rights of the individual versus the rights of the corporation. In this example, illegal downloading was the source of concern from a surprised sixteen year old:

R: Not that long ago, I downloaded The Lion King and then I got this e-mail from Disney, saying that they knew of me and they would take me to court if I did it again.

IG: Where did you download it from?

R: KaZaa

R: I don't know how they knew. It was a serious letter from a lawyer."

IG: It is interesting that they had your personal details"

R: But I don't understand how they could do it. Maybe someone who is uploading, from DisneyWorld or whatever, has a file and starts to check all the downloads?

(male, sixteen, fee-paying urban)

A range of concerns between the conflicting interests of participants' personal uses and commercial intentions highlighted the depth of young people's concerns and consequent loss of trust in the internet as an enjoyable place to spend time. When researching what inhibits US teenagers' trust of the internet, Lindstrom (2002: 74) found that 22% of teenagers cited 'loss of privacy', a higher figure than any other statement used. 'internet crime' was cited by the next largest percentage of teenagers (8%).

Concluding discussion

The findings from this chapter suggest that young people's experiences and consequent attitudes towards online privacy cannot simplistically be positioned in diametrically opposite camps as certain authors have suggested. Amongst this group of older adolescents, there exists a spectrum of viewpoints, ranging from the disengaged and arguably naïve through to the engaged but deeply sceptical. Such viewpoints are bound up in a complex web of socio-geographic backgrounds, levels of media literacy and personal motivations towards internet consumption. Within this, there is undoubtedly a blurring of the boundaries between what might be construed as societal privacy (parents, family, friends) and commercialised privacy. Exchanging personal information with companies for purchasing purposes for example involves relationships with all actors concerned. Fahey (1995) suggested there are 'zones of privacy'; for the adolescents in this study, commercial privacy concerns crept into and influenced most, if not all aspects on online consumption.

For the majority of young people in this research, feelings of deep scepticism towards commercial practices online dampened their overall enthusiasm towards internet consumption. Although levels of online use were high, the internet rarely received the unbridled enthusiasm of other mediums such as going to the cinema, console gaming (for the boys) or even watching television. Awareness, if not detailed knowledge of online commercial practises, provoked a climate of caution when dealing with commercial relations. The research did find a 'pocket' of unconcerned, carefree individuals but they in no way represented the majority.

Such findings mirror broader societal concerns over commercial intrusions and personal privacy with implications for issues of personal liberties and the rights of the individual. Although virtually all participants in the research were classified as children, there were on the cusp of adulthood, likely to carry forward such experiences as they progress through the extended transition into adulthood. At its most extreme, the resultant tensions over privacy concerns found might reflect opposing desires of marketing practitioners to “annex cyberspace” for profitable gain and consumers desires to “exercise their freedoms” as described by Venkatesh (1998). They certainly suggest a build up of negative goodwill towards commercial practices which does not bode well for practitioners seeking to target a highly attractive market through new media channels.

The research was conducted amongst an older child audience and therefore issues of vulnerability and exploitation observed by others such as Cai and Gantz (2000) were less prevalent. Older adolescents are known to exhibit more sophisticated levels of commercial media literacy and this research does little to dispel that notion. However, schools (and parents) continue to play an important role in further educating and guiding young people on the ways of searching, navigating and interacting with commercial concerns online. As children approach adulthood, this should be viewed increasingly as an open, transparent dialogue rather than an instruction or directive that risks hostility and ultimate rejection.

The findings do suggest that there is much practitioners can do to reduce the level of angst displayed by young people. This includes tighter procedures for ongoing checking of permission for contact, more careful control of e-mail practices and clear information in comprehensible style concerning the use of personal data. The issue of parental consent is a more complex one; industry guidelines such as the Direct Marketing Association’s Privacy guidelines in the United Kingdom recommend that companies obtain parental consent before obtaining personal details for children under the age of 13 (DMA 2000). As Turkle (1995) points out, adolescent online experiences are bound up in attempts by young people to experiment with their personal and socialised identities and parental involvement will undoubtedly be seen as an unwelcome intrusion for older children. Of more importance for this older adolescent age group, the findings suggest that young people are unlikely to rely on such online interactions for identity development if their concerns about privacy intrusion are not remedied.

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A Glass Half Full?

Schools and Young People's Internet Use in the UK

Andrew Burn & Sue Cranmer

Young people's engagement with digital technologies has often been characterized as effortless, intuitive and all-embracing, a generational shift in technologised practices of communication. By contrast, such views see education as a dinosaur, missing the opportunities offered by the new digital landscape, obstructing the digital utopia by heavy-handed regulation and incomprehension of the skills and interests of the digital generation.

The research we discuss in this chapter reveals a more mixed picture. While it confirms that certain communicative practices are near-universal among young people, and that indeed schools often (though not always) fail to recognise and exploit these skills, it also suggests that other practices, key critical skills and forms of creative production, are far from universal. In discussing this complex scenario, we will consider what the implications for UK schools might be. At the same time, we wish to consider these uses in relation to emerging notions of media literacy, and concomitant debates about it in Europe. While many European countries are developing a view of media literacy as inclusive of the internet, we wish to distinguish media literacy from other aspects of internet proficiency.

An aspect of media literacy is what risk might mean to and for young people. This investigation has a lengthy backstory across the world, of course, and the UK has its own version of this. UK perspectives and approaches to children and young people's safety online often reflect an opposition between those who advocate protectionist approaches and those who promote the development of young people's media literacy skills. Child Protection Agencies such as Childnet International, the internet Watch Foundation (WWF) and NCH have websites offering safety tips and other information dedicated to keeping children safe. Government initiatives such as the Home Office guidelines *How to keep your child safe on the internet* (2004) seek to protect young people from the potential risks whilst balancing these alongside the potential opportunities for learning, entertainment and communication that the internet affords.

Yet several authors have drawn attention to the limitations of adopting the kind of model seen in the Home Office and other similar guidelines. Abbott (1998), for instance, has pointed out that young people in particular have been constructed as potential victims of risk on the internet in terms of encountering inappropriate material, an approach which tends to clash with young people's 'sense of control or self-efficacy' (Perloff 1983 in Holloway and Valentine 2003) and their perception of risk in terms of the offline challenges they face. Burn and Willett (2005) have argued that whilst the dangers may be real, messages such as: 'don't give out your email address'; 'don't go in chat rooms' and so on, treat listeners as objects of instruction and close down discussion. Moreover, Buckingham (2000) argues that measures restricting children's access to media are bound to fail, and children need to be prepared to deal with potentially risky situations, not merely defined in terms of what they may lack. Livingstone (2003) has pointed out, while emphasizing that in some circumstances real dangers clearly exist, the relation between risk, danger and incidence of harm is 'genuinely tenuous'.

We will spend much of the chapter presenting and discussing key findings of the Mediapro project for the UK, focusing on the contrast between school and home use, the nature of internet risk, and the emergence of new forms of communication on the internet. We will return to the question of media literacy and how it relates to these aspects of internet use at the end of the chapter.

The Mediapro Project

Between January 2005 and June 2006, universities, government ministries, associations and foundations from 9 European countries – Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, France, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal and the United Kingdom – collaborated on a research project funded, as mentioned above, under the European Commission's 'Safer Internet Action Plan'. The study was designed to explore how young people between the ages of 12-18 appropriate digital media including the internet and mobile technologies. The hypothesis underpinning the project was that young people's own actions are tantamount to their safety on the internet and in their uses of other digital technologies. Therefore, it is essential that young people are equipped with the skills and competencies they need to keep themselves safe online.

It was necessary to more fully understand how children appropriate, use and perceive of digital media in order to make recommendations to educators and parents about how young people could increase their responsibility, autonomy and awareness in their uses of this media. For this purpose, about 7400 young people aged 12-18 in Europe participated in the project. Schools in each country were selected according to their social, economic and cultural setting. Three age groups were chosen to represent different stages of schooling: 12-14 (beginning of secondary school), 15-16 (middle of secondary school) and 17-18 (end of

secondary school). The data was collected in two stages: in stage one, the sample of young people completed a questionnaire during the period October – December 2005. From this quantitative data, 216 young people (24 in each country) were selected for individual interviews according to their different levels of internet usage, age and gender. In the UK, 865 young people completed the questionnaire followed by 24 interviews. The interviews were designed to explore in more depth the responses given in the questionnaire. Both the quantitative and qualitative studies focused around young people's perceptions of the following issues:

- the gap between home and school uses, educational approaches and attitudes;
- the place and the role of networked communication with regard to social identity and relationships within the family, school and peer groups;
- young people's attitudes towards regulation, potential risks and dangers, negative experiences and anti-social behaviour;
- young people's attitudes towards themselves as networked consumers and how they envisage the future;
- how young people learn and behave with the internet, mobile phones and games.

The findings reported in this chapter are drawn from the data collected for the Mediappro project, see <http://www.mediappro.org/> for the final report.

The gap between home and school

While home use of the internet is extensive, school use is shown in this research to be severely limited and constrained. Although young people have physical access to the internet at school in theory, in practice it is used much less than at home. However, when compared with the other countries in the project, the UK gap between home and school is less than in other countries.

	Use everyday + several times a week percent	
	At home	At school
Belgium	69	9
Denmark	89	33
Estonia	83	30
France	57	10
Greece	38	25
Italy	56	7
Poland	68	45
Portugal	62	22
UK	79	56
<i>Average</i>	67	26

This is due to a range of reasons. Firstly, the research suggested more constrained school use in other countries. It was reported, for example, that in Poland, computer suites are closed during breaks; in Italy, some schools are still not connected; in Portugal, the computer-student ratio is low. In other countries, however, physical access is not the problem (Belgium; Estonia; Denmark). More importantly, use is restricted by school policy. In Greece, the internet is used only in school lessons, while the prohibition of internet use for communication (chatting, email, instant messaging), and leisure uses such as games and music, is widespread in schools across all the countries in the project. Secondly, we may speculate about why school use was reportedly greater in the UK: a history of extra-curricular access through computer clubs; an emphasis on innovative uses of ICTs in the now extensive specialist schools programme; a range of national initiatives with creative uses of digital technology at their core.

While the gap between school and home use clearly deserves investigation, and is dramatic in some countries, there are two broad questions. Firstly, why should we *expect* internet use to be equally distributed between school and home; and, indeed, to consist of the *same kinds* of use? Secondly, in respect of the UK, where the gap is much less marked, can we rush to condemn teachers for underuse; or should we congratulate them for evidence of reasonably well-developed use? To use a popular metaphor, is the glass half full or half empty?

It can be seen as a positive finding that children and young people in the UK reported using the internet more frequently at school than their counterparts in other countries. Moreover, some young people mentioned using the internet within school lessons such as history and science, not purely within ICT classes. Additionally, some young people reported learning how to construct their own websites in school – a positive development when such creative activity was found to be much lower (whether at school or at home) across the whole European sample than ‘cyberkid’ rhetorics sometimes suggest. In addition, a significant proportion, 40.9 percent, reported using the internet for their own purposes outside lessons.

On the other hand, school uses were often talked of without enthusiasm in the UK compared with the zeal with which young people spoke about instant messaging, games, music and other home uses. As in the other European countries, students mostly say that they use the internet for their schoolwork through information retrieval.

One likely reason for this is over-regulation of the internet by schools, and the research provided evidence of widespread regimes of rules and prohibitions which can be assumed to produce discouraging and negative elements in the schools’ internet culture. For instance, many activities were said to be forbidden such as instant messaging (63.3 percent), chat rooms (63.9 percent), visiting certain websites (69.5 percent), playing online (49.5 percent). Furthermore, while UK schools may be providing better access than others in Europe, there were still many young people either never using the internet in school or using it very rarely (15 percent). A substantial minority of the young people (42 percent) said that it was important that their school should give them better access to the internet.

Furthermore, the cultures of internet use in schools seemed to preclude open discussion which might be assumed to lead to learning, critical awareness and deeper engagement: 59.3 percent of respondents said that they 'never' talk to teachers or librarians about their internet uses whilst only 12 percent talk about the internet with their teachers or librarians 'sometimes, often and very often'. In addition, only about half of the respondents felt secure with their teachers' knowledge and expertise: 49.3 percent of young people thought that their teachers were familiar with the internet. Another substantial minority, 34.2 percent, said that they didn't know if their teachers were familiar with the internet or not, which bears out the finding above that discussion between young people and their teachers about the internet is uncommon. By contrast, home internet cultures seemed to involve greater open discussion, and students were much more likely to talk to their parents than with their teachers: 41 percent said that they talked about the internet at home with their parents 'sometimes, often and very often'. The qualitative interview data suggest that these conversations occur when young people ask their parents for help, perhaps in defining search terms for homework for instance, and/or when parents seek to limit their children's time and activities online.

The interviews contained examples of students' feelings about constrained use in schools, and a predictable privileging of school-work uses over social and communicative uses. Tina (female, age 13) said that she finds use of the internet at school too restricted. She says that within school lessons teachers will 'stick you with the Bitesize' [BBC revision site]; you can hardly search; you can use Google but not go on games unless they are maths or English games. In some respects, this is unsurprising; indeed, some might argue that schools' focus on uses and content of direct relevance to schoolwork is justified and proper. However, there was also evidence that students were able to see, if their schools were not, how social uses and softwares might also serve legitimate educational purposes. For instance, Shelley (female, 17) said she was frustrated that email was blocked as it would be useful for emailing her course work between home and school.

However, the picture was by no means one of unrelieved censorship of young people's preferred internet uses. In some cases, there did appear to be a degree of tolerance towards children's uses for their own purposes. For instance, whilst 53.6 percent said that they used the internet at school mostly for school work; 35.1 percent said that they used it mostly for both school work and personal activities (games, information about my hobbies/interests, *Chat* and emailing); while a further 5.8 percent said that they used it mostly for personal activities.

A characteristically mixed picture emerged in respect of finding out new things to do with the internet. Here, the influence of friends predominates with 84 percent saying that they find out new things to do with the internet through friends 'sometimes, often and very often' compared with 50 percent through siblings, 33 percent through parents – but 46 percent through teachers. It is not possible to represent this simply as a home-school divide: while teachers lag behind peers and siblings as sources of new knowledge, they outperform parents.

How do we make sense of this quite indistinct representation of the differences between home and school uses of the internet? One approach would be to identify the substantial gaps, and suggest that schools need urgently to address these – and this was, in fact, a clear conclusion of the Europe-wide project. In the UK, it is possible to say reasonably securely that it would be preferable if all students used the internet frequently as a resource for learning, that all teachers should be perceived as competent and as sources of new knowledge by students, that schools should encourage flexible, imaginative, encouraging internet cultures and open discussion, and that creative uses of social softwares could be better exploited for learning.

In addition, it is certainly the case that schools privilege information retrieval over communicative functions of the internet, and indeed of ICTs in general. This is unsurprising in view of the emphasis on these core functions in the National Curriculum for ICT in England and Wales: the programme of study for Key Stage 3 (11–14 years), for instance, uses the word ‘information’ 14 times, while the word ‘communication’ is not used once. Nevertheless, to more fully capitalize on children and young people’s enthusiasm for the communicative functions of online technologies, schools and colleges need to develop the potential of these technologies, not only to negotiate the online environment safely but also for learning. For instance, this could mean linking with schools and colleges in other countries to develop language exchanges, school intranets, texting and instant messenger groups to further curriculum objectives.

Against these undoubted extensions to and improvements of current practice, however, two counter-arguments may be lodged. Firstly, there is no good evidence that optimum internet use in schools should be at any particular level, or that any given quantity of usage would necessarily deliver learning benefits above those of non-digital resources. The best that can be done here is to identify the affordances of media such as the internet, and develop usage on the basis of the consequent argument. Secondly, there may be good – indeed, obvious – reasons why young people should perceive the use of any medium as less interesting at school than at home. This could be because education and leisure are fundamentally different experiences. Moreover, especially in the UK – a heavy regime of frequent assessment and examination is more likely to produce a climate of anxiety than one of pleasurable learning in harmony with students’ home and leisure cultures.

Schools, then, can clearly do more, and some convergence is both possible and desirable between learning objectives on the one hand, and social, communicative and leisure-based uses on the other. Nevertheless, to expect the work of learning in the compulsory sector to blend seamlessly with online practices whose natural context is one of elective grouping, timing and purpose seems like a fantasy projection of ICT as a magic solution to a raft of education ills (in this case boredom, disaffection, inadequate outcomes, and so on).

Risk and the internet

Broadly speaking, the tension for educators is between the need for a proper regard for children's safety and a recognition that the over-policing of risk may, ironically, pose the biggest risk of all, paralyzing effective and creative use of the internet. In this respect, the results of the Mediappro project across Europe, suggest that anxieties about children's safety online, constructing the internet in schools as a highly regulated environment through prohibition and filtering practices, means that children prefer to use the internet at home. Not only does this have consequences for those children without efficient access at home but it also undermines the opportunities afforded for teachers to communicate the information literacy skills needed for young people to go online safely and competently.

Having said that, our research found that many risks tended to be mundane rather than spectacular. While young people undoubtedly encounter online porn and the threat of – though rarely actual encounters with – paedophiles, these risks are relatively rare. In addition, young people are now well aware of this kind of risk, both from the media and from frequent reminders at school: – 44.1 percent, for example, said that they had been given advice at school about how to safely use the internet. Much more frequent are risks arising from uses of new forms of communication, and from misconceptions of the nature of the internet, the legal status of certain activities, the proper function of basic tools such as search engines. The question about risk, here, is twofold. In respect of what we are terming 'spectacular' risks, possible dangers need to be weighed against infrequent occurrence, and against the arguably greater ill of discouragement. At the same time, some areas of apparent risk: encountering unknown people in chatrooms and online games, encountering 'undesirable' content, and so on, need to be considered in the light of development and maturation. For older students, these areas may form part of the attraction of the adult world, coming to terms with which is a necessary part of growing up. In respect of what we are calling 'mundane' risks, there is a good case for an intervention in the form of media education. This would address questions of provenance, of institutional presence behind content, with a range of social, political and commercial motives; questions of internet texts and how to critically interpret them, and questions of audience: who different sites are targeted at.

Two specific areas of 'spectacular' risk were explored in the survey and the interviews. The first, chatrooms, is easily dealt with. In line with other recent research, our survey showed a shift from young people meeting strangers in chat rooms to being contacted by people they do not know face-to-face in instant messaging and online gaming environments. Children and young people said that they do engage with people they do not know face-to-face when their personal details have been passed on by a friend they trust and with their permission. In some cases, this means that they get to know a new friend online, already well known and trusted by a friend or family member. On the other hand, however, personal details are passed on anyhow, so that young people are approached

through instant messaging by relative strangers. Although they are given the option of refusing to talk to the new person, they report that they often say 'yes' to find out who they are. They may subsequently decide to block them or keep chatting to them depending on their behaviour. However, many of the young people interviewed said that in general their preference was for speaking to people they knew in person as they had more in common. In this respect, then, the implication seems to be that this risk, once perceived by child protection groups as severe, can now be seen as less serious.

Whilst 39.3 percent said that their parents forbade them to play online with people they don't know, some young people reported that they encountered people they did not know offline within games spaces, often when seeking tips relating to the game in hand. Whilst often these exchanges take place on screen and within the game, young people may also choose to speak to them later through instant messaging.

This aspect of online games playing with people who young people don't know face to face may or may not be cause for concern. Whilst young people may have taken on board safety advice relating to speaking to strangers in standard chat rooms, they may be less guarded about chatting to people they do not know in games related chat rooms. Conversely, they may feel more motivated in this form of interaction, and more confident with regard to risk. In addition, given the game-focused nature of the activity, it is more likely that the interaction will be confined to the specific episode of game-play.

The second area of 'spectacular' risk we explored was bullying. Our findings in this area were surprising compared with other studies in the UK which have often lead to headlines which emphasise children's online vulnerability. For instance, the Children's Charity NCH surveyed 770 youngsters and found 14 percent of 11- to 19-year-olds had been threatened or harassed using text messages. Moreover, bullies had used images taken with mobile phone cameras to intimidate or embarrass one in 10 young people (2005). In contrast, amongst our sample, negative incidents involving young people's engagement with online technologies were rare. These findings suggest that focus groups rather than individual interviews might have given our respondents more confidence to talk about these issues openly. For instance, the survey data did show that 13 percent admitted to sending a text message or picture that could upset someone. However, in interview young people said that this had been accidental with the youngsters not intentionally setting out to offend someone. Moreover, even taking account of their friends' experiences which they sometimes drew on in the interviews, young people seldom gave accounts of disturbing incidents, such as are frequently reported in the media. One boy said that he had been the victim of an email hoax where a classmate had registered an email with the name 'Mystery Caller' which had scared the recipient until he and other friends realised what was happening. Another boy had deleted his own website after he had received racist comments and swearing within the site's 'notebox'. One girl said that pornographic images had appeared on her screen when she was younger which had upset her.

With regard to 'mundane' risks, two examples emerged with wide-ranging implications. The first related to the use of new forms of communication (in effect, instant messaging and SMS). These were seen to have both benefits and disadvantages, explained in more detail in the next section. Briefly, the risk that arose was that of causing accidental offence by misjudging the appropriate codes for particular social situations.

The second example was a degree of confusion about the legal implications of such common activities as music downloading, one of the most popular activities across the European sample. For instance, 60 percent of young people said that they downloaded music from the internet 'sometimes, often and very often'. Moreover, 39.5 percent of children and young people agreed that they would download music using the internet despite it being forbidden. There is also an issue about children and young people not knowing what is illegal in any case.

In the interviews, young people's views about downloading music ranged from those who knowingly carry out illegal downloading to those who will always pay to ensure that they stay within the law. If seen as opposite ends of the spectrum, there are also many young people in between these two points who are confused about what is and is not legal in any case. While some young people said that if downloading music was illegal, it should not be there, others thought that they were acting legally if they downloaded from particular sites or if they kept music in a shared folder where anyone, including the police, could see it. For example, Jacob (male, 13) said that he did not currently download music because he did not know how to. However, his cousin had given him a program which would allow him to download 'free music', which he would be allowed to keep. He naively understood that if he kept it in a shared folder, so that the police can see it, it would be legal. Whereas, he believed, that if he hid the music on the computer he could get into trouble.

In general, then, the picture of risk was considerably less dramatic than is often represented in, for instance, media discourse about children and the internet. There was no evidence of real incidences of harm, and limited evidence of sustained forms of internet or mobile phone use likely to lead to harm. While there was some evidence of the use of these technologies to cause offence, or more seriously to bully, it was impossible to determine whether such antisocial motivations were increased by the medium or not – and in relation to the question of cyber-bullying, some kind of comparison between both the quantitative extent and the nature of online and conventional bullying needs to be addressed. Finally, risk arguably needs to be redefined in two ways: in addition to risk of harm, it needs also to be seen in terms of apparent risk of a kind necessary for adolescents to encounter as part of maturation; and in terms of 'mundane' risks which may nevertheless be more harmful and widespread, with outcomes such as embarrassment, misunderstanding, discouragement.

How, then, should schools and parents approach the question of risk, in the light of this evidence?

Our suggestions are twofold.

Firstly, teachers and parents need to work together to develop methods for moderating online technologies within schools and colleges which allow for more positive and developmental approaches and outcomes. We recognise that this is a difficult issue for schools and colleges as developing children and young people's own skills and competencies to negotiate the online environment will undoubtedly lead to pupils accessing inappropriate material, whether deliberately or accidentally, from time to time. However, we believe that this eventuality is offset by the benefits that will be derived by children and young people who are more adequately prepared for the online environment.

Secondly, teachers and parents together need to develop school/college policy to deepen and incorporate understandings of children and young people's online cultures within schools. This is important not only because schools may be missing the opportunity to capitalize on the popularity of children's media cultures, but some young people will remain without any or with only limited internet access at home. As noted by Livingstone and Bober (2004), schools are central to redressing the digital divide, as they can 'equalise the effects of inequalities in resources at home'. We recommend, therefore, that the current emphasis placed on the regulation and prohibition of online media within schools and colleges is substituted by pedagogical interventions aimed at developing children and young people's critical literacy skills and competencies. This kind of critical understanding would encompass areas about which there is currently real confusion, such as the legal implications of music downloading which we have described above.

New forms of communication

The third aspect of internet use we wish to discuss is the use of new forms of communication, especially instant messaging and its close cousin, mobile phone SMS messaging. Our research showed, to begin with, a number of benefits arising from these communicative practices.

It appeared from responses that not only was instant messaging enabling increased communication between young people through its convenience and economical aspects (for those with flat rate or broadband packages), but that the affordances of the technology itself were enabling young people to chat in subtly different ways from those achievable offline, and which are adding to the attractiveness of this medium. In particular, young people spoke positively about its flexibility to provide a forum for both one-to-one and group conversations, with various combinations in between. For young people, one-to-one conversations provided an opportunity to speak privately and without interruption compared with the hustle and bustle of school. Nevertheless, young people also liked talking with more than one person and/or in larger groups, particularly when discussing or organising a joint activity.

Young people differed in their opinions about whether using instant messaging had any influence on their communication practices and subsequently, their relationships. On the one hand, some believed that there were no differences between on and offline conversations. On the other, young people commented on various differences, such as instant messaging being helpful for getting to know new people better. Whilst these potential friends had met initially face to face, instant messaging enabled the friendship to develop and helped overcome the awkwardness and shyness that could accompany early exchanges. Moreover, instant messaging gave young people time to think as they could spend longer composing their responses.

Against these obvious benefits, our study also revealed some problems. Some youngsters talked of less positive aspects of using instant messaging which included the sending of exaggerated and untruthful messages. Some youngsters said that situations online could easily escalate into disagreements or fights, as the result of users perceiving themselves to be at a 'safer' distance; they may go further online in terms of what they are willing to say and do when compared with their offline exchanges. This can have both positive and negative consequences. Whilst some young people report that this aspect of online behaviour can deepen and increase friendships, there are also accounts in the data of young people finding themselves in uncomfortable situations when a situation has escalated online which they then must deal with in person when they return to school.

The problems come within the category which we have defined in the previous section as 'mundane risk'. In some ways, this kind of risk can be seen as inherent aspects of learning communicative skills in daily social encounters, and could arguably be left to the informal learning processes generated within these contexts by families and peers. On the other hand, it may be that the conventions of such new communicative forms are appropriate material for areas of the curriculum that address language, literacy and communication. In the UK, the English curriculum has a mandatory remit to develop competence in speaking and listening, for instance.

Conclusion: media literacy and the internet

How, then, do these three areas – and the Mediappro findings about young people's internet use in general – relate to the nature of media literacy in schools?

Media literacy is differently defined in different contexts. One simple but powerful model gaining some popularity in Europe is the so-called "3-Cs" model, which sees media literacy as *cultural, critical and creative* (Burn and Durran, 2007). In relation to this model, schools might want to firstly learn more about young people's cultural uses of internet media such as instant messaging, social softwares, games, and media related to other popular media, especially music,

film and television. These new understandings could then inform a more positive approach to building internet cultures in school, as well as developing ways for the curriculum to incorporate references to such cultures where appropriate.

Secondly, schools might develop ways to teach critical understanding of the internet. This might well include aspects of spectacular risk such as cyber-bullying, approached perhaps through role-play and simulation. It would also include explorations of the 'mundane' risks, however: the legal and moral questions of property rights, the commercial interests of sales and advertising, the codes and conventions of new communicative practices.

Thirdly, schools have a clear role in relation to creative practices on the internet. It is very clear from this research that young people can only be considered 'digital natives' (Prensky 2001) in their seemingly intuitive appropriation of the communication functions of the internet and mobile phones: thus, the use of instant messaging and mobile texting was almost universal. Here, then, requisite forms of media literacy can be assumed to be attainable without intervention from formal education. However, the 'digital natives/digital migrants' rhetoric, collapses all digital practices into its central claim. The Mediappro findings confirm that such an assumption is erroneous. Those practices whose central function is representational – making videos, constructing websites (or blogs), and other forms of composition of content, are only undertaken by minorities of young people. They are more difficult, less easily learnt, more dependent on forms of tuition. Arguably schools can step in here to give all young people some experience of these new forms of creative production, developing skills which can then feed back into new forums for distribution and social exchange such as YouTube¹.

These, then, are ways in which internet uses of the kind we have explored in Mediappro can be addressed through a model of media literacy by schools. We will emphasise two points in conclusion.

Firstly, the media education/media literacy approach is not limited to – or even primarily about – learning *through* the internet. It does not pretend to know whether geography or science can be more effectively learnt through the internet than through conventional resources and pedagogies. This may or may not be the case – but it is a question, not for media literacy, but for e-learning theory, research and practice. Media literacy and media education are concerned, rather, with learning *about* media, in this case the internet. The internet here, then, becomes an object of study, a phenomenon about which the young people of the 21st century need to be informed.

Secondly, media literacy/education poses questions which are not commonly asked within e-learning and ICT pedagogic theory. In particular, the question about the cultural experience, interests and motivations of young people is emphasised by media education. Without a proper understanding of and engagement with these cultures, the divide between young people's actual uses of the internet and schools' pedagogic uses of it will continue to grow.

Note

1. YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/>) hosts a popular website which enables users to upload, view, and share video clips.

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Tweens as Consumers – with Focus on Girls' and Boys' Internet Use

Birgitte Tufte

It is not a new phenomenon that young people are considered as consumers. Until recently focus has very much been on teenagers, but in later years the so called tweens have become an important target group. Why has this age group become so interesting as consumers?

There are various reasons for that. First of all children play an important role as consumers as they both have their own money and seem to have a strong influence on the household purchases in the family. This means that these young children, the tweens, are independent consumers as well as influential when it comes to family consumption.

'Shopping' has found its way into the conceptual universe of tweens. In shopping centres, they can be found in pairs or in groups. Especially the girls shop, but it does not necessarily mean that they make a lot of purchases. They get to know new trends and 'brands' while browsing the shops and maybe only buying a hair clip or a magazine. This represents a consumer socialization process in which these youngsters acquire knowledge about goods and consumption on their own. At conferences and in papers about children adolescents and consumption the term KGOY is often used, it is short for 'kids grow older younger'. One may say that childhood has 'shrunk' while youth has been extended, and that being 11 or 12 years old today means being young, having an opinion about music and clothes, and dressing like the 'real' young people. The debate about very young girls wearing 'grown up' clothes exemplifies this.

The increasing interest in the area of 'tweens as consumers' can be found among advertisers, marketing and media specialists as well as among sociologists, psychologists, political scientists and economists. Of course also teachers and other educators, parents and not to forget politicians are extremely interested in the results of the research. However, these different parties are motivated by different interests and perception of the child.

Research areas

When it comes to research regarding children, media and consumption it is important to look at this area through interdisciplinary glasses, and it is thus a question of founding your research on theories from childhood studies, as well as media studies, consumer studies and gender studies.

As introduced in the beginning of this book there has been a common development within different research disciplines when it comes to studies regarding children. This means that the perception of the child within the last 30 years has moved *from* considering the child as a vulnerable creature, who was to be protected, *to* considering him/her as an active producer of meaning and a competent actor in his/her own life.

This is for instance due to *childhood research* where many studies until recently were based on developmental psychology whereas today researchers, in general, put more focus on the social interaction and negotiation processes taking place between children and adults.

In modern childhood sociology (Alanen 2000, Brembeck, Johansson & Kampmann 2004), which to a large extent is based on research carried out by British sociologists (James, Jenks & Prout 1998,) the child is considered as a 'social being' whereas previously the perception of the child was that he/she was developing into a competent grown-up, i.e. the child defined as a 'social becoming'. Within childhood studies there has thus been a marked shift of paradigm.

Within *studies regarding children and media* there has been a similar development, influenced by the general trend within mass communication research where focus in the beginning was very much on effect studies, and today the perception of the media recipient as a 'tabula rasa' has changed into that of the media recipient as a competent and selective media user.

A topic, which has been very much on the international agenda regarding children and media, is the discussion about TV advertising. Research into children and advertising has been carried out internationally for many years. Until recently most of the research took place in the United States and Canada (Adler 1980, Dorr 1987, Kline 1993, Seiter 1995, Pecora 1998, Ward, Wackmann & Wartella 1977). However, we now have a number of European studies as well (Bjurström 1994, Bjørnebekk, Jarlbro, Schultz Jørgensen & Tufte 1992, Borch 1996, Brembeck & Johansson 1996, Gunter & Furnham 1998, Martensen & Hansen 2002, Sultan & Satre 1988, Tufte 1998, Tufte 1999, Werner 1994). A characteristic feature of research into advertising is that it takes place in both the private and the public sector. Advertising research at universities is a rather new phenomenon, whereas studies financed by the private sector have been carried out for many years, especially in the United States. It is a fact that, as long as it has existed, research into advertising in general, and especially regarding children and advertising, has been characterised by different interests.

Generally it can be said that the connecting thread in research regarding children and media has followed developments in media research, meaning that focus

has moved from being on the effect of the content of media to an increasing interest in how media products are used in everyday life and how messages are decoded and understood, as described above. In other words, the development has gone from research into the effect of media to reception and cultural studies. Where the early media focused on the sender perspective (the stimulus-response model), modern-day research is to a large extent focused on the receiver perspective, i.e. on the way in which the media is used by recipients in relation to their daily life and customs, their social relations and the culture of which they form part.

During recent years various studies have been carried out regarding children, adolescents and the internet. A comparative study among 12 European countries (Livingstone & Bovill 2001) shows that there are rather large differences among the countries of Europe regarding use of media. Countries like Spain, Italy and France have a strong focus on national television and relatively low figures in new media technologies (including the computer and internet access). The second group is made up of Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, and Israel – all countries with a multi-channel environment and a moderate use of new technologies. The United Kingdom is treated as a group on its own because it – contrary to the pattern observed elsewhere – combines a heavy orientation toward television with rather high figures for new technologies. The fourth group consists of the Nordic countries and the Netherlands, all countries that are seen as the pioneers in new media technologies (Livingstone & Bovill 2001:27).

Similar differences among the European countries are seen in the comparative study among 9 countries Mediappro (www.mediappro.org), carried out from 2004-2006, investigating 12-18 year olds' use of internet and mobile phones.

Danish findings show that there is a great deal of media equipment in children's own rooms. In 2004 69% of the 7-15 year olds had TV in their own room. (Bille et al. 2005). However, there is an increasing use of the internet among children and young people as well as a minor trend towards less TV watching. 40% of the 13-16 year olds are using the internet daily at home (Bille et al. 2005).

Gender differences are apparent in relation to consumption as well as regarding media use. According to the Danish Professor Kirsten Drotner the gender differences in the use of media are a fact, Drotner was the Danish partner in the European comparative study mentioned above. According to Drotner (2001) the gender differences in media are very striking and go beyond age and social background. This is especially true for computer games, where 9-16 year old boys spend four times as much time on the games as the girls, whereas the girls to a higher extent use the computers for schoolwork. When it comes to the internet boys and girls use it for different purposes. The girls mostly use the internet for surfing, chat and email, whereas the boys use it for looking for information, production of websites and downloading software.

The area of *consumption research* in relation to children is rather new. It was not until the 1960s and the 1970s that the concept of 'consumer socialization' was presented. The American researcher Scott Ward defines consumer socialization as:

‘The process of learning consumer-related skills, knowledge and attitudes’ (Ward 1974)

In her article ‘Consumer Socialization of Children: A Retrospective Look at Twenty-Five Years of Research’ (1999) the American researcher Deborah Roedder John has documented 25 years of accumulated international experience with research on children, in relation to their role as consumers. Her summary is presenting important (mainly American) research within the area and the major parts of the studies are based on developmental psychology. Consumer socialization is thus considered as a developmental process that proceeds through various stages as the children grow up and gradually become adult consumers. She operates with three stages of consumer socializations i.e. the perceptual stage (3-7 years), the analytical stage (7-11 years) and the reflective stage (11-16 years). Based on this stage oriented way of thinking she presents three areas of research, i.e. advertising and persuasion knowledge, transaction knowledge and decision making skills and abilities.

Work within the area of *gender studies* in relation to consumption show that gender plays a significant role in the consumer socialization and identity formation (Hansen et al. 2002a/2002b, Halling & Tufte 2002, Kenway & Bullen 2001/2003). Girls spend their money on clothes and cosmetics, while boys spend their money on sports wear, and they also to a larger extent than the girls save up for larger consumption goods such as computers and mobile phones. An interesting perspective in this connection is that boys have more money at their disposal than girls. 8-12 year old Danish girls have an average of 22 Euro at their disposal a month, whereas 8-12 year old boys have 38 Euro on average. The reason for this difference probably is that girls this age have jobs that are linked to the home e.g. looking after younger siblings, whereas the boys, to a larger extent, have jobs outside the home that pay a little more. However, the difference is a trend that continues when the children become teenagers.

The study

Tweens between media and consumption

As already mentioned companies and advertisers have recently shown a growing interest in tweens as a consumer segment, and new methods for targeting this segment are being developed all the time.

Recently the concept of tweens has had an increasing importance in marketing literature and is defined in different ways. There is general agreement that it is a group of ‘in-be-tweens’ i.e. between childhood and adolescence. However, there remains some disagreement on a precise definition of age. According to Martin Lindström (2003), the term tweens covers children in preadolescence until the age of 14 (i.e. 8-14 year olds). My immediate reaction to this categorization is that all studies show that there is a great difference between being 8 years old and 14 years

old. Siegel, Coffey & Livingston (2001) believe that it would be relevant to operate with the age group 8-12 years and then possibly further distinguish between younger and older tweens that is the 8-10 year olds and the 11-12 year olds. It is interesting, however, that according to Mitchell & Reid-Walsh (2005) the word tween is commonly understood to be a preadolescent and young adolescent age group exclusively – or almost exclusively – female, defined by a distinct commodity culture.

The above mentioned discussions and different points of view have, among other things, provided the foundation for the research project “Tweens – between media and consumption – a study of 10-12 year old children’s use of media focusing on the interplay between different media – in relation to children’s identity formation and socialization as consumers” (2004-2006).

The project aims at examining the extent to which the media play a role for 10-12 year old children’s consumer behaviour in relation to other socialization factors such as family, school and friends. We have chosen the age group 10-12 year olds, the so-called older tweens. The basis for the project is:

- That presently there has been a convergence within the media-technological area
- That children use media convergently i.e. that they communicate across technologies
- That the 10-12 year olds – the so-called tweens – is a group whose media and consumer behaviour has not yet been examined on a larger scale
- That continuously growing internationalization and commercialization of the media is taking place followed by an increasing number of messages targeted at tweens
- That presently Danish companies are increasingly orienting themselves towards tweens as a consumer group

Quantitative as well as qualitative research only point at the extent to which the different media interact in the consumer socialization of older children whereas reception analyses of children’s own understanding of and attitudes towards media and consumption are lacking. The aim of the tweens-project has therefore been to examine these exact problems.

Our study is based on theory from media research as well as consumer research which so far represent two distinct areas. In addition, we refer to childhood and gender studies. We try to ‘think together’ relevant parts of these different research traditions in relation to the problem area of the project.

Results

The four schools in which we have collected data are situated in different geographical areas. The areas where the schools are situated have the following characteristics:

Area	Characteristics
I: Country side area	Middle Class economy, focus on local, cultural values
II: Suburban area close to large city	Very good economy, social and cultural stability
III: Suburban area close to large city	Economic, social and cultural stability
IV: Suburban area close to large city	Economic, social, cultural and ethnic diversity

The data collection includes both quantitative and qualitative methods:

- A quantitative survey in cooperation with TNS/Gallup
- A questionnaire survey (220 10-12 year olds in four different schools)
- Drawings of their own room
- Lists of Christmas wishes
- 24 interviews in pairs (i.e. 48 children in four schools)

A general overview

If we compare the four different schools regarding the children's leisure time activities there seems to be a trend that boys have a few more activities than girls. Both boys and girls are very interested in sport, but in general the boys spend more time on computer games/playstations whereas the girls are very interested in spending time with family and friends – and not to forget their pets. There is a slight trend that the children in area I and IV have less leisure-time activities than the children in the other two areas.

When it comes to use of media and preferences, almost all families are well equipped with media, except in area I where families tend to have access to fewer types of media than in the other three areas. This is especially the case for the youngest children. In general the boys have more media equipment in their rooms than the girls.

Girls read more books than boys, and when it comes to reading newspapers the children in area I read more newspapers than the children in the other areas. They read local newspapers. The explanation for this is probably that in a small community people are more interested in local newspapers, because they get information about local activities and stories about people they know which is not the case if you live in or close to a big city.

Almost all the children are very interested in music, and when they listen to the radio it is mainly music they listen to. The most popular medium is still TV although they are using the internet more and more.

The pattern in the use of the internet is rather similar in the four areas. It is mainly used at home, but also together with friends, at the school library and in school. The boys use the internet more than the girls. The internet is not widely used at school except for area IV, where they use it often for school work and sometimes are allowed to play online, as well. The reason for this is undoubtedly that the school in area IV is situated in a municipality where the local policy for many years has been to integrate media education in all schools, which means that the children have a higher level of media competence.

Regarding mobile phones, there is a significant trend indicating that children in area I possess fewer mobile phones than children in the other three areas, although they seem to possess more mobiles the older they get. It seems like a paradox that children living in the countryside, far from each other, have less mobile phones than children living close to each other in urban and suburban areas, but the explanation is undoubtedly that people living in the countryside generally seem to be less oriented toward new technology compared to people living in big cities, and therefore buy new technology later.

Advertising and websites

These 10-12 year olds have a rather critical attitude towards advertising, boys being slightly more critical than girls. It seems as if girls are more influenced by the media images focussing on glamour images of young women, brands, etc. than boys. However, as well girls as boys zap away from TV commercials, and they definitely do not like pop-up ads on the internet. (See figure 1)

Figure 1.

"TV-commercials can be just as fun as real TV programmes"	Boys (%)	Girls (%)	All Children (%)
Yes	14.9	19	16.9
No	57	47.6	52.5
Don't know	28.1	33.3	30.6
"Internet pop-up ads are irritating"	Boys (%)	Girls (%)	All Children (%)
Yes	73.1	68	70.6
No	13.5	9	11.3
Don't know	13.5	23	18.1

Source: Quantitative data from the project 'Tweens between media and consumption'.

As stated earlier, there seems to be a slight trend towards boys being more critical than girls when it comes to advertising. One example is that more boys than girls consider it a good idea not to have TV commercials at all. The girls have a great interest in fashion, jewellery, etc. This, together with the above mentioned gender differences in relation to advertising, may be interpreted as a stronger materialistic approach among the girls because they are very oriented towards

how they look and are perceived by others. This is in accordance with the findings of Mitchell & Reid Walsh (2005).

It is very important for as well girls as boys to tell that they themselves are not influenced by the commercials but that others might be. An 11 year old boy says that he is not influenced, but that his sister keeps buying things she has seen advertised on the internet:

Interviewer: What did she buy?

Boy: All sorts of stuff, mascara and things like that. Every time she sees something, she goes like 'this is really special, I need this...'

This is very much in accordance with various other research results showing that children, as well as adults, do not want to admit that they might have been influenced by commercials, but that other persons often get ideas to buy various things.

Generally, with a few exceptions, these 10-12 year olds are not interested in buying things on the internet. They are, however, extremely interested in 'shopping', a way of being together – especially among the girls which does not necessarily mean that they buy big things. They have fun and sometimes they buy a few things. Two 12 and 13 year old girls (from area II) describe their visits to the shopping centre as follows:

1st girl: We just walk around dallying ... and at New Year I went to Lyngby Mall with Helene.

2nd girl: We had been at the Cinema and then we just walked around and saw that they had these New Year hats, then we put them on and took pictures of each other and stuff...

And two other girls describe their shopping in the following way:

1st girl: Sometimes if we have to buy presents for our parents or something, or just to see if there is anything new. Just to look and have some fun.

Interviewer: What kind of shops do you go to, then?

1st girl: Sometimes I go to Hennes & Mauritz. Sometimes there isn't anything that fits me. Then we're just looking.

2nd girl: I go to Englestøv.

1st girl: And Pink Flamingo because I just love their necklaces.

As far as the children's knowledge of websites is concerned, 4th grade children in area I and IV do not know many websites, but their knowledge increases as they enter 5th and 6th grade. In area II and III they are familiar with quite a number of websites. There seems to be a strong trend that boys and girls have different website favourites. Boys focus very much on sports web sites, and girls focus on fashion, idols from film and music, etc. Both sexes are familiar with websites relating to TV channels such as Cartoon Network, the Disney Channel and local Danish TV channels.

Most of the children are very familiar with several websites, and there is no doubt that it is the interactivity of the internet which appeals to them. When we, for instance, ask if they can mention some TV commercials, it is very difficult for them to mention any, apart from a few that they find funny. When they are asked if they can mention some websites, most of them are able to put down addresses of several websites. The older they get the greater the number of websites, they can remember. They mainly visit Danish websites, although some of the eldest children also visit English websites, but mainly sports and games sites.

We were surprised that so many of the children mentioned a website called www.arto.dk. We did not know the site at that time (November 2004) and neither did the other grown-ups we asked. We found out that it is a commercial Danish website with games, chatrooms, jokes etc., made by a young student, which today has several thousand visitors every day. It seems as if the children have been informed about this website through a kind of peer-to-peer marketing. Other websites of interest were sites where you get things 'for free'. One example of this is www.gratisting.dk

Although we have found that tweens are rather critical to advertising i.e. pop-up commercials on the internet, they are not at all aware of the fact that most of the websites are commercial and often have more or less explicit commercial messages – that the lines between content and advertising are blurred.

Furthermore it should be pointed out that there are age differences. In the youngest group with children aged 10-11 they are still very much children, using the internet for playing. For instance the girls play with paperdolls in the virtual form on www.diddle.dk or www.dudu.dk, or they go on sites with information on pets. The young boys are also using the websites for play, e.g. www.hundeparken.dk where they can get a virtual dog to feed, play with and take care of, and of course sites with games.

As mentioned before, it is not a daily practice to make purchases online. There is, however, a slight trend that some of the children and their parents are beginning to buy on the internet. For instance 13 year old Anna has bought a mobile phone via the internet:

Interviewer: ... So you just used the Net to find out which mobile phone you should buy?

Anna: Yes, if I had had to buy it in a shop the price would be DKK. 1200 – and I really didn't want to pay that.

Interviewer: What did you pay for it?

Anna: 500 – and then you can also choose what kind of subscription you want ... If you do it in the shop it is much more difficult.

Interviewer: So it is easier to use the Net to find out?

Anna: Yes.

Of course they do not have their own credit cards yet, but those who are interested in buying usually talk with their parents about it and borrow their credit card.

Pocket money and consumption patterns

As far as their disposal of money is concerned, they are still dependent on parents and grandparents, but an interesting aspect, confirmed by other studies (Hansen et al. 2002b) is that girls get less pocket money than boys (see figure 2).

Figure 2.

How much money do you have at your disposal per month?	Boys (%)	Girls (%)	All Children (%)
Less than DKK 50	3.2	5.3	4.2
Between DKK 50-100	27.4	35.1	31.1
More than DKK 100	69.4	59.6	64.7

Source: Quantitative data from the project “Tweens between media and consumption”.

If we look at the lists of Christmas wishes there are obvious gender differences, although they seem to be more explicit the younger the children are. At the age of 12 they have more similar wishes these being media electronics and sport equipment, as will be seen from the lists on the next page.

The girl, who wrote the first list, is very interested in handball, and she is rather representative for Danish 11-12 year old girls, being interested in sport as well as mobile phones, teddy bears, things for her room and pets. The boy, who wrote list no. 2, is focussing very much on computer games, DVD’s and music i.e. very interested in new media. However, a more representative list of wishes for this age of boys would normally also have included sport equipment such as for instance wishes for football equipment.

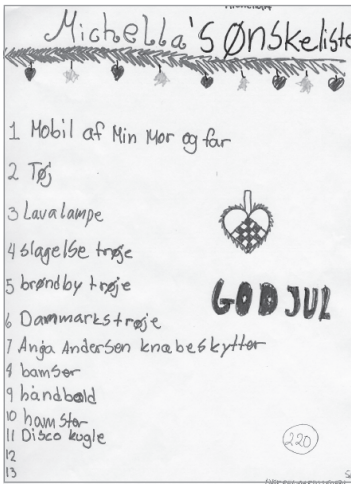
Summary

The study ‘Tweens between media and consumption’ gives a picture of Danish 10-12 y.o. children as very active young beings with many leisure time activities in general and belonging to families with a huge variety of media. TV is the most popular media although there is an increasing interest in using the internet. This is, among other things, shown by the fact that the children are familiar with many websites.

There is a slight tendency that the children living in the countryside get new technology at a later stage than children living close to the big city, and the children in the rural area are definitely more oriented towards local media.

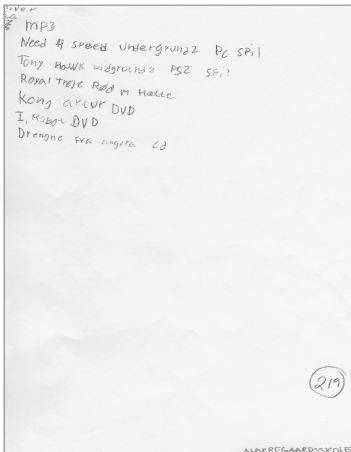
Both girls and boys are critical towards advertising, but they find it o.k. to be together in shopping malls around shopping. This is more due to the girls than to the boys.

Boys dispose of more money than the girls, but the boys are more critical towards advertising and consumption than the girls. This may be interpreted as



Wish List 1

- Mobile phone from my mom and dad
- Clothes
- Lava lamp
- Slagelse T-shirt (Local Danish handball team)
- Brøndby T-shirt (Local Danish soccer team)
- The Danish national handball team's T-shirt
- Knee protection for handball training
- Teddy bears
- A handball
- A guinea pig
- Mirror ball



Wish List 2

- MP3 Player
- Need for Speed Underground (Computer game)
- Tony Hawk Underground (Playstation 2 game)
- Red, hooded sweater from 'Royal'
- King Arthur (DVD movie)
- I Robot (DVD movie)
- Drengene fra Angora (music CD)

a more materialistic approach among the girls. There might be different explanations to this, one is for instance the general focus on top models, beauty, brands, fashion, etc. in the media which might have a certain influence on the girls.

This trend has been highlighted by other researchers as well – in this case with focus on the parental influence on boys and girls:

Parental influence on the development of the consumer behaviour of their offspring is also affected by the gender of the child. Among adolescent girls, for example, parental influences may often be far weaker than they are among adolescent boys because of the powerful effects of the need to conform to peer group norms among girls, especially when purchasing items related to physical appearance, such as clothing and health care product. (Gunter & Furnham, 1998:15)

These 10-12 year olds are generally not extremely interested in consumption, although advertising and shopping is a part of their daily life.

The pattern of their media use and consumption is very much influenced by their interests. If for instance you are interested in football you watch football on TV, search for football websites on the internet and play football yourself. For the girls this may be due for instance to a hobby like horse riding or football which is gradually also becoming a sport for girls.

They toggle between kid and teenage behaviour, and do not define themselves as tweens. It is our impression that their identity is not primarily based on consumption although they use commercial websites and spend time in shopping malls, but that their building up of identity is based on a wide variety of factors such as family, friends, advertising, school, websites and consumption. However, talking about consumption, as mentioned earlier there is a slight tendency that tween girls are more oriented towards consumption and materialistic values than boys.

Summing up we can conclude that tweens are both competent and vulnerable, depending on the context. On one side they are educating themselves as consumers through shopping, websites, TV, friends and family. On the other hand they have almost no knowledge about the relationship between price and value, budgeting, marketing, advertising, the right of the consumer etc. i.e. economical and financial insight in general. To give them this insight and supporting them in developing consumer competences is a task for as well parents as schools and marketing people, consumer organisations, politicians and media, if we want that the tweens of today may become competent and critical citizens in the consumer society of tomorrow.

New marketing methods

So far the discussion among politicians and others concerned with regulation and/or deregulation of media and consumption has focussed very much on TV advertising.

A great number of TV commercials are still a daily phenomenon, but various new ways of targeting children as consumers are being developed now-a-days.

For instance marketing to children takes place on the mobile phone, and on the internet it is possible to target various consumer groups through links that only address a specific group. This is a method which seems to be increasing.

Another way of reaching the children is via so-called 'viral' marketing which means that a virus is placed among children, which could be compared to 'word-of-mouth' or peer-to-peer marketing leading to a kind of chain reaction via SMS on the mobile phone or MSN (Messenger) on the internet. An example of this could be that an advertiser for instance via the internet sends a film or a game to a number of children and young people who then – if they find it interesting – may forward the film or game to all the persons they have on their MSN list of

addresses. There is no doubt that new and still more sophisticated marketing strategies will be developed in the future.

Future research

As has been emphasized several times during this chapter the theme 'Tweens as Consumers' is an area with many facets.

As there are many different parties interested in the topic there are of course also different ways of throwing light on it. It could be seen from a marketer's point of view i.e. from the sender perspective such as: How can we develop marketing strategies towards tweens? Or it could be seen from the child's point of view i.e. the receiver perspective, and then the question would be: What is good for me (the child)? It could also be seen as a topic which still has to be investigated as broadly and deeply as possible in order to obtain new knowledge and in order to qualify the public debate. If the last mentioned approach is accepted it is a must, seen from a researcher's point of view, to continue to work interdisciplinary, which means carrying out studies based on theory from childhood studies, media studies, gender studies, consumer and marketing studies, etc. and working with as well quantitative as qualitative methodology.

An area which is new and urgent to focus on is the new marketing strategies towards small children and tweens, as they are being developed all the time – especially marketing on the mobile phones and the internet. What are form, content and aesthetics of the new marketing methods? How are the target groups defined and reached? How do the children understand and consider these marketing methods? My hope for the future regarding research about marketing and advertising in the consumer socialization of children is that some researchers may find these themes challenging and interesting enough to create new research projects.

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Mobile Phones and Tweens' Needs, Motivations and Values

Segmentation Based on Means-end Chains

Anne Martensen

Children are given a role as consumers at a still earlier age allowing them to influence decisions concerning household purchases (Neely, 2005; McDougall & Chantrey, 2004; Tufte, 2003; Martensen & Tufte, 2002; Hansen et al., 2002a, 2002b, Siegel et al., 2004). This is especially the case in relation to technical products, where children have often greater technical knowledge than their parents (Bell & Harper, 1977; Mead, 1970; Negroponte, 1996; Papert, 1996; Peters, 1985; Sussman & Steinmetz, 1987; Tapscott, 1998; Venkatesh & Vitalari, 1985). Therefore they have more influence in the family when it comes to purchases of for instance new technical products such as mobile phones. The complexity of mobile phones has increased; they are still used to get in contact with others through telephone calls or text messages, but the technological development has resulted in new innovative functions such as camera, MMS, games, FM tuner, videophone, MP3, etc.

Tweens (the 8-12 year-olds) are particularly interesting in relation to mobile phones as they are part of the interactive generation, who are used to get instant satisfaction of their needs (Lindstrom & Seybold, 2003:11, 23-24). They have grown up with interactive media where emails, text messages, MMS and video recordings are a natural way of communicating with each other. And mobile phones have become the possession of nearly all tweens. In Denmark 85% of the 12 year-olds had their own mobile phone and almost 50% of all 8 year-olds in 2003.

Purpose

Several different needs underlie tweens' motives for acquiring a mobile phone. The purpose of this article is *firstly* to discuss the needs and motives of tweens in relation to acquiring a mobile phone. What needs are the primary reasons for tweens' attitudes towards and use of mobile phones?

Secondly, on the basis of a major empirical survey we will analyse whether the knowledge of tweens' needs and motives in relation to mobile phones, can serve as a segmentation tool. The Means End Chain (MEC) model will be used as a framework and the MEC approach will empirically be validated in a tween and mobile phone setting. The questions are: Can the entire MEC structure be used to segment the tweens and thereby as a means of describing the identity and behaviour of different tween segments? Do we achieve a meaningful interpretation of the segments?

Siegel et al. (2004:2) state that the identity of tweens is not necessarily defined by age, sex or demography but rather by the situation, the feeling and the need, which they label "state of mind". It is this "state of mind" that we wish to focus on in this article. Traditionally, sex and age have been the decisive factors for a division and segmentation of the children. Such a division makes sense when we look at a large age group such as the 6-18 year-olds. However, we only focus on the 8-12 year-olds and a segmentation of the children according to their needs will therefore be more appropriate.

Depending on tweens' "state of mind" we expect significant differences in their knowledge of and attitudes towards mobile phones. The way they let themselves be affected by different reference groups and media will also be depending on their underlying needs and motives. This will influence their role in relation to the family decision making process as well.

The 'state of the mind' mentality can be compared to the MEC theory. MEC is a chain structure that links the consumer's knowledge of the specific product's physical or tangible attributes to the subjective consequences and values it creates in the mind of the individual consumer (Gutman, 1982, 1991; Botschen, 1999; Peter et al., 1999:71-76; Peter & Olson, 2005:81-86). Using the MEC model will thus indicate what kind of motives that lies behind their choice of mobile phone and may show how tweens relate the product attributes to their self-perception. Therefore, the MEC model will provide a solid foundation for understanding tweens' behaviour in the mobile phone market.

According to Aurifeille & Valette-Florence (1995) and Reynolds & Gutman (1988) the MEC theory is seen as particularly suitable for the development of segments, and Botschen et al (1999:54) find that the MEC model is "a powerful tool for effective market segmentation".

Tweens' needs and motives for mobile phones

The child's motivation for acquiring a new mobile phone may be based on several needs. In consumer literature many types of needs are emphasised and they can be studied on the basis of different frameworks (Arnould et al., 2004:267-271). Our starting point is the Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1954, 1970; Arnould et al., 2004:269-271; Blackwell et al., 2006:311) where needs are arranged in a se-

quence from lower-level needs to higher-level needs. The physiological need is not relevant in this connection. The ego and self-actualization need is discussed as one. Let us in the following three sections discuss Maslow's different levels of need, starting with the lower-level need: Safety, practical and flexible.

Safety, practical and flexible

The mobile phone make tweens reachable to others and provides a high flexibility, thus the mobile phone is able to fulfil some of the tweens' lower-level needs. The mobile phone is a communication tool that fulfils the individual's need to get in contact with family and friends in a much quicker way (Olesen, 2003:76-77). The children are also available to their family and friends in a flexible way – the mobile phone ensure that others can get in contact with them regardless of time and space.

According to Jessen (the Danish newspaper *Berlingske Tidende*, 11 January 2003) mobile phones among children and adolescents are not seen as a trend – it simply has become a necessity in children's social lives. Children take part in so many different activities during the day that they need a mobile phone to communicate with each other. It may be the only way to reach their friends because they are constantly on the move and they always bring their phones along. "In this way, both children and grown-ups have the possibility of postponing or making plans, and they can change appointments during the day, if anything comes up" (Olesen, 2003:77-78).

The need can also be related to the children's (and the parents') need to feel safe. *Safety and security* is one of the most important values in tween lives – according to the BRANDChild study conducted in 2003 with more than 600 people from 70 cities in 15 countries. 92% of the tweens (see Lindstrom & Seybold, 2003:27) think safety is an issue. Also Olesen (2003:77) finds that being able to reach their parents is a decisive factor to children.

Two opposing motivational tendencies drive consumer behaviour: (1) the motive toward integration or affiliation with other people, and (2) the motive toward differentiation or distinction from other people. These two motivational tendencies also apply for tweens, and will be discussed in the following.

Social needs and recognition

The need for belonging and being accepted by a group are very important to all children and adolescents. Martensen & Hansen (2002) find in a major Danish study that friends play a very central role in the lives of children and adolescents. Being with friends is what they want to do if they have an hour of spare time – this activity comes in first among all 5-18 year olds. Similar results are referred to by Lindstrom & Seybold (2003:79,196) BRANDChild survey, conducted in 15 countries.

Tweens become a part of a community through consumption of specific products (Olesen, 2003:39). Often tweens prefer specific brands simply because they are accepted by the group or are popular among the trendsetting members of the group. Having the *right* mobile phone brand accepted by the friends will be a way to social belonging and acceptance in the group. It functions as the tween's tool to achieve a more popular role in the group and to feel more "in" among friends. McDougall & Chantrey (2004:5) support that fact that group pressure may lead to disloyal purchasing behaviour and frequently changing brand preferences.

When the trendsetting tweens in a group change preferences and devote themselves to another brand, the rest of the group will quickly follow and adapt their own preferences to those of the trendsetters. The herd instinct results in a constant striving for confirmation of being on the right track. One can argue that loyalty is first created within the group and then the individual tween adapts the group's norms and choices. That is why tweens' brand preferences change very fast (Lindstrom & Seybold, 2003:13).

Tweens love to experiment with their identity and self-orchestration. Tweens use the brands to define themselves and create an identity. To tweens the brands reflect the way they see themselves and the way they would like to be seen at by others. Brands are symbols of various life styles, norms and values and give tweens an identity of what they represent more than what they really are. Thus, since many tweens use brands for defining their own values and roles in the social hierarchy, and their popularity, they will go a long way to get the 'right brands' as it can be a way of achieving recognition and social status (Lindstrom & Seybold, 2003:276).

Social relations and social acceptance is incredibly important to tweens – they have a herd mentality and are dependent on the community. But tweens are also looking for an individual identity; they want to feel special and unique. This will be the topic in the following section.

Ego and self-actualization

Tweens can try to preserve, enhance, alter, or extend their identity by buying and consuming brands and products with "images" or "personalities" they believe to be in harmony with their own self-image, or avoid brands and products which do not live up to the self-image they want (Belk, 1988; Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Fournier, 1998; Gardner & Levy, 1955; Kleine, Kleine & Allen, 1995; Lindstrom & Seybold, 2003; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Olesen, 2003; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995; Shiffman & Kanuk, 2004; Sirgy, 1982; Solomon, 1983; Wallendorf & Arnould, 1988). According to self-image congruence models those products with attributes matching the person's self-image are chosen. The consumer's self-image is matched with the features of a brand (Birdwell, 1968; Dolich, 1969; Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Gardner & Levy, 1955; Sirgy, 1982; Solomon et al., 2002). The argument is of course that what we own, reflects our personality.

A tween, who wants to be perceived as a trendsetting person with great knowledge about mobile phones, may want to have the latest advertised model with many technical features in order to feel special in relation to others.

Tweens prefer brands that allow them to personalize the brand and define on their own how to use the brand (Lindstrom & Seybold 2003:290). There are many ways in which the child can personalize and 'design' his/her own mobile phone. Tweens can use the specific mobile phone brand (Sony Ericsson, Siemens, Nokia, etc.) to impress other people, and tunes, logos, covers etc. can help signal who they are or who they want to be. This way of personalizing brands is supported by Lindstrom & Seybold (2003:119) who find that tweens do as much express their personality through 'self-created' and personalized brands representing their self-perception, as they choose commercial brands. Moreover the mobile phone has become a technically complicated product – you can use the mobile phone as a radio or an MP3 player, transfer data and pictures via infrared signals, send MMS, make video recordings or use video telephony. Mobile phones can be personalized in the same way as clothes can. It has a great signal value and is a very suitable tool for telling other people who you are. Mobile phone manufacturers are very aware of this, which can be seen in Nokia's commercial from June 2002 that had the slogan: "What does your phone tell about you?" (Olesen, 2003:70).

Tweens' creation of identity and self-orchestration has strategic implications for marketers, since still more tweens use brands for self-orchestration and to create their identity. All things being equal, we would expect a higher buying intention when the brand image matches the tween's self-perception and identity. Hoyer & MacInnis (2004:463) support this viewpoint when emphasising that "research finds that the more similar a product's image is to a consumer's self-image, the more the consumer likes the product". Therefore marketers should try to understand how they can create the best fit between the image of the brand and the identity of tweens. Hereby companies can position the mobile phone as a symbol of certain life styles, norms and values which are attractive in the eyes of tweens. By segmenting tweens according to their needs and motives in relation to mobile phones, the best starting point for development and marketing of new mobile phones is achieved.

Using the means-end chain theory as a framework

We will now study how the MEC approach (Gutman, 1982, 1991; Reynolds & Gutman 1988; Olson, 1989; Olson & Reynolds, 1983; Peter & Olson, 1993; Young & Feigin, 1975) can be applied in relation to the above mentioned needs and underlying motives for tweens' interest in mobile phones and in acquiring one of their own. The MEC approach is a chain structure that links the consumer's brand salience and knowledge of a specific product to the subjective consequences

and values it creates to the individual consumer (Gutman, 1982, 1991; Botschen et al., 1999:40; Peter et al., 1999:71). In MEC the product attributes are a means through which the consumers achieve their values (ends) via positive consequences and benefits related to the product's attributes. By studying tweens' motives for acquiring a mobile phone, an understanding of how tweens relate product attributes to their self-perception can be achieved. It is this knowledge that we will use in the following to group the tweens into different segments.

The consumer's product knowledge can be categorised into three different types (Peter et al., 1999:65-71) which can be combined so that they create a simple associative network:

- **Knowledge about attributes or product characteristics** (e.g., MP3, camera, covers, expensive, latest features, smart design).
- **Consequences or benefits of using the product** (e.g. practical, flexible, security, cool to have the latest mobile phone, more 'in' among friends, all the others have a mobile phone, attracting more friends if possessing the latest mobile phone).
- **The values the product helps consumers satisfy or achieve.** *Values* are the central, core, enduring beliefs that guide customer behaviour across situations and are independent of product use situations. They are abstract, specific to individual customers and centrally held and are associated with strong affective and emotional responses (Peter et al., 1999:71) (e.g., want to be attractive and have a lot of friends).

According to Rokeach (1973) there are two types of values: (1) *instrumental values*, which refer to the consumer's preferred way of acting/behaving and (2) *terminal values*, which refer to the preferred mental state of mind or more general psychological state of mind. Examples of instrumental value types in the Rokeach value survey are: Honest, independent, intellectual, loving, obedient, responsible, self-controlled, and helpful. Terminal values are: An exciting life, a sense of accomplishment, inner harmony, pleasure, self-respect and true friendship (Pollay, 1983).

Seen from a cognitive perspective, the consumer's ability to see or interpret all a product's attributes can be questioned – it is often very complicated and may take on a supra-complex form. The consumer does simply not have the mental energy, the necessary competences or the time to evaluate all attributes. Instead the consumer often looks at the product based on the consequences and relates these to possible benefits or potential risks. Therefore the consumer often sees the product as a bundle of benefits instead of a cluster of attributes – it is the benefits that they want. As Grunert (1993:10) says: "Consumers don't buy products because of their attributes *per se* but rather because of the ultimate benefits that these attributes provide, in turn leading to the satisfaction of ultimate values".

Thus, the MEC model reflects how the consumer cognitively organises and relates lower levels of abstraction to higher levels of abstraction, and thereby

demonstrates the correlation between the consumer and the product through a network of concrete and abstract product attributes, functional and psychological consequences as well as the consumer's instrumental and terminal values.

Table 1 shows an example of MEC statements for tweens and mobile phones based on the previous theoretical discussion of tweens needs and more than 50 qualitative interviews with tweens conducted in the autumn of 2003. These qualitative interviews were conducted by master students from Copenhagen Business School as part of their exam project. In total 32 student groups participated and each group conducted at least one qualitative study. Several different interview techniques were applied; for instance in-depth interviews with one child or two friends together, focus groups with 5-6 children or observation studies. All age groups between the ages of 8-12 were represented. All interviews were taped and transcribed or meaning condensed, and the main results were reported.

Table 1. Tweens' mobile phone statements put into a MEC setting

Means-end chain levels					
Concrete Attributes	Abstract attributes	Functional consequences	Psychosocial Consequences	Instrumental values	Terminal values
-phone conversation	-has the latest features	-it is practical	-more popular	-knows some who gets bullied because they don't have a mobile	-important to have a mobile when your friends got one
-text messages	-appears in commercials	-it feels safe	-a mobile which friends think is cool		
-MMS	-is expensive	-easier to make plans with friends	-more 'in' at school	-gets jealous if someone in class got the coolest mobile	-you feel left out if you don't have a mobile
-camera	-is very interested in mobile phones		-get more friends with the coolest mobile		-the mobile can give you new friends
-polyphonic tunes			-it is cool to have a mobile		
-games			-has a mobile because others do		
-MP3/radio					
-cover					
-colour display					
-phone book					

The list is by no means exhaustive – it only indicates some examples.

The abstract product attribute 'has the latest features' can thus to some children be a function of all 10 concrete attributes and to other children just be the functions MMS, camera and MP3.

The psychosocial consequence 'you get more friends with the coolest mobile' can to some be the fact that the mobile phone has a camera, colour display and polyphonic tunes, that it appears in commercials, is expensive and makes it easier to make plans with friends, while to others it may just be the fact that it has the latest features and that it is practical.

The MEC network provides many possible combinations. The same attribute lead to different benefits, a case of multifinality (Pieters, 1993), and because a single

benefit may be based on multiple attributes, a case of equifinality (Pieters, 1993), segments based on attributes may differ from segments based on benefits sought, and benefit segmentation which is actually based on attributes instead of on actual benefits sought may be grossly misleading. On the basis of this argument we will use all levels in the MEC model as the point of departure for our segmentation of tweens, and not only on the basis of attributes or benefits. In contrast to other segmentations, our segmentation of tweens is thus not concentrated on a single level but is completely means-end chain based. Tweens who share one or several means-end chains will be grouped together and treated as one segment.

The survey

In order to validate the MEC approach and to test the possibility of using the MEC levels as segmentation criterion, an empirical survey has been conducted in the spring of 2004. From the Ministry of Education's register of schools in the greater Copenhagen area a number of schools were chosen on a randomized basis. The schools received a letter in which the objective of the survey was described and where we inquired to interview pupils in 2nd-5th grade corresponding to the age of 8-12.

35 schools agreed to participate in the survey, and a detailed interview plan was worked out. There was also a letter to the parents of children in the classes taking part in the survey. In the letter we asked for permission to interview their kids. The letter was to be signed by one of the parents and to be brought back to the interviewer.

During the weeks 10-12 in 2003 the interviews were completed. The objective was to make 1000 interviews with children between the age of 8-12 having a mobile phone. In each age group the goal was set to 200 children. Also 150 children with no mobile phone in the respective age groups were to be interviewed. In 4th and 5th grade the interviews were carried out in the classroom with a mix of children with and without mobile phones. The interviewer read the questions and the children themselves completed the questionnaire. In 2nd and 3rd grade the children were interviewed in pairs, the questions read and the questionnaire completed with some guidance.

The questionnaire is based on the results of the above mentioned qualitative interviews and consists of 55 questions about tweens' knowledge of, needs for and attitude towards mobile phones and their influence on the family decision making process in relation to the purchase of a mobile phone. Moreover, 10 background questions are asked.

19 questions out of a total of 55 questions provide the starting point of the present survey. These 19 questions are formulated as statements to which the tween is asked to rate her/his level of agreement on a 5-point scale, from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'.

Findings

Several analyses have been carried out to study whether the MEC model can be used as a framework for putting tweens into segments that share obvious characteristics, but at the same time are significantly different from each other. These are discussed below.

Validating the MEC approach: Factor analysis

First, an explorative factor analysis has been conducted based on the 19 attitudinal questions.

The assumptions underlying factor analysis are met. The preferred sample size should be of at least 100 (here 647 respondents out of the 1002 respondents participating in the survey have answered all the questions), and there should be at least five times (and preferably 10 times) as many observations as there are variables to be analysed (Hair et al., 1998:98-99). Assumptions such as Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) > .6, significance of Bartlett's test, communalities > .5, loadings > .5, and minimal cross loadings were also taken into consideration (Hair et al., 1998:99; Malhotra & Birks, 2003:574; Malhotra, 2006).

Factors were judged based on the eigenvalue criterion as well as screeplot indication (Malhotra & Birks, 2003:574). Five factors have an eigenvalue above 1 and this is also the number of factors positioned before the curve's first break. The factors extracted account for 50% of the total variance, which is a bit below the recommended level of at least 60% (Hair et al., 1998:104; Malhotra & Birks, 2003:580). However, five factors still seems satisfactory; each additional factor included only contributes with modest percentages of the total variance. Table 2 shows the specific distribution of the questions on each of the five factors. The factorisation in Table 2 corresponds to the five levels in the MEC model, as it was the intention of the analysis to confirm. The five factors are:

- Abstract attributes: Important that the mobile phone has the latest features, is advertised in the media, is expensive and very interested in mobile phones.
- Functional consequences: Practical, flexible and gives a feeling of security
- Psychosocial consequences: Social approval/acceptance
- Instrumental values: Self-confidence, self-control and sociality/polite
- Terminal values: Self-esteem, social recognition and true friendship.

The naming of the factors will be used in the interpretation of the following segmentation of tweens.

Factor scores can be estimated for each respondent and indicates how high score a respondent gains on a given factor and these factors should be used in the subsequent cluster analysis.

Table 2. Results of factor analysis: Rotated factor loadings

	Factor				
	1 Psycho- social conse- quences	2 Terminal values	3 Abstract attri- butes	4 Instru- mental values	5 Func- tional conse- quences
You are popular when you have a mobile phone	,655				
I would rather have a mobile phone which my friends think is cool	,563				
You are more 'in', if you have a mobile phone	,534				
You get more friends, if you have a mobile phone	,462				
It's cool to have a mobile phone	,412				
I have a mobile phone because everybody else has one	,351				
It's important to have a mobile phone when your friends have one		,626			
You feel left out if you don't have a mobile phone		,521			
The mobile phone can give me new friends		,329			
I'm very interested in mobile phones			,523		
It's important that the mobile phone has the latest features			,484		
It's important to have a mobile phone which appears in commercials			,376		
A good mobile phone is always expensive			,358		
I know someone who get bullied because he/she does not have a mobile phone				,465	
I get jealous if one of my class mates has got the coolest mobile phone				,383	
It's practical to have a mobile phone					,460
I feel safe when I have a mobile phone					,404
The mobile phone makes it easier to make plans with my friends					,360
There is no reason for children at my age to have a mobile phone					-,302

Extraction Method: Generalized Least Squares. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

MEC-based segmentation: Two-Step Cluster Analysis

Cluster analysis is conducted with the purpose of segmenting tweens in clusters making them relatively homogeneous in their attitudes towards mobile phones and thus also in their means-end chain structure. The most significant difference between the segments will thus be the way in which the attributes are linked to the values. Some segments might not go through all levels in the chain, and do thereby not end up with terminal values but only reach the level of functional or psychosocial consequences. Other segments might start out on a higher level of abstraction and end up with the instrumental or terminal values. Other segments again might have longer chains with more intermediate consequences.

The segments will provide us with a better understanding of the common characteristics as well as the differences in the children's needs and motives, which can be used in a later analysis of the children's influence on the family decision making process as well as the influence of different reference groups. This knowledge can also be used for targeting various marketing activities to the children's parents or as a part of the mobile phone companies' product development.

The Two-Step Cluster Analysis procedure from the SPSS statistical programme is used, and the input is the factor scores estimated on the bases of the above factor analysis. The advantage of this method is that the automatic clustering algorithm determines the number of clusters. By comparing the values of either the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) or the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) across different clustering solutions, the procedure automatically determine the optimal number of clusters. In our case, both the BIC and the AIC criteria point at four clusters as the best solution. On the basis of a number of initial cross-tabulations the four-cluster solution seems very applicable; many significant differences between the clusters appear. Each of the four clusters consists of 22-29% of the respondents which means that the four clusters are fairly of the same size.

The profiling of the four clusters and the interpretation of them are made on the basis of the average factor scores in each cluster, and here the primary importance is attached to what differentiates the clusters from each other. In table 3 the mean and standard deviation of the factor scores are shown for each cluster. The factor scores have a mean of 0, and therefore both positive and negative factor scores appear. The higher the factor score is, the more importance is attached to the specific MEC level.

Table 3. Results of a Two-Step Cluster Analysis: Cluster profiles

Cluster	Abstract product attributes		Functional consequences		Psycho-social consequences		Instrumental values		Terminal values	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	,515	,537	,561	,483	,015	,804	-,406	,507	,473	,688
2	,486	,798	-,337	,837	,545	,902	,900	,695	,085	,804
3	-,505	,592	,016	,435	,219	,523	-,019	,417	,214	,586
4	-,345	,581	-,222	,708	-,673	,410	-,277	,483	-,708	,429
Com- bined	-,008	,781	-,013	,717	-,011	,811	,029	,722	-,026	,775

The four identified tween segments can be characterised in the following way:

Segment 1: The self-assured and socially strong – use mobile phone to achieve great social recognition and self-confidence through knowledge about abstract product attributes and high functional consequences.

This segment consists primarily of 11-12 year-old boys. Many of them got their first mobile phone at the age of 10-11 – it was a brand new model given to them as a present (81%), only a few inherited one (13%). Most of the children (97%) desired a mobile phone before getting one, and they only seldom did pestering their parents beforehand. This can be interpreted as children possessing the power to influence the family decisions – more than every third child were allowed to pick the mobile phone most desired or they influenced the buying decision to a high degree. They were very clear on which model they wanted before discussing it with their parents.

Their powerful influence at family decisions when it comes to mobile phones is probably also a result of their interest and involvement in mobile phones as they seek information from far more places than the three other segments – regardless the source. Everything helping them obtaining new knowledge about mobile phones is usable. However, parents, brothers and sisters are seldom asked as the children feel that they know most about mobile phones at home. The high level of involvement also means that this is the group of tweens with the most comprehensive brand knowledge – on average they know 6 brands (mean=5.99).

These tweens are very interested in mobile phones and their functions, and they believe that the phone should have all the latest features. They are significantly more interested in all of the 17 listed attributes in the questionnaire, so you can say they value all the features of the mobile phone much more than any of the other three segments.

This group can be characterized as innovative and front runners. For instance they send far more MMS, which in 2003 was a brand new feature. On the other hand these tweens are not very interested in changing ring tone or logo. However, it is still the basic functions which play the most important role for this group – text messages, charging frequency and phone book as being the core features (mean in the interval 4.19-4.59 on a scale from 1-5, where 5 is the most important attribute).

They have a mobile phone because they have a great need to be in contact with friends and family or because they want others to be able to get in contact with them. Therefore it is very important that the phone is easy to use for sending and receiving text messages, that it has a phone book and a high stand-by capacity. These tweens send significantly more text messages to their friends than other tweens. They acquire a mobile phone because it is practical. The mobile phone has given them more and closer friends – friends who they talk to more often. The mobile phone has been an important tool in getting more friends. The mobile phone gives them self-confidence and fewer of these tweens feel teased about their mobile or feel jealous of others because of their mobile. In the end, the mobile phone provides these tweens with a very high self-esteem, they experience that they can get more friends via the mobile phone and they do not feel left out, when other tweens have a mobile phone.

The mobile phone plays an important role for them. It seems more important than the bike or the computer – or definitely as important.

Primarily they have heard or seen the mobile phone in commercials (46%), and secondarily through classmates or in a store (34%). Lastly they have their knowledge from other friends (27%)

This group can be characterized as *front-runners* and they are *the most dis-loyal group*. They would rather have a mobile phone different from what they see in their social circle (43% vs. total 35%). Family, brothers and sisters are not a factor when choosing a mobile phone – significantly fewer wants the same model as them (9% and 8% vs. total 14% and 12%). Friends have an impact on them, but only moderately (19% vs. total 17%). It is important to them that their mobile phone is cool and to some it is also very important that it is a brand new model that nobody else possesses yet. However, every fifth child chooses a mobile phone similar to their friends, so you can argue that they are not quite free of influence from reference groups.

Segment 2: The identity making mobile freaks – use mobile phone as a signal value and as a means of achieving social status among friends.

This segment consists of a mix of 8-9 year-old girls and boys who have acquired their mobile phone from a family member. Many have had their first mobile at the age of 6,7 or 8 years. So they have got their own mobile phone before they could even spell or use text messages.

The mobile phone plays an important role to these tweens. They feel they get teased if they don't have a mobile phone and they get envious at their class mates if they have a cooler phone. They feel they need a mobile phone because the others have one (15%). If they do not have a mobile phone, it has a significant negative consequence for their self-confidence. The mobile phone only has a slight positive influence on their self-esteem, but this influence is not (yet) significant. Maybe it is because the 8-9 year-olds dominate this group – they are mature of their age but only in the initial phase when it comes to achieving social status.

This group of tweens may be characterised as followers. They have a great need for a mobile phone because it helps them get accepted among their friends. Social acceptance can be achieved in several ways. Either by getting a model that no-one else yet possesses (25%). In this way they experience admiration and envious looks from their friends. Or by getting the same model as their friends (20% vs. total 17%), thereby it is not decisive whether it is the same as now (15% vs. total 22%). But they still look for a newer model and a certain brand.

They are interested in the more abstract product attributes, but not on a technical level. They attach great importance to the basic or visible features when selecting a new mobile phone. It is important with a phone book and size and cool design (45%), colour display and availability of accessories are decisive criteria. For instance, they love changing ring tone or logo several times a day. They use the phone to create social acceptance and this is well in compliance with their status as followers. When they start to find interest in the new technical features, just like the front runners, they use it for a social purpose – like the blue tooth feature enabling wireless transfer of ring tones, logo, wall papers etc.

to their friends. Every third child also states that the game functions are a reason for why they have a mobile phone in the first place.

The mobile phone is used as an entry point for hanging out with friends. The phone provides more and closer friends who they talk to both in and outside school. In this way the mobile phone has a very positive impact on the psychosocial effect – the children experience that the mobile phone helps them achieve social acceptance.

The mobile phone is used for contact purposes with friends (65%), but not in the same extent as segment 1 (85%). This may be a consequence of their young age (8-9 year-olds) as children in segment 1 are 11-12 years old and at this age level friends become far more important. The 8-9 year-olds, however, are mature and already in a phase where friends matter more and the importance of the parents' role slowly is reduced. They still want to be in touch with their parents (84%), but to a lesser extent than segment 1 and 3, and more corresponding to the segment 4 level. They use the phone to dial up and receive calls – very often to and from friends and family. In relation to friends appointments and social relations are maintained via the phone. They call their family and friends, but they mainly send text messages to their parents.

They are interested in mobile phones, but it is the father who knows most about mobile phones at home. The children do not yet feel like experts.

The mobile phone is far more important than the bike and plays station or in any case just as important. However, the mobile phone cannot match the computer as 41% of the respondents state that the computer is more important than the mobile phone. Not even TV can match the mobile phone – only 32% prefer TV over the phone. The central significance of the computer depends on many games-happy children.

Segment 3: The followers without clear-cut attitudes – use mobile phone as a means of achieving social acceptance, social recognition and self-esteem.

This segment consists of primarily girls in the age of 10-12 years old. 9 out of 10 girls desired a mobile phone before getting one (94%). Most of them only recently acquired a phone (in the age of 10-11). Significantly more children in this group received the phone from their parents and often it was a new model (3 out of 4).

These tweens have a mobile phone to be accepted by their friends – they want other people's approval. The phone is therefore essential to them. To more than half of the children the phone is just as important as the bike, but even more children think that it is far more important than the computer and the play station. To almost half the children the mobile phone is in any case as important as TV.

To be accepted by friends it is important that you are reachable for contact. In this area they differ slightly from segment 2 and 4, but significantly from segment 1. 2 out of 3 use the mobile phone to get in touch with friends, but this pattern does not vary from the average of tweens. Of course they call family and friends and receive their calls too, but not more than what applies to other tweens.

By contrast they often use the phone for appointments and they send and receive many text messages to and from friends. It seems like there is a subculture within this group where you enjoy high prestige when sending and receiving many text messages. The more text messages you send or get the more "in" you are. 9 out of 10 mention that the phone is used for dial ups to parents, not text messages.

Even so this group of tweens states that the phone has not provided new friends in or outside the school. Actually the proportion is significant lower than segment 1 and 2 (yet still higher than segment 4) stating they have a closer relation with their friends after having acquired a mobile phone.

Spending time with friends gives them self-confidence and self-esteem. They want to be like others and they rarely have their own opinion on things, which results in vague or non-existing opinions or attitudes on mobile phones. They are very dependent on what their friends and other acquaintances do and say. Significantly more seek information about the mobile phone among friends which comply with the importance of the social accept. Best friends and classmates are an important source to experience the phones before a purchase.

The most important source of information is the family – like any other tween they will ask their parents. Beyond that they are not the greatest searcher of information. In fact, they surf less on the internet, which comes as no surprise since they prefer the phone over the computer. Compared to other tweens they rarely hear/see anything about mobile phones in advertising material or in-store promotion. This is quite noticeable as commercials generally are the second most important information source to achieve awareness of mobile phones before a purchase.

There are significantly fewer who desire a phone like their parents', partly because they want to break away from their parents, partly because it is critical to be accepted by the friends and follow their recommendations. The decisive factor is therefore not the price but their friends' opinion. That is why significantly fewer tweens have picked a phone no-one else has yet. This harmonises perfectly with that: a) in this cluster the tweens have the highest top of mind awareness of Nokia, b) no other cluster has a higher number of Nokia phone owners, and c) tweens in this cluster have the fewest brands in their evoked set.

Having a mobile phone no-one else has (that is another brand than Nokia) will distinguish them too much from their friends and they may not be "strong" enough to handle this. Instead they personalize the phone with covers and ring tones. They care less about games, so this is not a decisive factor. This matches their statements about preferring the phone over computer and play station, and that they seldom use the mobile phone for playing games.

To the question: "Does your mobile phone live up to your expectations" they respond "yes" (mean=3.97 and 3.98 respectively). But there is no guarantee that they will select the same brand next time they need a mobile phone: The likelihood for repurchase is 3.3 on a 5-point-scale where 1 is 'definitely not' and 5 is 'yes, definitely'. This corresponds to their profile: Friends have great impact on which model they select. Every fifth child selects the same mobile phone as their

friends. When asked if they would recommend this phone to others the pattern is even more clear – they are not sure if they would recommend it or not (mean=2.82 where 2='no' and 3='both yes and no'). These responses reflect their insecurity and dependence on what other group members think.

These tweens do not have a noticeable need to feel safe nor to have a mobile phone because it is practical or make it easier to make plans with their friends. They are not at all interested in mobile phones, neither seen from a technical/innovative perspective nor from a more abstract product attribute perspective. On the contrary, mobiles interest them far less than their friends the same age.

Technical features such as video telephony and video recordings are far less important, and they only rate six out of 19 product features as positive and as 'fairly important'. These six include personalisation features such as covers and tunes as well as fundamental functional features such as sending/receiving text messages, phone book and stand-by time. Games options are not a decisive factor to them.

Segment 4: The passive – the mobile phone don't have any functional or psycho-social consequences nor any influence on the social recognition and self-esteem.

This segment consists of a mix of 8-9 year old boys and girls. Notably fewer wished for a mobile phone before getting one and notably fewer got a brand new model. More have had their mobile phone during the age of 7, 8 or 9 years old which of course is coherent with the fact that the group is dominated by 8-9 year olds.

First of all they have seen or heard about the phone within the family before purchase and in far less extent from their friends, class mates or from the store. Not many ask their friends or older siblings for advice in regard to mobile phones. Actually they do not seek information on mobile phones at all – not via TV commercials, magazines, circulars or the internet due to the fact that they are generally not really interested in mobile phones. Due to their lack of involvement they do not have an idea of which phone to choose before consulting their parents. They show a clear inactivity towards decision making in relation to mobile phones.

It is their older siblings who know most about mobile phones in the family, subsequently themselves. The share stating that they are the mobile experts at home is significant smaller than for the other three segments. It seems like they belong to families where the mobile phone is not the focal point of communication.

These tweens are very passive in their attitudes toward mobile phones. The bike, computer, play station and TV are far more important than the mobile phone – 4 out of 5 things are preferable to the mobile phone. Only gameboy is less important than the phone.

They seldom use the mobile phone and are characterised by not having a noticeable need for it. They don't need one to be accepted by their friends – the social factor only plays a minor role to these tweens. They often want a mobile phone similar to their parents'. So the current model is therefore not chosen

because it is similar to their friends' phones or because it is smart or because no-one else has it. These tweens are not followers, but passive and not interested in mobile phones. In fact they choose the well-known and play safe. Much fewer want a mobile phone they are not familiar with.

The mobile phone has not provided them new friends in or outside school and it has not created a closer contact with friends or made them talk more often with them. They also write far less text messages to their friends.

These tweens are not at all interested in the mobile phone, the design or the latest technical features. They are far less aware of the evaluative criteria that exist when acquiring a new mobile phone: Which brand, model and features do not matter to them. They emphasise little weight on the brand, the size and design, the latest model and features like its ability to change logo, games, colour display, radio/MP3, infrared, video telephony, MMS or accessories. In other words they do not care for the most basic mobile phone features. This matches the fact that they rarely use the phone. It is enough for them to be able to call their parents sometimes or the other way around. It is the same thing with text messages – if they can just send and receive messages now and then, they are satisfied. Basically it is not decisive for being socially accepted via the mobile phone by personalise it or possessing the newest functions.

Even though they are relatively satisfied with their mobile phone it does not fulfil their expectations. That is why they rarely recommend their phone to others. This reluctance may be a result of their lack of interest in mobile phones and therefore they do not discuss phones with others.

These passive tweens can according to Lindstrom & Seybold (2003:15-16) be categorized as an 'out-group'. They do not seek the community in the same way as opinion leaders and followers do – instead they pursue their individuality and personal identity in their own way.

Conclusion and implications

This study finds that the MEC approach can be used as a framework for segmenting tweens based on their needs and motives for acquiring a mobile phone. Tweens' knowledge of the concrete and abstract product attributes is linked to the functional and psychosocial consequences, which again leads to fulfilment of tweens' goals, namely their personal values. So how tweens relate product attributes to their self-image influences which segment they belong to. The segments are relatively homogeneous as regards attitudes towards mobile phones, and thereby also as regards their means-end chain structure.

The survey confirmed the MEC approach. By conducting a factor analysis, a categorization that corresponds to the contents of the MEC model's five levels is reached. Then a two-step cluster analysis is conducted. The children are divided

into four segments that differ on the five levels of the MEC, thereby each segment have different MEC profiles for mobile phones. This gives a better insight into the common features as well as the differences between the children. Segmentation is not a new technique. What is new is the segmentation based on MEC.

This insight can be used to study tweens' influence on the family decision making process as well as to what extent tweens are affected by different reference groups such as parents, brothers and sisters, friends and acquaintances.

The insight can also be used for developing a differentiated communication strategy. The segmentation helps marketers to understand differences and similarities among tweens. It is valuable to identify the optimal tween target group for a specific brand. The wrong choice, the wrong message or the wrong image can easily destroy the effect of the whole campaign (Lindstrom & Seybold, 2003:17). Therefore it is appropriate to focus on tweens needs, motives and personal values.

The survey confirms the new consumer role of today's children – they have an increased influence on decisions made on e.g. mobile phones. For instance every third boy between the age of 11-12 in segment 1 had a final say when acquiring a new mobile phone.

Generally children and tweens are very adaptable to new things. They do not fear the new technology and therefore they are better at using the technology than their parents. The fact that they are more competent than their parents in certain areas is a new problematic never seen before. This will most likely have consequences on the family decision making process when it comes to purchasing mobile phones and other new media technologies like the internet and portable media players (MP3/MP4). Children and adolescents will have a far more dominant role in the decision making process than previously. An interesting generation problematic occurs when it comes to acquiring and using the new media and technologies, and this can change the roles within the family. This means that new media technologies which tweens use to gather information (Information), to communicate (Communication) and to be entertained (Entertainment) (ICET) have impact on the division of roles between generations. Will the tweens gain an expert role in relation to the new media? Will they gain more influence on family purchases when it comes to media technology? In the future, will tweens be the innovators and opinion leaders within the new media and technologies? Today we have only limited knowledge to answer these questions.

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New Technologies, New Methods?

Representing Children in Online and SMS Ethnography

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Researching new technologies, such as the internet and mobile phones, or the new and diverse ways in which traditional media such as television are used together with online and mobile communication devices, call for a discussion of methodology. The routinization and convergence of new media through increased use and access to a variety of new technologies which themselves 'melt together' raise a series of new questions and require a rethinking of both how to approach research and how to represent the audience. One question to be asked is whether there are particular challenges involved in representing the audience when it happens to consist of children.

As this field of study has changed and expanded, this also applies to researchers from a variety of disciplines. As Lievrouw and Livingstone argue, the "inextricably linked phenomena of information, communication and mediation are no longer the sole province of communication research and a few related specialties; today they are the focus of intense interest and study across the social sciences, arts and humanities" (Lievrouw and Livingstone 2006:3). As these authors analyse the current situation, one consequence of this is that multidisciplinary approaches are essential in new media studies, posing both theoretical and methodological challenges and bringing hitherto distinct fields into conjunction (and sometimes confrontation) with each other. Communication and media research is at a conceptual and disciplinary crossroads, they argue, and it is therefore time to rethink such phenomena as the role of 'the masses' in technology and society, bearing in mind the distinction between mediation today and mediation in the past. It is also time to rethink issues of methodology in studies of children and the new media, including the dynamics between production, text and audience (Buckingham 2000).

Adopting the perspective of the social studies of childhood (Qvortrup 1994, 2005; James, Jenks and Prout 1998), this article discusses methodology in relation to three main issues. First, it refers to a contemporary academic discourse in

media research, which is criticized for treating this question in a relatively superficial way. Secondly, the question of representing children in general is treated, referring to changing constructions of children and childhood in contemporary societies. Finally, the article describes and discusses methodology related to two empirical examples based on ethnographically inspired studies of children's online and SMS activities, focusing on procedures and questions of reliability and validity. The main argument in this article is that the dynamics and convergence of new media technologies and changing constructions and perceptions of children and childhood must continually be taken into account and reflected in the academic discourse of child and childhood research methodology, not so much to provide a "true picture of reality", but rather to encourage methodological creativity and maintain epistemological standards.

Methodology: a "stepchild" in media research?

One contemporary argument in media research is that questions of methodology and methods have been treated in quite different ways by disciplines in the social sciences compared to those rooted in the humanities (Fetveit 2000; Höijer 2005). 'Methodology' refers here to a meta-perspective on methods, for example, theoretical discussions of the methods to be used, while 'methods' refers to procedures and how to do research (Höijer 2005). As Höijer argues, both of these levels are equally important. This article will therefore combine a double perspective by discussing not only meta perspectives, but also certain research procedures and principles in doing research with children.

While methodological issues have assumed a central position in the social sciences, generating an extensive body of literature, the humanities, Fetveit (2000) argues, have a tendency to regard such issues as peripheral, as something which is found implicitly in their research traditions, and, in this respect, as nothing to worry about. In addition, some researchers contend that too much time has been wasted on the quantitative/qualitative debate. Even if this latter debate is often perceived as out-dated today, it continues to be an influential part of contemporary academic discourse. The authors of the book *Researching Audiences*, for instance, refer to what they call "methodological apartheid", arguing against being methodologically narrow-minded by giving either quantitative or qualitative methods paradigmatic status as the one and only way to obtain new insights. Based on what they say is a true story, they refer to a conference where a researcher, having presented a qualitative project, receive the following comment from the discussant: "So altogether it was an interesting paper, and I am sure you could easily do a quantitative thing to it if you wanted to publish it" (Schrøder et. al 2005: 11). The most obvious problem with such kinds of utterances is the question of academic hegemony or, as Højer calls it, "positivistic fundamentalism" (Højer 2005). What the utterance above also illustrates is, first, a superficial way of hand-

ling the question of methodology, and secondly, the lack of recognition and awareness of the many ways of approaching a research question and the challenges involved in representing people in research. In using a narrow methodological approach based on tradition and hegemonic paradigms, the risk is that questions about methodology and methods are only rarely discussed in a wider research community and therefore left to individual exploration or "recycling" without thorough or shared reflections.

This claim does not imply that research on such topics as the media, consumption and childhood is static or that it suffers from a severe lack of updated knowledge and reflections on methods. On the contrary, many researchers often dedicate relatively extensive amounts of time to inform the reader what kinds of procedures were used (before we come to the "real" thing, that is, the substantive results). However, a critical review or a meta-perspective on these procedures is often conspicuous by its absence. Research procedures and approaches always express ways of understanding. For instance, researching 'children's culture' is not neutral (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 2002). A discussion of methods and procedures will therefore never be about techniques alone, but also about how the researcher perceives the phenomenon that is to be studied, the role and position of the researcher and how the researcher positions the research object (or subject).

Ontology and epistemology

Some researchers argue that it is not the methods, but rather the ontology and epistemology that are the determinants of good social science (Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2000), i.e. how one understands and interprets the world and how one chooses to obtain knowledge about it. Thus the researcher's position in relation to these issues is crucial to the entire research process, from defining the topic, the research problem and the methods, to the analyses, interpretations and conclusions of the study. How the researcher approaches an interview situation reflects in different ways the researcher's view of knowledge production, including the kind of status those interviewed should be given.

Kvale uses two different metaphors which describe various concepts of knowledge formation in an interview (Kvale 1996). The *miner* metaphor sees knowledge as buried metal and the interviewer as a miner who is unearthing the valuable metal. In this perspective knowledge is waiting in the subjects' interior to be uncovered. The alternative is the *traveller* metaphor, in which the interviewer is understood as a traveller on a journey, using *method* in the original Greek meaning of the word: a route leading to a destination. Knowledge is the narratives that emerge from the journey and that are explored and interpreted by the interviewer. "The interviewer wanders along with the local inhabitants, asks questions that lead the subjects to tell their own stories of their lived world" (Kvale

1996:4). The journey Kvale refers to need not produce only new knowledge. Kvale argues further that the traveller might change, or the journey might instigate a process of reflection that leads the interviewer to new ways of self-understanding, as well as uncovering previously taken-for-granted values and customs in the traveller's home country.

Qualitative research has developed a tradition of focusing on the encounter between the researcher and the informant. This includes an emphasis on reflexivity, in which the researcher is seen not only as an observer, but also as part of the social world that is being studied (Hammersley and Atkinson 1987). This requires reflections about issues such as the researcher's age, gender and social and cultural background (Ehn and Klein 1994). A part of this reflexivity is also to be aware of and take into account the power relations that are implicit in a research context. In the end the researcher is the person who decides what and how to interpret the informants and their accounts, and how to present them. This is particularly important when studying children, because they are generally dependent on adults and have fewer possibilities to protect themselves than most adults have. In line with Geertz's idea of the thick description (Geertz 1973), Solberg asks for more descriptions of the process through which researchers obtain their results (Solberg 1988, 1996). This should be written on 'the blank pages' in the methodology chapters, she argues.

Doing versus being in child research

In this respect, reflections on "how to do it" raise fundamental questions of ontology and epistemology. Procedures and techniques are about responsibility, respect and reflection vis-à-vis one's informants, not least when they are children (Fine and Sandstrom 1988). An essential question when interviewing children is whether doing child research is essentially any different from interviewing adults. Solberg warns against the researcher becoming ethnocentric by occupying adult roles, thus having difficulties in establishing the necessary distance to reflect on adult ways of conceptualising children and childhood (Solberg 1991). She recommends a certain ignorance of age, encouraging researchers to redirect their attention to the situational context within which children act. Solberg argues in favour of concentrating more on children's doing, i.e. children's actions, and moving away from their being, i.e. how they 'are'. This movement does not imply any claims that children do not possess qualities different from adults, she argues. Her suggestion is rather that researchers' concepts of such qualities should not influence their ways of approaching children in social science research. In principle, she argues further, we are not facing other methodological challenges when we interview children than when we interview adults.

Motivation, power and agency

However, what does it mean when we say that we are listening to children (Clark, Kjørholt and Moss 2005)? In child research, as in research with adults, a crucial question is: What are the underlying assumptions of the positions of the informants, both as participants in the research and in society in general? What do we mean when we say that we "adopt the children's perspective"? How do we represent children in research? How do we maintain a reflexive distance from our private and professional biases and adult-centrism?

Regardless of age, it is important to state general principles in giving an account of the aim of the study and the reasons for choosing a particular informant, establishing a good relationship and entering into an explicit agreement about the interview (Solberg 1991). Questions must be relevant, and the interviewer must be able to listen and show interest. What should characterize professional interviews with children, it is argued, is the absence of adult evaluation or supervision. Motivation, contract and a common focus are key words for conducting a child interview (Andenæs 1991). Reflections on these issues are crucial from the very moment the researcher plans the project to the final stage. In an approach where the aim is, following Kjørholt (1991) and Gullestad (1991), to emphasize the child's world and regard society and culture from the position of children, the researcher has to take into account the power relations between the researcher and the informant. Woodhead and Faulkner (2000) recommend acknowledging the complexities that lie beneath the simple appeal to listen to the child. It is the researchers, not the children, who generally control the research process, they argue.

Strandell (2002) asks whether childhood research, in its efforts to treat children more like people of other ages than it has done traditionally, is tying itself too strongly to the competence paradigm. Strandell doubts this and asks whether the competent child is running the risk of being trapped in a too narrow and inflexible notion of children's agency (Strandell 2002). She cites Lee (1998), who claims that, in order to make children and childhood fit into sociological theory, the sociology of childhood has solved the ontological ambivalence between *being* and *becoming* by declaring that children are more or less mature and complete persons (Lee 1998). Strandell's argument is that the question is not whether children are to be seen as either competent or immature: "It is about *not defining* children or childhood as being of a certain kind. It is about using knowledge of children's actions and interactions for a theoretical broadening of notions of agency" (Strandell 2002: 33).

Online and SMS data: two empirical examples

This section discusses how new communication technologies may supplement more traditional methods like observation and interviews. It deals with some of the characteristics of these technologies, but also reflects on challenges by using

the data that have emerged from them. It is important to emphasize that these methods are supplementary to, not intending to replace other, more traditional methods, such as observation and interviews. But as online and mobile devices are becoming increasingly familiar to children, they may offer a valuable methodological opportunity. In fact, empirical material from real time observation of children's online communication and 'staying in touch' on mobile phones may supply the researcher with data about everyday practices that are difficult, perhaps impossible to obtain in other ways, for example, by interviewing or by conducting a questionnaire. An e-mail or a text message may function as a way of establishing a routine or flow of information, maintaining contact between researcher and informants, and offering an easy, accessible and relaxed way of communication. My main argument for choosing this method is that this kind of material can provide me with rich and sensitising sets of data and thus modify my interpretations (cf. Spiggle, 1994).

In my research with children, I have used technologies such as online observations, e-mailing and text-messaging as additional resources and tools (Tingstad 2003, 2006, 2007). The first study was about children's chat on the internet, while the second focused on the TV reality show, *Pop Idol*. Both projects were inspired by media ethnography, as they focus on children as media users rather than the medium itself (Drotner 1993). This does not imply that I have used traditional ethnographic methods strictly speaking, such as long-term field studies conducted within the settings of the participants. However, defining ethnography,¹ not as a method, but rather as a combination of different methods and a theory about the research process (Skeggs 1995:192), means that we can relate it to certain major issues, such as:

1. The researcher in participation and observation
2. An account of the development of the relationships between the researcher and the researched
3. A study of the other
4. Focusing on experience and practice
5. Frequently having culture as the central focus
6. Treating participants as a micro cosmos of wider structural processes.

I interpret these six examples as a research approach which recognises children as subjects and thus meets my theoretical requirement for positioning children not as powerless and exploited victims of the new media, nor as empowered superheroes (Cook 2004), but as a mixed group of agents within a particular cultural and social structure in society.

Triangulation of methods

I have combined these methods with other approaches, such as child interviews, both in groups and individually, as well as interviews with parents and written texts with children's descriptions of the series to a fictitious person who does not know what *Pop Idol* is about. The individual interview with children was structured from the model of a "life form interview", where the focus is on actions that are anchored in time and space and are repeated as a pattern (Haavind 1987; Andenæs 1991). Thus there will be series of social occasions as the child guides the researcher through the house or flat, recalling what has happened during the day. Parents may tell and reflect on what happened at home yesterday. Time and space are the organising principles of the interview. This method is useful in order to obtain concrete and recently experienced actions. What happened? Who participated? How were the interactions? By comparing and reflecting on how things usually are, the interview encourages nuances, complexities and patterns from daily life to emerge. Parental interviews give contextual information about, for instance, media access and habits, the family and the child, routines and practices, norms and regulations. Interviewing children and parents together or separately (or both parents together or separately) have advantages in terms of displaying different practices, positions and dynamics within the family. On the other hand, a 'family interview' may risk to suffering from a social pattern which leave the child to be dominated by the parents' point of view. As always when organising an interview, it is crucial to reflect upon the 'gains and losses'.

In 1999, a set of guidelines was approved in Norway, focusing on the *informed consent* from parents or people who have formal responsibility for children, participating in research (NESH 1999). This is usually necessary up to the age of 16. From the age of 12, children have a special right to be heard on the issue of research participation. In addition, approval from children is necessary when they are old enough to express this. A presupposition for such an approval is that children have received adequate information about the project and the consequences, that they understand the voluntariness, the confidentiality and, last but not least, that they may withdraw whenever they want. I informed both parents and children, and asked for the parents' permission.

Study 1: Chat room communication

How children's play in cyberspace (the world of computers tied together in networks) resembles on or differs from what is traditionally perceived as play, is a relatively un-mapped field. This study has explored two Norwegian chat rooms and how a small sample of children uses them. Empirically, the study is based on 14 hours observation of the chat rooms www.popit.no and www.sol.no in addition to observations, interviews and e-mail-communication with 8 children

in the age 11 to 14 years in a period of 2 years (Tingstad 2003). Chat rooms are small-scale electronic communities which enable users to 'talk' to each other by using a written language (Werry 1996). In the following transcript we see that complaints about school, and the joys and expectations of the summer holiday, are shared with chat partners.

Summer_girl>nå slipper vi skolen i 3 måneder	Summer_girl>now we don't need to go to school for 3 months
Zombie>og dumme lærere	Zombie>and stupid teachers
Zonebabe>nei 12 måneder	Zonebabe>no 12 months
Zonebabe>hehhe	Zonebabe>hehhe
Summer_girl>Jeg har 1 år igjen på barneskolen	Summer_girl>I have 1 year left in barneskolen ²
søtjente_15>du må gru deg til ungdomsskolen	søtjente_15>you have to worry about ungdomsskolen
søtjente_15>hater skolen-lærere-ungdomsskolen	søtjente_15>hate school-teachers-ungdomsskolen
søtjente_15>ungdomsskolen er helt grusom!!!!	søtjente_15>ungdomsskolen is awful!!!!
Lars>hvorfor syns du ungdomsskolen er grusom?	Lars>why do you think ungdomsskolen is awful?
søtjente_15>fordi den er det	søtjente_15>because it is
søtjente_15>jeg er bare såååå glad for at jeg akkurat er ferdig på ungdomsskolen	søtjente_15>I'm soooo glad that I've just finished ungdomsskolen
Zonebabe>dritherlig med sommerferieJIPPPPIIIIIIIII	Zonebabe>fantastic to have summer holiday. JIPPPPIIIIIIIII !!!
Zonebabe>SKA FÅ MEG EN TYPE I SOMMERFERIEN	Zonebabe>GOING TO GET A BOY FRIEND DURING THE SUMMER HOLIDAY
de 2 kuleguttene>er skolen et drittsted som alle hater tast 111 for ja tast 1234 for nei	de 2 kuleguttene>is school a dump everybody hates key 111 for yes, key 1234 for no
Zonebabe>1234	Zonebabe>1234
Jordan>1234	Jordan>1234
de 2 kuleguttene> er alle snål skolen er jo et drittsted	de 2 kuleguttene> is everybody strange school is a dump

These kinds of online encounters have the character of many comings and goings. People can physically leave the computer and still 'be' in a chat room as long as the site is logged on. Thus, a chat room is transient and continuously changing in terms of participants, content and atmosphere. As a result of these characteristics, chat communication often appears to be chaotic, as if on the verge of a breakdown.

What are the difficulties involved in collecting and interpreting this type of empirical material? What distinguishes it from other types of talk or qualitative data, such as a classroom observations or an interview, for example? How can we obtain reliable data from this chaos?

First of all, it is obvious that the material represents something particular, which poses a challenge in terms of both data collection and analysis. Chat is typically multiple communication between many individuals simultaneously (Holm Sørensen 2001). Chat is characterized by chaos and transience, regarding both participation and content. As chat is a more or less continuous activity, it is not an easy matter to determine its starting point or obtain a reasonable understanding of what, in Goffman's terms (1959), the *definition of the situation* is. The communication exists before the researcher arrives, and it continues after the observation is finished. A chat room might be silent for minutes, maybe hours, in terms of utterances until there is a sudden and huge burst of activity, probably when something entertaining or provoking has happened or when a special person has entered the room. This might be someone somebody has waited for or someone who, for some reason, is popular (or unpopular) in the room. The researcher also faces problems when participants make references to things which happened the day before, for example, when accusing each other of changing nicknames. The problem is that the researcher has not been present on this special occasion because it happened yesterday. The researcher has to make use of bits and pieces of talk, without knowing in what contexts the communication has been made. Another question is which excerpts of the communication to choose. Karlsson suggests focusing on one 'chatter' or one topic (Karlsson 1997). However, hers was a linguistic study that focused on the details of language. My focus was on the actual interactions between the participants, of which the continuous changes are an essential part. Thus, it was difficult with my chosen focus, even impossible and undesirable, to single out one topic in the way Karlsson suggests and define it as *the* topic of study. Sveningsson (2001) found that most of the conversations in her material were dyads that went on independently from the other dyads in the chat room, a situation that increases the number of simultaneous conversations that the researcher has to keep track of. She chose to isolate conversations in order to avoid distraction from other ongoing conversations. In my material there were obvious dyads, too, but most often the messages were intertwined and difficult to isolate. Since the main aim was to explore the social aspects, I decided to use *content* as my organizing principle.

A second challenge with this kind of material is that there are usually no clearly defined roles between the participants in the sense that one asks the questions and another gives the answers. Messages are literally spoken in a helter-skelter manner, where they are thrown out into the virtual world. Thus, compared to classroom interactions or interviews, chat is not limited to a dialogue where one paragraph is usually to be understood as an answer to a previous question. On the contrary, the contextual structures that normally help a researcher are absent. In a chat room, several parallel dialogues on various topics may be going on or

there may be no obvious dialogues at all, just rows of letters, numbers or signs. As the messages are viewed on the screen in the same order as they are keyed, an answer to a question may emerge a long time (or many messages) after the question was asked. Thus, this kind of communication also differs from more traditional forms of conversation in terms of *turn-taking*, i.e. conversations in which one person talks and another listens, and with some system for determining when one person's turn is over and the next person's turn begins (cf. Tannen 1982). Chat communication challenges the observer who must make sense of a flow of parallel and potential dialogues, of simple utterances and statements, often performed in an apparently secret language, at a fast pace and with no regard to traditional systems of turn-taking.

A third aspect that must be taken into account is the uncertainty concerning the identity of the actors and actresses. Who is actually writing the messages? Even if a participant presents a credible identity, such as *boy 14, interested in football and games*, this self-presentation can be questioned. Most of the participants know that this ambiguity is a part of the chat context, whatever their motivations for entering the room might be. Nicknames may be changed: someone who was *coolboy* yesterday might be *hotbabe* today. Consequently, as Holm Sørensen (2001) also argues, chat enables participants to play, pretend and present themselves using shifting identities, thus questioning traditional images of face-to-face interactions, which are often perceived as more authentic than interactions without physical closeness.

Lastly, in classroom observations or an interview, the talking partners can observe both verbal and non-verbal communication, and adapt questions and answers on behalf of what happens in the context. In a chat room, facial and bodily gestures are absent and therefore cannot be used to derive information: the participants have to rely solely on the written words and other language forms, which must replace emotional expressions and body language. In a face-to-face interview it is possible to ensure a relatively consistent degree of honest and reliable communication. Chat communication is not established for the purpose of research and is not regulated by any form of agreement of the sort that an organized talk or interview relies on. Chat resembles multiply voiced, loud talk in a dark and crowded room. Observing and analysing this talk is more likely to be compared with ethnographic fieldwork in a foreign culture, where meaning has to emerge from and rely on what the researcher is able to observe and make sense of. I will return to this issue in discussing the second empirical example.

Ethical considerations

After having chosen the chat room to observe, a question was how to establish a research situation which takes into account the ethical principles and avoids influencing the activity in the room. What kind of procedure was the most useful for

finding authentic information about the phenomenon in the actual chat rooms? I approach this question by describing my strategy for observation and the level of my own participation. A fundamental question was to choose how to observe. One issue was whether I should enter the chat rooms openly as a researcher, as a participant with a common nickname or pretend to be a young person and thus be a hidden observer? When I tried to introduce myself as a researcher, the communication stopped. When I entered the chat room and acted as a participant, other people 'talked' to me and expected me to answer. I therefore usually chose a position with a hidden identity which means that I entered the room with an ordinary nickname and remained 'silent'. This position might, from an ethical perspective, be questioned, even if this is recommended in the methodological literature (Patton 1990). Paccagnella (1997) recommends hidden observation to avoid the observer influencing the situation. My main arguments for choosing this approach lie in the fact that this was what I evaluated as the nearest way possible to study the phenomenon without disturbing it. Another argument is that this kind of communication actually goes on in a public space. I was one of the crowd. Chat rooms of this type are open and accessible to anyone. Everybody has a nickname, and pretending is a part of the convention. Thus, it is likely that many of the participants are aware of the room as a public space. Those who want to chat privately, i.e. by creating a sub-room within the chat room, can withdraw from the public room. This chat habit, which continuously emerges in questions like "anybody who wants to chat privately?" is supposed to increase the chatters' images of the differences between various levels of publicity. However, even if the chat context is a public space and perceived as such, people have a right to be protected from being compromised. In order to protect participants who write personal details, it has been an issue not to include private information, for example real names, addresses, e-mail addresses or phone numbers.

Study 2: Pop Idol

The global television concept *Pop Idol* is a singing contest that has been successfully broadcast in different national versions in a number of countries since its creation in 2001. People can vote for their favourites with their mobile phones, ask questions on the internet, participate in online discussions etc. Audiences can take part in a television quiz, win a day with the contestants, watch previous episodes on web-TV, make their own video to send in, send *Idol* cards electronically to friends, and buy accessories for their mobile phones. This strategy supplements traditional media such as television, newspapers and magazines with the internet and mobile phones.

The paper uses data from the 2003 and 2005 season of the Norwegian *Idol*, collected with a range of methodological approaches that are comprised of qualitative data, and using children as informants and information from websites and

newspapers (Tingstad 2007). These extensive data have been used to construct thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) of the commercial product *Pop Idol*, the phenomenon as a text and its child audience, noting that the descriptions rely on understanding informants' points of view in order to portray broader cultural meanings (Spiggle, 1994). The interview data, which represent the main set of data, cover focus groups of girls and boys between 11 and 13 years old, and consist of recordings of children's conversations while watching a video clip from the programme, their individual descriptions of the series written to a fictitious person who does not know what it is all about, individual interviews with the children in their home environment (2003) and focus groups, combined with individual interviews, text-messages (SMS) and e-mails (2005). The sample consists of 21 children (10 in 2003 and 11 in 2005), who were recruited from the same level at two different schools in an urban environment. Given the goal of establishing smaller groups of well-informed children (Patton, 1990), I deliberately recruited those who actively said they wanted to participate in the inquiry. This approach yielded a group composed of 71 per cent girls.

In this study, I have used e-mailing and text-messaging systematically in the sense that I have made explicit contracts with the children with the intention of using the things they write to me as a part of my empirical material. I will present a few examples from this study and discuss some of the potentials and, not least, challenges related to this methodological approach. This way of obtaining data made it easier for children to initiate spontaneous and close responses to the researcher in the immediate context of their television viewing or purchasing of *Idol* items on the internet, such as accessories for the mobile phone, cd's, hats and cups. One example of a spontaneous message about purchasing an item is the following e-mail from one girl: "By the way, I bought a picture of Alejandro today, for my mobile.... I paid 20 kroner...but can afford that. Hug from Vicky".

Whenever I received such messages, I would continue the exchange by answering and asking questions. This e-mail gave me an opportunity to talk further about the economic aspects of the television concept in terms of for instance the children's interest in using money on *Idol* items and whether it was appropriate or 'cool' among the friends to use money on such things. Another issue which emerged from a text message was the question of gender. The following messages between Ingrid and me raise this question for the first time, and I could refer to this issue in the interview later on.

Ingrid: Hi! Today I hope that Jorun wins. But anyway, it will be good if a girl wins Idol.

Vebjørng: Thanks for the message. Can you plz tell me after the show what you think about the judges? Preferably by e-mail.

Ingrid: I'm in the hut, so I don't have the internet, but you'll get a message.

Vebjørng: Excellent!

Two hours later:

Ingrid: Tonight I think Tone was the best one. The judges were too kind.

When I received such messages, I knew that the children had something they wanted to say, or that they just wanted to be responsible informants. In any case, I was able to continue the exchange by answering them and asking questions; a method that requires the researcher to be attentive and available on Friday evenings when the program was shown. The following e-mail, which discusses the judges' changing 'attitudes' throughout the program series, illustrates the sort of information given in the immediate context of watching the programme, such as questioning the credibility of the series:

The judges have changed a lot. Tor in particular! In the beginning he was very strict, but now he does not say so many negative things.... The other judges have also changed! But sometimes they become too kind too. The hosts are also a bit different...they are more emotional and talk nonsense. In the very beginning, they were very personal and they often cried when others cried after being evicted from Idol. They don't do this any more.

This kind of online and SMS data also poses some fundamental questions, which I will discuss in the next section.

Validity, reliability and generalizability

In her discussion of the methods, politics and ethics of representation in online ethnography, Markham argues that internet-based technologies change the research scenario, altering interactions and their possible outcomes (Markham 2005). As referred to in the discussion of chat communication, one interesting question is whether one can trust the information received by these technologies. Informants in Markham's and my own studies support the suggestion that offline information is not necessarily always more trustworthy than information given online. Some girls in my study say that they often feel more 'themselves' when they 'are' in a chat room compared to when they are in their school playground. In Markham's study, one informant says something similar: "In cyberspace, one dwells in language, and through language, I exist as myself in language online...it feels more like being me than I sometimes feel offline" (Markham 2005: 793).

By using new technologies as an additional source for giving information, children do not control the research process any more so than by using other methods. However, children have the potential to use their expertise to inform, calibrate and extend research projects with rich and unexpected (and easily accessible) data in the different stages of the research process. Seeing the results of the research process as a co-constructed product may lead to a more open-minded approach to both the research situation and the informants. In this way, informants are given opportunities to introduce new subjects (Svenningsson 2001), as well as to facilitate the collection of rich empirical data, new perspectives and interpretations.

Kvale argues (1996) that issues of verification do not belong to a separate stage of the investigation but should rather be addressed throughout the entire research process. One question is whether it is possible to *generalize* results from a small sample to a larger one. According to Kvale, the positivist quest for universal knowledge, as well as the cult of the individually unique, should be replaced by an emphasis on the heterogeneity and contextuality of knowledge, with a shift from generalisation to contextualisation. *Reliability* has to do with the consistency of the research findings, with whether the findings of a study can be trusted. A traditional criterion of this concept is that other researchers can repeat the investigation. In observations and qualitative interviews, this claim does not make sense, and the researcher has to develop procedures to ensure that reliable material is produced. *Validity* concerns the extent to which a method investigates what it intends to investigate. But validity is not only about methods: "The craftsmanship and credibility of the researcher become essential", Kvale (1996:252) argues. He outlines three aspects of validation as investigation:

1. To validate is to check
2. To validate is to question
3. To validate is to theorise

A solid piece of research should present the procedures in ways that make these investigations possible. However, the power to make choices – to single out what to make transparent and what to check, question and theorise – lies in the hands of the researcher. Does the researcher take the power relationship in the interview situation into consideration? How open or pre-fixed are the categories from which the analysis begins? Which excerpts from the data does the researcher choose and regard as typical of the phenomenon? What kinds of procedure does the researcher use to validate interpretations during the data collection? These are all crucial questions to be asked.

The question of representation in child research: concluding remarks

This article has raised a number of questions, crucially how to position children and childhood in the social structure and represent children in research. As Strandell argues (2002), it is also important to discuss how children are represented as research subjects in reports after the study has been completed. She refers to childhood research that has stressed that children should be seen as social actors in their own right. Strandell presents a series of challenging questions, asking what kinds of actors children are in research and how their actions should be conceptualised. Other questions are: What attributes do we attach to children and childhood? How do we tell the story? What stories do we tell? To what end? For

whom are we telling them? A concluding appeal in this article is that we should continue to ask and discuss these questions thoroughly and across disciplines, as well as within the different research communities to which we belong.

Notes

1. From Latin, *ethnos* and *grafein*, which mean people and to write, respectively.
2. *Barneskolen* (6-12 years) and *Ungdomsskolen* (13-15 years) in Norway roughly correspond to primary and secondary school in the UK.

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Youth Media Consumption in South Africa

A Research Overview

Jeanne Prinsloo

A few years back a content analysis of the advertisements in more widely read South African magazines produced a particular surprising finding, for in this 'snapshot', not a single teenager was represented (Prinsloo 2003). While the depictions of families included pre-teen children with a mother or occasionally both parents, the adolescents were nowhere to be seen. Remarkably, a whole age cohort was invisible. Whether it was the perceived storm and stress of those pesky hormone producing teens that was too incongruent with the glamorous world of consumer capital, I can only conjecture. However, a sense of puzzlement relating to media and teens recurred as I set out to review the research on South African teen media consumption. This time I was surprised again - but not by the absence or representations of teens, but by both the scarcity and the nature of the studies that probe teen or youth media consumption. This is perhaps all the more surprising considering how often youth are often constituted as asocial or problematic in the South Africa media as elsewhere (Seekings 1996). It is notable that among the studies undertaken there is a dearth of rigorous critical research.

Youth

To consider the studies into teenage engagement with media, it is necessary to briefly provide some context in relation to South African 'youth'. The construct of 'youth' has mutated considerably in recent South African history and much of this discussion has focussed on black youth. At the height of the anti-apartheid struggle in the 1980s young black South Africans were construed as crucial political actors against apartheid as they boycotted schools and white businesses, ran running street battles with the police, and made entire areas ungovernable. They reversed the generational norms by disciplining their elders (if they were

perceived to be acting politically incorrectly) and dealt with collaborators fairly brutally. For a time then, young township South Africans who were acting outside the normative roles of youth were acknowledged for their role in the struggle for democracy. During this struggle period a strong sense of identity emerged among township youth as South African, as black, and as politically active and this identity was enacted in performance, such as *toyi toyi*, and dress (including the ubiquitous struggle slogan t-shirts). Subsequently, when key political actors previously imprisoned or otherwise excluded began to engage in delicate political negotiations in the early 1990s, the role of youth was reviewed¹. The discomfort felt in various quarters about their actions gave way to a moral panic (Seekings 1996), reconstituting township youth as an angry 'lost generation', prone to violence and averse to negotiation, alienated, uneducated and dangerous, or, according to the then editor of the *Sunday Times*, 'marauding cohorts of youngsters ... truly lost ... ineducable' (in Seekings 1996:107).

And, in these early years of the twenty-first century more than a decade since the first democratic elections, township teens are still frequently considered deficient, but this time for becoming more like other teenagers elsewhere by jettisoning political concern and a cadre identity for a fascination with image and consumption, and also for mimicking things foreign (read American). Arguably a sharp sense of a South African identity persists, despite the pessimistic denouncement of youth as Americanised. Signifiers of the local fuse with global fashion markers whether in aspects of clothing, music or leisure choices as waves of fashion serve to mark them as separate from adults. Ironically, what is conspicuous is the adoption of the consumerism of their financially triumphant elders² (some the activists of twenty years ago) who have adapted to trends of conspicuous consumption as markers of status with some rapidity. However, this consumerist fervour needs to be placed in the context that South African youth inhabit.

South Africa, a 'developing' country, does not boast the wealth of countries of the industrialized north but has very high discrepancies in wealth between the richest and the poorest. If for teenagers the political struggle is history and their concern lies with the present and their futures, the cornucopia proffered by consumer culture remains desirable but elusive for many. Half of them live in rural areas with limited access to the spoils of modernity and where traditional or customary ways of being are shored up by tribal leadership³. Rather than complying with any rural idyll, rural areas, the previous homelands of the apartheid regime, are marked by poverty, hardship, deeply entrenched traditional patriarchal power relations and severe social problems⁴.

For many urban and rural teenagers the spectre of poverty and disease looms large in the form of HIV. The high rate of teenage pregnancy propels many young women prematurely into the responsibilities of adulthood, the sexual and child abuse statistics remain dire, while comparatively high numbers of juveniles are in prison, often for violent crimes. I mention these aspects relating to sex / sexuality and violence as part of the backdrop as these issues will be revisited in relation to audience responses.

It is common cause then that there is a pressing need for media to recognise the conditions and issues that teenagers confront and it is also common cause that the media has a crucial and difficult role to play in this regard. In response to this a range of Education Entertainment (or Social Marketing) media campaigns exist and are the most frequent focus of the studies into youth media consumption.

Formal occasions as literacy events

Before moving on to examine the form and nature of research undertaken in South Africa relating to youth media consumption, one specific contextual factor needs to be introduced as it pertains to audience responses generated in local research situations. I refer to how people read texts in formal situations, or in other words, to the sets of literacy practices that respondents bring to the research context. How people read the media or any other text needs to be recognised not as neutral, unique or authentic, but as situated social practices acquired through apprenticeships of learning when particular responses and behaviours are validated and deemed successful (Barton et al. 2000, Green 1990, Luke 1997). It is in language education (whether subject English, Xhosa or Zulu, for example) that people acquire particular sets of practices of reading/interpreting and writing/making texts. These are powerful domains and, while not the only ones young people encounter, they serve as a set of practices, almost a default position, that is activated particularly under formal circumstances, or when a response is asked for by an authoritative figure.

In particular, two sets of responses have dominated and been rehearsed in schools in South Africa⁵. The first has occurred historically in more privileged sites of education where English was the primary language⁶ and entails a set of practices with its roots in liberal English education. Within a humanist frame, it calls for reading between and beyond the lines and privileges empathetic engagement (particularly in reference to literary texts). Writing or textual production includes reflection on personal experiences and positions. Such self-disclosure or the ordering of significant personal experiences through language is identified with the Personal Growth paradigm (Ball et al. 1990) with its interest in the development of the fuller person.

In contrast, the other set, entrenched in black education, normalises different repertoires of responses and foregrounds self-presentation of a different kind of moral subject to the self-disclosure identified above. In reading/interpreting texts, the focus moves to factual detail and identifying lessons learnt – an emphasis on identifying the ‘moral of the story’ and a judgemental response is assumed rather than empathetic engagement⁷. In contrast to any emphasis on reading for pleasure and being impelled by the narrational enigmas, texts are probed for what they might teach the reader, for the lessons they propose. It is this didactic edge that I wish to foreground in relation to this discussion of teen media consumption

research. If texts are conceived of as principally didactic in purpose, the purposes attributed to reading a text are practical ones – to learn from, to advance oneself, or to develop better literacy skills in relation to employment (see Broster 1999). Writing is primarily functional rather than expressive of personal tastes and opinions. At these schools, for example, particular practical forms of letter writing have been rehearsed, whether asking for funding or sponsorship, acquiring information, or applying for work. In these instances self-presentation of a particular wholesome and dependable persona are also practised.

I note these literacy practices specifically, for the research that I identify here is not marked by any awareness of these tendencies and tends to accept participants' responses as neutral or authentic rather than also learnt or schooled. That these repertoires are then rehearsed in research contexts might result in researchers acquiring data that does not represent how teenagers engage with a set of texts as much as how they were taught to respond to texts in formal or bookish contexts. I return to this in my discussions.

Forms of research

Rather than a comprehensive overview of all the research into teen media use in South Africa the intention of this chapter is to indicate research tendencies and lacuna that might be factored into future research. Any perceived criticisms of research studies should be viewed in the light of the necessarily partial and positioned nature of research, that 'every attempt to "know" the object must be incomplete' (Patterson 1997:426).

My discussion foregrounds the kinds of research, the questions asked, and the value given to the responses. The surprisingly small body of research into teen media consumption in South Africa was noted earlier. What is also striking is that where studies do exist, they tend to be more administrative than critical research. The discussion that follows considers both forms by first citing examples of research in relation to reception of education entertainment series which tend to be more administrative, before presenting two examples of critical enquiries into teen use of media.

Administrative research questions⁸ usually relate to 'how to make an organisation's actions more efficient' (Smythe and Van Dinh 1983:118). While, the administrative research discussed here is concerned with the reach and impact of the media products on (youth) audiences, it is atypical in that its intentions are primarily social or philanthropic rather than commercial. While the local drama series produced under this rubric are arguably among the most compelling and thoughtfully conceived of TV programmes available to South African audiences, the research, I suggest, frequently sets out to demonstrate what is in fact notoriously difficult to establish definitively, for example, an increase in knowledge or evidence of attitudinal and behavioural change. Some administrative research

assumes a more nuanced relationships between the media and their audiences, allowing that the media might play a role in setting the agenda of what people will think about (and not what they will think) (Tuchman 1974) and in cultivating attitudes to issues (Gerbner 1973)

Within cultural studies, the general consensus is that the power of the media lies in its ability to mediate social realities (Silverstone 1999) and in presenting discourses that variously reinforce and contest other prevailing discourses. What people do with media texts is understood as a complex and varied process that is unpredictable and often surprising, and is linked complexly to social relationships (Thompson 1995, Ang 1991). Research informed by critical theory foregrounds issues of identity and power and is concerned with the media as cultural (and economic) industries. When it comes to the latter, critical researchers are keen to find out what young people do with the media they engage with, what meanings are produced during these acts of consumption, and to probe the cultural significance of meanings produced (Ang 1991).

In what follows, the education entertainment and administrative research is discussed first with reference to three studies, and thereafter critical research is discussed in relation to two research papers.

Education entertainment studies

As education entertainment initiatives are conceptualised to propose and change attitudes and social behaviours, it is unsurprising that the producers and sponsors seek to research their reach and impact, and that it is more frequently administrative in form and intention. While such research is frequently quantitative in approach, qualitative dimensions are included but are usually confined to evaluating responses to particular elements selected in the content and design of the product.

In addition, the context of such research tends to be contrived. Surveys are a formal, usually written, exercise expressly designed to evaluate the respondents' responses. Focus group interviews are exceptional moments in respondents' lives when a group of young people are gathered together to collect their responses to media texts, usually by strangers, usually in an artificial grouping. Research data elicited from letter-writing (discussed below) is derived from a formal literacy event. Such research occasions are not 'authentic' moments and arguably what they kindle is a default position for responding to texts in formal situations. I would suggest that the dominant formal set of literacy practices, marked by a high level of didacticism, coincides with the agendas of administrative research, namely to show high levels of learning having occurred. This will become apparent in the discussion of three studies undertaken in relation to teen media use.

Soul City: focus groups

The Soul City TV series, the product of the Soul City Institute for Health and Development is part of a multi-media initiative described on their website as a 'dynamic and innovative multi-media health promotion and social change project' (www.soulcity.org.za). While it conducts regular research (which I cannot attempt to do justice to here), my focus is limited to a single study carried out in 2002 into the television preferences of 16-24 year old South Africans (Soul City 2003). This was a relatively large undertaking that took the form of fourteen focus groups of about ten to twelve people each in seven of the nine provinces with the intention to establish viewing preferences among young black people. (Of these, seven were conducted in the more urbanised Gauteng but rural sites were explicitly included and thus a cross section of class and geography was factored in.) The group facilitators were identified by Soul City to undertake and record the focus groups, but instructed not to say they were conducting the research on behalf of Soul City, while Soul City analysed the data. This discussion seeks to highlight certain findings and identify research dilemmas that this form of research can confront.

First, the findings reported that there was a consistency in responses 'with very little new information coming in after the first 4 or 5 groups... despite the varied backgrounds and areas that young people live in' (Soul City 1993:2). That there should be such consistency in response across so many areas and among so many young people with diverse experiences is extraordinary. In the report this cultural homogenisation is accepted at face value rather than being problematised and reasons for this one-dimensionality sought. It arguably needs to be linked to biographical experiences embedded in what has been termed the ecological context (Bonfadelli 1993 in Strelitz and Boshoff 2007) and in this case it would include schooling and forms of learnt responses to texts.

Second, it was also found that the favourite programmes of the respondents were local dramas. The preference for local programming is interesting and echoes the findings by Straubhaar around media consumption practices in Latin America where he identified a desire for 'cultural proximity' by non-elite classes to consume local products that reinforce traditional identities (Straubhaar 1991:51).

Finally, the focus of the report tends to be on learning. The replies to the question about what respondents liked to watch foreground learning: 'all those groups talked about learning and liking those programmes that taught them something', and TV 'provides lessons in innumerable ways' (Soul City 1993:4). The participants answered that it was important to learn about AIDS and about South African cultures; they liked shows that were motivational or encouraged them to learn. These responses lead the research to conclude that 'enjoyment and appreciation of learning was an overwhelming response'.

The echo of schooled didactic textual practices rings loudly here. In a country where young people had a particular history of resistance and rebellion, these responses are indeed docile. What needs to be emphasised is that the responses

were elicited within the formality of the focus groups, convened as extra-ordinary moments in their lives. Moreover, the responses are schooled ones and are typical of the functionalist attitudes validated for reading texts, the almost sycophantic refrain of learning lessons and self-betterment. This doctrinaire approach with its due reverence to 'messages' does not accord with what young people actually do; the responses obscure their actual lived worlds described in the context presented earlier.

The compilers of the report failed to question the nature of the elicited responses and find them gratifying as indeed they are consistent with an agenda that wishes to foreground a thirst for learning and pro-social behaviour. What is of concern then is that these responses are taken at face value, rather than that such audience research question why young people respond so uniformly and probe what young people really do with the media they encounter.

Soul City: letters

Another audience study relied on letters written voluntarily by teens in response to the SoulBuddy TV series for its research data (Galaen 2003). While SoulBuddy, another element in the Soul City repertoire, targets 8-12 year old children, the letters received by the producers were mostly written by teenagers. This approach to obtaining audience responses was chosen on the grounds that they would be 'largely unsolicited and free of researcher bias' (Galaen 2003:5). In this audience study, the intention of this research (undertaken independently of Soul City) was to explore 'the largely uncharted reservoir of views, experiences and other information contained in the feedback from the audience'.

In all, the researcher examined eighty four responses received by 1 May 2003. The researcher hoped that these unsolicited letters received in response to SoulBuddy, whether by email or traditional hard copy, would provide qualitative data relating to behavioural and attitudinal change; he anticipated that he would access 'comments, suggestions, fan mail and the like' (Galaen 2003:6) which would contain 'indications of raised knowledge about the educational issues, changed attitudes or behaviour in connection with the issue', 'personal experiences' and 'expressly stated positive sensations towards the series'. In contrast it was found that the correspondents had more practical intentions than self-disclosure or relating their personal experiences. Requests for their educational materials and enquiries about participating in the series were the order of the day. The letters seeking acting roles tended to include a particular form of self-presentation, namely as a reliable and responsible person: 'I am working hard not to let you down. I am in the final class in this school and the schoolwork is demanding. ... I provide my results so that you can see how serious I work at school' (Galaen 2003:8). In contrast to the findings of the research above, few mentioned either that they had explicitly benefited from the series or learnt anything specifically. Nor did many (only a mere 8%) mention personal experiences as anticipated.

Again, it is to the sets of schooled practices that I turn. Within black language education in South Africa, letter writing is a genre that has always formed part of the syllabus and been rehearsed as a practical task to achieve an end. These exercises rehearse writing to potential patrons of some sort, and there is the assumed imperative to present a good image of a docile and worthy subject – as illustrated above. The form of self-disclosure and volunteering of positive responses anticipated by the researcher is one that is rehearsed in the more middle class English schools where a Personal Growth approach to language is nurtured. An awareness of the schooled textual practices would arguably lead to the different research decisions in order to achieve the research intentions.

Yizo Yizo

Common to both studies above was a concern with learning in some form. Going beyond a focus on learning, the very detailed evaluation of the first series of the *Yizo Yizo* series also takes on board considerations of setting agendas for debate and cultivating particular attitudes. I include some discussion of this study to indicate the range of administrative research undertaken.

If many of the 1980s township youth refused the education that was delivered them, little had changed as regards the conditions at township schools and student (and teacher) behaviours after 1994. An initiative that attempted to intervene positively, the television drama series *YizoYizo*, ‘set out to portray the crisis caused by malfunctioning of many township schools, and also to demonstrate ways in which the school community could set about dealing with these problems’ (Research Partnership 1999:15). Like other education entertainment series discussed, it expressly aimed to avoid didacticism. Instead, as one director articulated, its intentions included setting an agenda of what might be talked about: ‘We wanted to provide the terms of reference for a debate’ (1999:15) and to this end they used powerful narratives that highlighted aspects of the educational and social crises around township schools.

The detailed study undertaken by a consortium of four organisations identified as The Research Partnership set out to evaluate the reception of the first series screened from February to April 1999. It probed questions of popularity, new knowledge and messages, the kinds of debates it gave rise to, and effects among three groups, namely high school students, parents and teachers using quantitative and qualitative methods (including surveys in four of the nine provinces in South Africa, and focus groups conducted in two provinces, namely Gauteng and the Western Cape respectively). Here, my discussion is confined to the responses of the high school students only in line with the focus of this paper.

Yizo Yizo was remarkably popular with teen viewers: 88% per cent of the high school students surveyed ‘made sure they were home in time to watch it’ and 55% watched every episode. In seeking to establish why they watched, 45% attributed this to curiosity or the desire to know what happened next, while 35%

attributed their continued viewing to it being educational. However, in spite of the majority's interest in the unfolding narrative, the four main reasons given for *Yizo Yizo*'s attraction do not speak of pleasure or curiosity, but are expressed in terms of learning and teaching - again the schooled moral of the lesson approach!

It tells us what we should not do in schools	40%
It teaches the youth not to take drugs	34%
It shows parents what is happening in schools	30%
It shows us what is happening in schools	27% (1999:20)

It was then established (through responses of the research participants) that the series served successfully as a platform for debate, but interestingly, most discussion occurred between the young high school students informally at school rather than with their parents or teachers, indicating a strong generational divide particularly in relation to the sexually explicit scenes. When it came to key messages intended by the producers, the concern about corruption was recognised, but other key intended messages, namely around sexual harassment and rape, guns and violence, corporal punishment and student participation in school forums were not identified as such. Then, rather than the consistency of response noted in the Soul City research, variations in reception occurred both regionally and along gender lines.

While positive emotional responses were recounted, it is interesting that feelings of shock, discomfort and embarrassment were reported particularly in relation to the explicit sex scenes, with the rape scenes being discussed more between girls than boys. While the sex scenes rated highest in terms of scenes discussed and they promoted a degree of discomfort, the group discussion on the date rape scene indicates how the desired effect of the producers was not achieved. Rather the date rape was discussed in terms of whether the student was actually raped or whether she got what she deserved. Some of the responses indicated deeply held sexist and misogynistic attitudes held particularly by certain male respondents. The report suggests that these scenes 'fed into, rather than challenged, the pre-existing attitudes around this issue' (1993:51). It also acknowledges that learning and messages are complex processes:

The focus group discussions around the rape scene are the best illustration that television messages do not impact on viewers in isolation of the viewers' personal assumptions, stereotypes beliefs and myths. The viewers' response ... depended precisely on how the action on the screen intersected with their own feelings and other areas of their lives' (1993:53).

This focus on coercive sex relates to the production intention to cultivate particular forms of tolerance and empathy. In acknowledging that these scenes did not achieve these ends, the evaluation proposes that there may be strategies that

could have 'more effectively challenged these assumptions and reinforced a clearer and stronger message' (53) around the rape.

While I have only scratched the surface of this research, the inclusion of agenda setting and attitude cultivation are important elements in addition to questions of effects. In summary then, the evaluation acknowledges that young people's responses occurred at intellectual and emotional levels and it focussed on what they perceived as important messages. This administrative research is detailed and attempts to delve into ways that the series could be improved. While the target audience have been schooled in didactic responses, the probing of particular scenes enabled them to probe the reception of particular issues beyond those learnt responses as they moved away from a focus on lessons learnt.

Critical enquiries

Where research on teen consumption has been conducted beyond these administratively driven studies, it has engaged more with how young people engage with media and how it features in their lived worlds. They tend to be more confined, focussing on particular groups of teens in specific sites. I pick up on two instances of critical studies in two different sites to give a sense of the nature of some of the critical research conducted.

The school

School-based research⁹ among high school students is one form of research that is undertaken, perhaps because of ease of access to groups of teens. In one study that focussed on a single multi-racial school in Durban referred to as Fernwood, Dolby found that the kinds of engagement with global popular culture became significant sites of identity formation¹⁰. Taking the form of a participant-observation case study, this research was conducted in 1996, five years after the student enrolment had changed from one that was exclusively white to a multi-racial population, and two years after the first democratic elections in South Africa. Particular preferences in terms of music acted as signifiers of identity and these marked the divisions, in her account, along the lines of race. She argues that, 'With only vague (if any) memories of apartheid, and little knowledge of politics or history, taste becomes the basis for explaining racial dynamics' (1999: 305). Questions of taste, then, were used 'to actively produce and negotiate these identities' (1999: 297).

The conflict over the music for a fashion show serves as one example of where lines of race coincide with taste. The white students' insistence on exclusively techno music, rather than pop and rap as well, is seen to be integrally linked to their sense of global whiteness rather than a South African whiteness. The racial fracturing identified in terms of music taste is repeated in terms of choice and access to lei-

sure spaces. The same group attempted to find a venue for an 'afterparty' that suited all groups. In the first place the house of one white girl was unacceptable to the black students and the white students felt unsafe in the black areas. Then, when they attempted to choose a club as the venue instead, the clubs that played 'white' music were ruled out by black students, as were the Indian or coloured clubs by white students. The result? 'Unity, even a patched together, unstable, rocky unity eludes them' (1999:299) and there was no afterparty that year.

Commonalities in music taste among black and coloured¹¹ students were seen as bridging differences among the cohort in the year where white children were more numerous. However, the demographics at the school shifted and the number of black students increased. Dolby describes a shift in racial alliances a year later among the more junior classes as coloured students find common ground with white students through rave music, a genre previously constituted as white, and white students begin to go to coloured clubs where there are rave sessions. Central to this argument is how popular culture becomes constitutive of identity positions, and how shifts in taste are dynamic, remixing and rematching alliances and friendships.

The 'Zone'

The transfiguring of racial identities is the focus of Nuttall's (2004) study. This reassembling of identities that has occurred in other global cities 'like New York, Shanghai, or San Salvador' (2004:431) is evident in Johannesburg, colloquially and affectionately referred to as 'Jozi,' since 1994 (the year of political transformation in South Africa) and Nuttall considers the specific concrete form these processes have taken. Black middle-class youth, both those from the townships and those who go to Model C schools (formerly white, better resourced and with an ethos of global mobility) are doing things differently from before in Jozi and this is exemplified in the area known as the 'Zone' in the trendy, relatively upmarket Rosebank suburb. This engagement with a new Y culture is marked by visual forms and a 'stylization of the self'. Central in its construction are *Y* magazine and the radio station, *YFM*, which propose a process of individuation, of self-transformative practices within a specific, yet shifting, set of stylistics. As in other research, race is at issue here and while the accessorisation and styling inscribe a raced identity, the stylising itself slips and mutates; neither blackness nor whiteness are fixed markers. Young people as exemplified in the Zone ('one of the most visible places in South Africa for experimentation with new media cultures and various practices of stylizing the self' (Nuttall 2004:435)) deploy these cultural and media markers and indicate the preoccupations of the increasing numbers of more middle-class young black people in 'Jozi'.

While Y-culture – 'Y for youth, for why, and for the y-generation' – sets itself apart from what has gone before, namely the x-generation of the apartheid era, it retains stylistic elements that relate to township (location) life to recreate "loxion"

culture. This performance of township culture does not constitute stagnation but rather it becomes Afro-chic. While the fashion might incorporate a retro township feel, there is little nostalgia for the political commitment that was associated with that past. Rather the aspirational focus is on an identity and a future marked by material signifiers.

Similarly, in this Zone, global media are reformulated with local inflection. Again in terms of music the particularity of the Y-culture is marked. Rather than merely adopting black American culture, Nuttall describes a cut and paste approach to hip hop, which is reworked with African forms and beats as 'kwaito'. Rather than references to slavery, they turn to apartheid as sources of identity, but at the same time they supersede resistance politics.

This research complexly probes significant global/local intersections of youth culture and the fusion of symbolic forms and consumption. It investigates what young people do with media and popular culture and how forms of making of selves are constantly changing in ways, according to Nuttall, scholars do not often attend to. She describes Y culture as 'malleable, multivocal, and dialogical through the power of a transnational imagination that is irreducibly located in the semiotic landscape of South Africa' (2004:450).

This account stands almost as an antidote to the critical work on gender and raced identities of young people, for here the hedonism of Y-culture is constituted as potentially transformative and creative. What it omits is Y-culture's refusal of 'the agony of the social' (Nuttall 2004: 451), the poverty, HIV/Aids pandemic and violence of South African society discussed in the introduction, although this omission is noted. Rather, in remarkably celebratory tones Nuttall seeks here to foreground this zone and the self as works of art poised between historical lifestyles and aspirations for the future.

Conclusion

To give some sense of the research into teen media consumption, a distinction has been made between administrative and critical research. The forms they have taken contrast strongly and funding for broad critical studies is scarce in contrast to the administrative research projects.

The administrative research tends to evaluate education entertainment in relation to learning and social change. In spite of the amount of research that evaluates education entertainment, these very campaigns often stand charged with failing to change behaviours and stem the tide, for example, of AIDS. While criticism is important and often well-founded, the danger of attributing too much direct power to the media alone is unhelpful and needs to be contextualised in relation to other social formations too. At the same time, critique such as that by Swanepoel introduces a cautionary note. He questions the 'window-dressing of current practices as "state of the art", as being heavily evidence-based and based on international

and local best-practice models of behaviour change' (2005:89). He points to ethical issues both in design and the presentation of the results. In terms of the results, I have noted how research methods can evoke schooled literacy practices rather than the assumed spontaneous and 'authentic' responses assumed by some researchers. I would go as far as to suggest that such research proves nothing more than that the respondents were schooled in a particular way.

Significantly, the critical research I have referred to probes ways in which the media are deployed by teenagers to constitute and enact their identities and insists on the fluid nature of this. While it is markedly different in intention from the administrative research agendas and approaches, arguably, the finely grained analyses of media engagements in such localised sites are not generalisable, it proposes nuanced insights of youth engagements that might usefully inform the education entertainment initiatives.

And finally, I would emphasise the purpose of an overview of this kind is to identify limitations of existing research, for if they are made explicit, future research might be able to factor them in to hone an approach that enables richer understandings.

Notes

1. At this point, youth was defined to include those who had been deprived of a meaningful chance to be educated both as a consequence of political resistance and inferior educational provision. Thus, about 11 million young people between 16 and 30 were included in the category of youth (Everatt 2000). The African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) is a misnomer in that its leaders include political actors in their forties. In this paper 'youth' signifies 'not adult' and thus refers to teens or pre-adulthood.
2. The obsession with brands and consumerism among teenagers might be an issue for concern, but it is unsurprising considering how the socialist impetus of the democratic struggle has given way to free market capitalism with its premise of increased consumption.
3. See Mamdani (1996) for a discussion of how the colonial legacy of constituting indigenous people as tribal or ethnic subjects rather than as engaged citizens continues, particularly in rural areas.
4. For example, rural sites have "much earlier starting ages for sexual intercourse with as many as ... 35% in the [Eastern Cape] site reporting having had sex by the age of 13 years" (SSMEP, 2000:27), frequently with significantly older partners, thereby introducing the possibility of sexual coercion.
5. In spite of curricular policy changes in South Africa, the actual classroom practices are deeply resistant to change and require long term and careful intervention.
6. Thus, race (white) and class (middle), in addition to language (English, but also Afrikaans) as definers of access.
7. See Prinsloo (2002, 2006) for more detailed accounts of how different forms of literacy have been schooled along the lines of (white) citizens and (black) subjects.
8. See Smythe and Van Dinh's discussion (1983) on the perceived split within communication and media studies between administrative and critical research, a distinction made by Lazerfeld in 1941.
9. More reception analysis has focused on students in tertiary education. See, for example, Strelitz (2002) and Boshoff (2006).
10. The race categories of the apartheid regime continue to be identity markers as this study shows.

11. Within the apartheid race categories, 'coloured', while often described as of mixed blood, is actually a bit of a hold-all category and denotes those who were categorised as neither as black, Indian, white, etc.

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Brand and Advertising Culture

Fun Food from Ritual to Performance

An Anthropological and Communicational Analysis of Kinder Sorpresa Commercials

Simona De Iulio & Nicoletta Diasio¹

Various studies on the contents of television advertising aimed at children have highlighted the tendency to associate food with entertainment and play (Young 1990, Dagnaud 2003, Becker et al. 2005). In parallel, it seems that fun food products are increasingly successful among young consumers, but despite their popularity, they have not attracted particular attention among the scholars of the anthropology of consumption or communication sciences. In our paper we seek to combine these two disciplines and their methodologies and conceptual schemes. The aim is to examine the progressive spread of fun foods from the festive domain to more everyday contexts; to formulate hypotheses for the reasons for their success; and to analyse a significant case: the television advertising campaigns for the Kinder Sorpresa product of the Italian multinational Ferrero. By 'fun food' we mean the kind of food that can be handled by children in a ludic context (coloured sweets or toffees, edible figures); the foodstuffs sold together with gadgets, games, figurines; or again products whose packing (unless otherwise specified) can be used for play, either directly (e.g. packaging which can be cut up to make a mask) or indirectly by evoking a fantasy world or association with 'traditional' toy brands.

At the origins of fun foods: the edible figure between ritual and play

Fun food products are not a recent invention. The association between play and food has ancient origins in ritual and festive practices centred on childhood. Connoted in social representations by a triple 'immaturity' – physical, psychological-moral, legal – the child has often evoked a dangerous condition of liminality. In many cultures, this openness to 'other' dimensions' has given rise

to a specific social position shared by those on the margins of society – women, foreigners, poor. The social marginality of children, emphasised by classical anthropologists like Mauss and Hubert or Lévi-Strauss, by historians like Grottanelli, Benvenuti, Papi, Ariès, or sociologists like Gavarini, turns them into the main actors in celebrations, rituals or ceremonies centred on the concept of passage or transition. For example, children are at the centre of the cycle of festivals that, during the winter solstice, celebrate the return of the dead to the earth, solidarity or antagonism between generations, the beginning and end of a historical cycle (Halloween, All Souls, Christmas, New Year). But they are also protagonists of rituals that celebrate life and the springtime renewal of nature (Easter).

These festive contexts are characterized by a 'renewal of time', by the uniting of the community around its fundamental values, but also by the profusion of food, the distribution of gifts to children, and often the presence of edible figures. Numerous devotional sweetmeats characterize the Festival of the Dead in Sicily (Buttitta, 1971): *pupilde di pane*, *favette di zucchero*, *ossa dei morti*, *frutta martorana*, and especially *pupi ri zuccuru*, also called *pupi a cena* or *pupaccena* sugar statuettes representing personages from folklore and tradition (paladins, the bride and groom, but also characters from Pokemon or Disney) given to children on the night between the 1st and 2nd of November. Epiphany, too, is in Italy an occasion to circulate an edible world in miniature: telephones filled with sweets, chocolate or chewing-gum coins or cigarettes, *carbone dolce* (sweet coal), chewy sweets representing cartoon characters. Not to mention, Easter eggs with their surprises, or the candy rabbits, chicks, eggs and fish which French and German adults hide in the garden or the apartment for their children to hunt.

But why are edible figures so crucial to festivals of time renewal centred on the relationship between life and death, between adults and children?

Firstly, chewing and playing involve the 'ritual destruction' constitutive of the ritual itself. Benveniste points out that the root of the word 'ritual' is the Indo-European *art*, which relates to the concept of order (1969: 99). A ritual is therefore, a way to periodically restore order to a world threatened by dissolution and by the undifferentiated. Sugar people and chocolate animals make up a parallel universe which, like our world, is menaced by the ephemeral and the informal. If the structure of ritual is based on a process of distinction and differentiation, imposing order where reality is threatened by disorder and formlessness (Douglas, 1971), the consumption of figurines alludes to a fundamental phase of the festival: that of the relaxing of rules, destruction, and promiscuity. When fun foods are given, exchanged and consumed, they permit allusive interplay between the destructibility of forms and the indestructibility of a universe which contains all possible forms (Diasio, 2001). Nibbled, gnawed and munched, edible figurines lend themselves to manipulation of the world. Writing about the Calabrian *mostacciolo*, the anthropologist Francesco Faeta describes how, after the biscuit has been skilfully confected, its fate is to "broken, changed, nibbled: an eagle, irrelevant to a playful setting, is fashioned into a dove (by shortening its wings), a mule, a horse; a camel may lose its hump, a cow may acquire two heads. The

fragility of the biscuit lends itself to the game of disfigurement and refigurement (...) Taking possession of the world works through the figure's assumption, its entification, but above all its negation" (Faeta, 2000: 211).

But there is a second reason why the consumption of edible figures, and the mixing of food and play in the broad sense, is a central component of the economy of the sacred. There is a dual relation of correspondence and opposition between ritual and play: both are tied to the calendar and to time, but they are tied to it in opposite ways: ritual fixes and structures the calendar; play conversely alters and destroys it (Levi-Strauss, 1962; Agamben, 1978). For this reason, play is a constitutive part of many rituals which 'hold time together' – synchrony, diachrony, structure, and the event – and where children are the protagonists. As Agamben stresses, children are the 'scavengers' of humanity: they are able to take junk or everyday objects and transform them into playthings which concentrate historically. Play enacts the temporal essence of things and behaviours. One mode to historicize the existent is to miniaturize it. A miniature is a way to appropriate the object in its totality before comprehending its parts, and a way to understand its historical, provisional and evenemential nature. Miniaturizing, like playing or collecting, makes human temporality tangible.

Edible figures, sweet and brittle miniaturizations of the world, are ways to play with history, to manipulate time, and to blend play and ritual together: they comprise event and structure, effervescence and restoration of order. For this reason, they are essential ingredients of numerous celebrations festivals: it is through them that the centrality of the child as guarantor of time is enacted. In the same way, fun food products occupy a boundary zone where festive and quotidian forms of consumption meet and merge.

The 'quotidian feast'

Fun food therefore, belongs to a tradition in which food and play participate in ritual reinvention of the world. However, other factors too are responsible for its diffusion. Products which used to be eaten only during festivities are now part of everyday consumption. The history of the democratization of sugar exemplifies the process by which certain foodstuffs have been freed from their solely ceremonial use (Mintz, 1985). The growing importance of fun food should also be viewed in light of the rearticulation of time typical of postmodern societies: the boundary between celebratory times and routine times grows increasingly indistinct, and so does the strict correspondence between activities and times of day, or between private domestic time and public work time. Consider the increasingly close interweaving between the ludic and educational dimensions in schools, or the importance of sensationalizing the everyday in television reality shows, which by conferring unique value on the routines of ordinary people stage them in an 'exceptional' space-time. Fun foods therefore, seem to arise from this con-

fusion of times, in a border zone among celebration, the everyday, and playfulness. Moreover, they conjugate industrialization and standardization with the growing importance of play in mass society (see Badot, 2002), in both infant behaviour and adult modes of thought and sociality: a fatal attraction between production and pleasure, therefore.

From the point of children, one of the salient aspects of this interweaving between food and play is the action of nibbling. The latter enables children to conquer their autonomy and experience it, express corporeal freedom, explore new objects, times and places, and tame the world by tasting it in all its flavours. Anthropological studies in France and Italy have shown that hand and mouth are allied in the search for taste: children see simultaneous eating and playing as a way to 'multiply pleasure'. One reason for McDonald's success is the opportunity it provides for eating and playing in the same place, where toys merge into foodstuffs from the point of view of touch, colour, packaging, opening and manipulating the hamburger, and playing with the boxes as in a construction game (Gacem, 1999; Diasio, 2004). This ludic manipulation of food requires dexterity and physical coordination. Through these activities, children develop techniques of Self which individualize the body as an organism endowed with skills: multiple physical, relational, oral, psychological skills which constitute children as individuals (Warnier, 1999). In the same way as a miniature, fun food – which is often also miniature – enables the world to be appropriated, and is a challenge to reveal one's secret life. It involves a profoundly cultural activity, because "there are no miniatures in nature; the miniature is a cultural product, the product of the eye performing certain operations, manipulating, and attending in certain ways to, the physical world. (...) The miniature assumes an anthropocentric universe for its absolute sense of scale" (Stewart, 1998: 55-56). The scavengers of play reinforce these hypotheses. By situating itself on the axis of play, not of the game, fun food permits great creativity in the inventing of situations and characters. Using the categories proposed by Caillois (1967) to classify games, it is mimicry – the game of imitation and invention – that predominates: a dramatization of behaviours which institutes the 'as if' or 'in the manner of' that form a central dimension of the periodic renewal of the world (Corbeau, 2004).

There are consequently numerous factors responsible for the success of fun food with children and adults. Fun food is inscribed in the tradition of ritualized consumption of confectionary products. It enables certain rules of etiquette to be circumvented – 'don't play with your food!', 'first you eat, then you play'. It enables the rearticulation of space and time, embedding ludic, educational, motorial and alimentary activities within them. It makes other play-like practices, such as miniaturizing and collecting, possible; it is a variation on games involving food typical of childhood; and it enhances the child's complex sensoriality, thus integrating different skills and pleasures. Finally, fun food products reassure adults because they represent a moderate subversion of everyday dietary rules. Their emphasis on entertainment more than pleasure dispels the impression of transgression that they may evoke. The festive component becomes unexceptional

and banal, so that although it may be a festival, it is only an everyday one, a transgression under control, such the paradox of a “domestic Carnaval”.

Ferrero’s ‘Kinder Sorpresa’

The analysis of Ferrero Kinder Sorpresa’s communication campaigns shows the shift from the ritual uses of edible figures to the daily, ludic ones. The Ferrero company was founded in the town of Alba, in the Italian province of Turin, in 1946, following incorporation of a small pastry shop. In 1968 Ferrero, which had already begun its international expansion, launched its *Kinder Cioccolato* chocolate bar, which it marketed to young consumers. The brand was rapidly extended to comprise an entire line of sweets targeted to children: the Kinder Division. One reads as follows on the Ferrero website, “the Kinder Division was created in 1974 as part of a business strategy designed to satisfy children’s needs with a wide range of healthy and genuine products covering the main phases of the day and of the year”.

In 1974, in order to employ machinery used for the manufacture of Easter eggs and which then remained idle, Ferrero launched *Kinder Sorpresa*, a chocolate egg containing a small toy in assembly kit form. The characteristics of this product encompasses many of the features discussed above: the extension of festive behaviour in ‘reduced format’ to other periods of the year; a compromise between adults and children consisting in the nutritional value of the milk and the pleasure of the free gift; the collectability of the gifts in the egg; the do-it-yourself assembly of the toy, which was both a challenge for the child and an opportunity for adult and child to interact in manipulating the object.

The following discussion is based on the analysis of a sampling of 21 television commercials for Kinder Sorpresa produced by the in-house agency Ferrero Pubbliregia and broadcasted in Italy between 1975 and 2006. The commercials were transcribed and examined by both of us according to a descriptive and interpretative grid designed to point out the evolution of the discourse strategies, the various forms of product presentation, as well as, the transformation of characters, setting, social milieu and extra-textual references².

This diachronic study of the television campaigns for Kinder Sorpresa evinces significant changes in the marketing of Kinder Sorpresa, in the targeting and positioning of the product as well as in the persuasion strategies and the tone of the messages. These changes have both reflected and accelerated the evolution in the role of children as consumers and the growing importance over the years of the interaction between nutrition and play in childhood habits and practices. It is possible to trace the changes of the Kinder Sorpresa advertising strategies through four different phases.

"For Mums it's loads of good milk,
for kids it's great chocolate" (1975-1985)

**Kinder Sorpresa
commercial - 1975**



Between the mid-1970s and the mid-1980s, Kinder Sorpresa was marketed as a *"reward for being good"* (for children) and *"a happy smile"* (for mothers). At the time, Kinder Sorpresa was the token in a trade-off game: a small gift made by the mother in reward for a minor accomplishment (a drawing, a good mark at school, help with a domestic chore, a good deed) or as a consolation for a minor disappointment (a lost ball, defeat in a game); a gift made in exchange for the pleasure of seeing the children happy (*"It's nice to see them happy, to watch them play"*) and their affection.

In the early commercials (1975, 1976), when Kinder Sorpresa was being launched on the market, the product was a novelty and therefore a surprise in itself for mothers (*"Autumn arrives with a surprise: Kinder Sorpresa"*) and for children (receiving one of the eggs was an unforeseen event). The launching of Kinder Sorpresa was tied in with the argumentative-informative discourse strategies for Kinder Cioccolato which were well-known to television viewers. The presence of an expert – an elderly bespectacled man – gave the message a serious and reassuring tone intended to gain the trust of mothers, the main targets of the commercial. Adopting the principles of hard-sell advertising based on a motivational approach and the copy-strategy model, Kinder chocolate was presented as the response to a dietary need (*"Our kids need lots of good milk"*). The

expert's voiceover suggested that Kinder chocolate met the needs of both mother and child because it contained an abundance of milk but only little good-quality cocoa (*"for Mums it's loads of good milk, for kids it's great chocolate"*): a compromise synthesized in the neologism *Ciocolatte* printed on the Kinder Sorpresa wrapper³. The reassurance was reinforced by the end-comment: *"From Ferrero Kinder Division. Specialized foods for children"*. At this time, therefore, Ferrero used a strategy employed by other manufacturers of foodstuffs for children: present one's products as specifically created for children; a message which helped consolidate the perception of Kinder Sorpresa as healthy, and affirmed the quality of the Kinder Ferrero product line.

In those years, while the expert's and the mother's off-screen and on-screen voices itemized the ingredients, few details were given of the surprise contained in the egg, it being only described as *"always cool and different"*. The video track depicted the child's pleasure in biting into the chocolate, finding the surprise, assembling the toy, and playing with it. This multiple pleasure was synthesised in the pay-off shots of the commercials broadcast after 1980: a collage of the actions involved in manipulating the product – hands lifting, lowering, unwrapping, detaching, eating chocolate, assembling, miming.

"Just a little treat" (1985-1990)



In the second half of the 1980s, Kinder Sorpresa was marketed as a “*desire*”. The commercials broadcast in 1985 showed children trying to get hold of Kinder eggs surreptitiously, the implication being that the product was somewhat exceptional and inaccessible. But the mother, delighted at the children’s enthusiasm, willingly handed out the eggs: Kinder Sorpresa was a “*great little pleasure*”. Unlike previous commercials in which the mother gave the egg without being requested to, in this phase, the child asked (“*Mummy, Mummy, will you bring me something?*”), but the prescription was generic: “*I’d like something new, a game and some chocolate*”. The commercials of these years were constructed on the problem/solution discourse pattern. The problem for the mother was “*granting three wishes*” without overdoing it (“*just a little treat*”). The solution was available in a supermarket: Kinder Sorpresa was presented as “*a good idea*” to make kids happy. Neither a reward nor a consolation, therefore, but “*a little treat*” for the child; a small gratification satisfying three desires: for novelty, entertainment (from the toy in the egg) and pleasure (from the chocolate).

Responding children’s needs (early 1990’s)

The commercials broadcast during the 1990s began to depict Kinder Sorpresa as a stimulus useful for child development. In these campaigns, the children explicitly publicized the product (“*Mamma, mamma! Kinder Sorpresa!*”), while the

**Kinder Sorpresa
commercial - 1994**



mother justified their demands and the purchase of the product. The children's pleas were not just capricious: they expressed a need to discover, to play and to grow. The mother therefore, "*never let them go without*" Kinder Sorpresa – not because she had given in to pestering, but because she was responding to her children's need. Kinder Sorpresa was described as a product of prime necessity, to be purchased daily ("*Because they need it every day*"), and in fact, it was bought together with bread and stored with the cereals. Besides extolling the product's nutritional qualities ("*more milk, less cocoa*"), as usual, the off-screen voice of male authority added a further argument: Kinder Sorpresa fulfilled ludic-educational functions because "*it stimulates the imagination and the desire to learn*". The video track showed the toy taking shape in a child's hands: the child was its creator. During the 1990s, the child's discourse was increasingly psychologized, while the boundary between play and education attenuated.

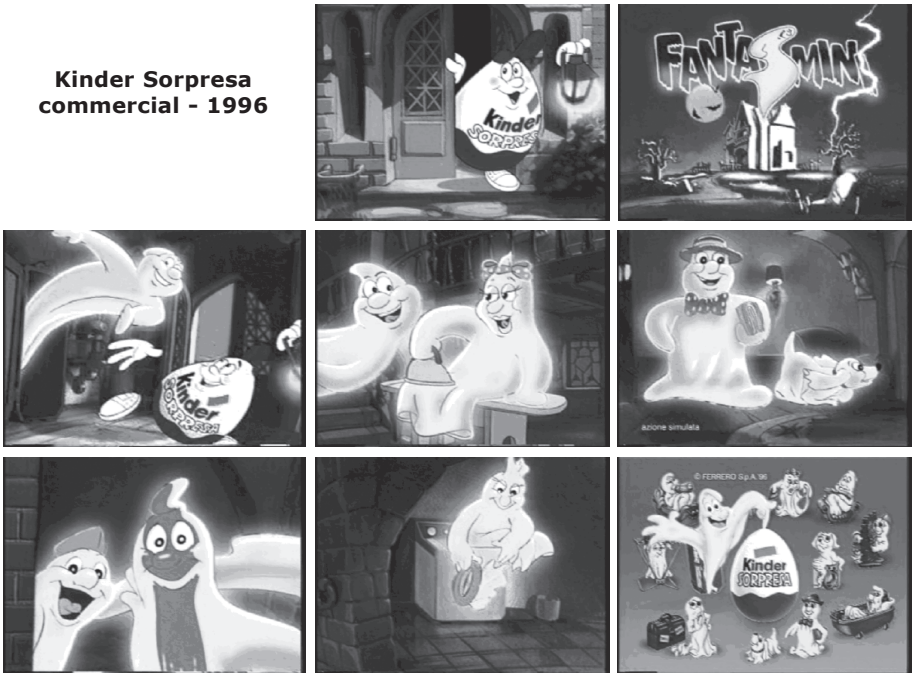
In the early 1990s, two new elements were added to the sales pitch: consuming together with a friend, and collecting the surprise gifts. The video track showed the child's pleasure on showing his collection of Kinder toys, suggesting that Kinder Sorpresa satisfied further needs: that of socialization and acceptance/esteem within the peer group. The 'amusements' of taste and play – apparently ephemeral – sprang instead from real developmental needs.

During the 1990s, television advertising for Kinder Sorpresa began to address children more explicitly and directly with spot-cartoons designed solely to promote the collectable surprise gifts in the egg. These spot-cartoons made no reference to the nutritional properties of the product. Their sole protagonists were the gift toys. These, however, were no longer generic plastic figurines, but now characters with names and specific personalities. The purpose of the mascot-eggs was to present the surprise-characters (Happy Hippos, Sharkybabas, Spookies, among others): the protagonists of amusing stories, these were small hand-painted plastic figurines contained not in every egg, but, as the commercials stated, in "*one egg in every five*". The Kinder Sorpresa advertisers thus adopted the characterization and personification strategies on which toy advertisements had relied for a number of decades (Kline 1993). Each series of surprise gifts was set in relation to a desired universe of experiences and emotions.

The emotional phase (from the late 1990's to the present)

In the late 1990s, Ferrero brand promotion acquired marked emotional connotations "moving beyond the intrinsic qualitative and functional aspects of the brands because these were by now consolidated" (Merlassino, Castiglia, Bus 2004). In a commercial broadcast in 1998, for example, a mother takes her shopping out of a basket and hands two eggs to her eldest child, telling him to give one of them to his little sister. The gift of an egg was therefore depicted as an event unrelated to celebrations and rites of passage: neither a reward nor a consolation, nor the response to a request, but a routine act. The emotional component (affectionate

**Kinder Sorpresa
commercial - 1996**



**Kinder Sorpresa
commercial - 2005**



play between siblings, innocence, the amusement of the game, the pleasure of tasting the chocolate, emphasised by the images and by the boy's mouth movements) took over from the rational-argumentative component. This being restricted to a brief male voiceover reciting the usual formula of discovery+game+Kinder chocolate with more milk and less cocoa. Parallely, the children acquired more space: they were the protagonists of the commercial while the mother remained in the background. The purpose of the egg was no longer to be eaten, but to circulate, to mediate relations.

The 2000 Kinder television advertising campaign, unlike all previous ones, told no story. A young smiling mother threw an egg; a child's hand caught it. At which point the storyline halted. The video track then consisted of scenic fragments in which children shook the egg close to their ears, opened it, assembled the toy, played with it, bit the chocolate, and chewed. The fragmentation of the sequence of images was accentuated by the speech. No longer was there dialogue or a voiceover/authority explaining the reason why. Speech consisted of juxtaposed verbs in the infinitive uttered off-screen: each of them by a different child and mother. The first three children-uttered verbs (*"Desire! Discover! Imagine!"*) referred to abstractive and imaginative capacities; the other three (*"Invent! Construct! Play!"*) to operative capacities. The mother instead evoked togetherness/sharing (sociality) and eating/growing (development, alimentation). Once again salient, therefore, albeit more elliptically and implicitly (at least in speech) were the ludic-educational and nutritional qualities of Kinder Sorpresa. But the key theme of the commercial was happiness, the joy given by multiple pleasures, this being suggested by the ever-present smiles of the children and the mothers, the end comment, and especially the jingle linking the fragmented sequence of images.

Kinder Sorpresa commercials aired since 2005 have focused exclusively on emotion: the wonder that something unexpected evokes in children. Images and a song by Giuseppe Povia illustrate the commonplace notion that it takes very little to surprise children and make them happy. The song says that children can be astonished, enthused, enchanted by things that adults consider banal. For children, *"Everything is new, everything is a surprise"*. Children feel wonder and astonishment at the small Kinder Sorpresa gifts. The staging of small innocent gestures and spontaneous expressions of children caught in the immediacy of their emotions is obviously intended to arouse tenderness and nostalgia in adult viewers. A series of formal strategies (choice of child actors with appealing, expressive but commonplace Italian faces ; close-ups; shots of spontaneous gestures and expressions; camera angles with the children's line of sight) contrive to give an impression of authenticity.

Here, too, no story is told. Rather, the viewer sees a fragmentary collage of images of the product being consumed (the egg shaken close to the ear, play with the surprise gift, a mouth biting into the chocolate) accompanied by typical childhood gestures (fingers in the mouth, rolling on the ground, finger writing in the air, walking fingers, chewing with the mouth open, playing peek-a-boo, hide-and-seek). The advertising discourse addressed to the mother then shifts from

regimentation and education, to acceptance, to the point of mythicizing infant behaviour. Salient in the most recent Kinder Sorpresa campaigns has been a representation of childhood as an age of innocence to be protected, a product of twentieth-century European culture (James and Prout, 1997).

Conclusions

Analysis of the Kinder Sorpresa television campaigns produced by Ferrero Pubbliregia and broadcasted in Italy from 1975 to 2006 reveals a mix of continuity and change.

Scene and chief characters remain unchanged: most of the commercials are set in a domestic context and present a *mise-en-scène* of family roles centred on mother-child relationship. This relation portrays an idealized model of the well-off, nuclear family, which mirrors cultural values and social status' hierarchy of the European middle class. For instance, since the middle of the 1970s, Kinder Sorpresa commercials assigned tasks and roles according to traditional gender differences. In the first campaign (1975), the masculine character portrayed by an expert (a paediatrician or a nutritionist) gives the viewers "scientific information", while the feminine character is a mother lavishing care and affection on her male son. Masculine "scientific" authority and competence face feminine intuition and solicitude. The "Mother" is at the core of the campaigns between 1975 and 2005: women are always presented doing domestic tasks, cooking, buying or storing the food. Since the end of the 1970s, the masculine character of the expert has not been present on the video track of Kinder Sorpresa commercials. However, the masculine voice-over has continued to play the role of the authority explaining the qualities of the product and guiding the viewers' interpretation of the commercial. Fathers are absent with the exception of a 1989 commercial: a boy calls his father at work asking for some chocolate and a surprise. The father will buy Kinder Surprise in a service station before returning home. Therefore, the distinction between public and domestic spaces strictly follows the separation between masculine and feminine activities. The same distribution of tasks characterizes the "fantasy" campaigns centred on Squalibabà (1995) or Ghosts (1996 and 2001): the female ghosts iron and switch on the washing machine or the vacuum cleaner. This hierarchical allocation of gender roles is also underlying the siblings' relationships: in most of the campaigns, the mother's privileged interlocutor is the son. The character of the daughter seldom appears, furthermore, the girls are always younger and weaker than their brothers, from whom they need protection or their abilities. Moreover, girls are often filmed in the background or come on the scene in a second moment of the movie. The only exception to this, is the 1980 campaign: a girl engages in both masculine and feminine activities, but the purpose to go beyond a traditional model is obtained by an effacement of gender qualities. In fact, it is quite difficult to un-

derstand, at first glance, whether the child is a girl or a boy: hair, clothes, poses are clearly inspired by an androgynous style. In 2003, an elder daughter is for the first time a chief character of the spot; in the 2005 campaign no differences between girls and boys activities or ages are performed, but these spots clearly make an attempt to essentialize childhood by playing a “degré zéro” of children’s attitudes and practices. From an anthropological point of view, we can argue therefore, that feminine characters are mostly in a cadet position within the social system classifications.

If the “Family” remains the reference of Kinder commercials, we can point out a significant change in targeting and in argumentative strategies. In fact, the first commercials target almost exclusively mothers through an informative discourse centred on the rational explanation of the “reasons-why” and, most of all, on the nutritional qualities of the product. In the late 1990’s, there is a turn in the argumentative strategy: the statements on the ingredients disappear whereas the emotional rhetoric and the emphasis on ludic aspects of the surprise progressively prevail. Commercials for Kinder Sorpresa begin to target parents and children, and this double target implies new persuasion strategies, which work in parallel: the matter is to convince and reassure mothers and to tempt kids. The double “readability” of the commercials plays on a skilful mix of elements from the Italian festive tradition and features typical of the contemporary consumption society.

Fun food has been indeed gradually removed from the festive sphere and incorporated into the everyday diet of children, first as a reward or a consolation, and then as an educational object. The object is part of that appropriation and reinvention of the existent, which is a fundamental feature of both play and ritual. In this transition, the alimentary component diminishes until it almost disappears. Not only are children increasingly the protagonists of commercials, but also adults themselves adopt childish behaviour or value childish speech as authentic. The evolution of the Kinder Sorpresa campaigns therefore, exhibits the transformation of parental functions and educational models that Mead described in 1972: the evolution from a pre-figurative model in which tradition and adults are the driving forces, to a co-figurative – in which education is between peers – and post-figurative model in which, to use the poet Wordsworth’s expression, “the Child is the Father of the Man”. This shift is marked by the transformation of the image of the child. The calm, well-behaved, tidy child, quite an adult in miniature who characterizes the first commercials, is replaced by lively kids who seem to behave spontaneously, eat with finger, want to explore the world and are all the time interconnected with peers. The new representation of the child modifies also the relation between his body and the product. Until the end of the 1990’s, the chocolate egg is presented still packed, unbroken, except when the child shows the “surprise”, whereas in the last commercials it is embodied by means of childish practices. The chocolate melt on mouth, on fingers, it becomes a part of the kid’s bodily scheme and contributes thus to the construction of self. This change is consistent with the increasing value of the childhood *per se* in Western societies, even when it risks to be one of the contemporary figures of salvation (Gavarini, 2004).

This sacralization of the child, present in many traditional rituals in which children are the holders of truth and a counter-power that temporarily counteracts the strength of structure and tradition (Turner, 1969), has arisen with features of its own in contemporary society. This has accompanied an evolution of the ritual into 'performance', as shown by Turner's studies on the ritual and spectacle in consumption societies (Turner, 1982). "Performance comprises the impulse to be serious and to distract; to produce meaning and to pass the time; to display a symbolic activity that actualizes the 'here and now' and to exist only 'here and now'; to be oneself and to play at being someone else; to be in trance and conscious; to obey results and to digress; to concentrate action on and for a select group which shares a hermetic language and to disseminate to the broadest possible public of outsiders who purchase a ticket" (Schechner, 1977, quoted by Piette, 1992: 177). This paradoxical logic, this interweaving of times, goals, and themes characteristic of secular rituals, is apparent in the evolution of the image of the Kinder egg from a food product used to reward children to a multifunctional product: a concentration of activities (eating, playing, discovering, experimenting, exchanging, mediating relations), a mediator of relations with adults, between siblings, among peers, and a support for the interweaving of diverse times typical of postmodern society.

It seems that this paradoxical logic has been skilfully used in the Kinder campaigns. Unlike other ludo-alimentary products, the 'Kinder egg' can draw on an important background of tradition. Besides the paschal reference of 'egg', the Kinder Surprise, like the miniaturization of the gifts, is a concentrate of historicity: for example, in its collectable objects, or in its rootedness in Italian cinema and popular music. The slogan '*milk, love and fantasy*' of the Kinder Happy Hippo campaign of 1996 evokes a popular Italian movie, *Pane, amore e fantasia*, directed in 1953 by Luigi Comencini, with Vittorio De Sica and the "débutant", at that time, Gina Lollobrigida. At the same way the music by Carosone in 1995 and from *La Traviata* in 1996, but also the song written by Povia for the 2005 campaign (*Quando i bambini fanno oooh*), with its nostalgia for the enchantment of childhood, create a sound background targeted toward the parents: an actualization of the past, in which adult time rediscovers the time of childhood. The aim of 'getting parents and kids together', the company's leitmotif since 1975, is thus synthesised at the formal level into the encounter between these multiple worlds and ensures the success of 'invention of a tradition'.

Notes

1. The Ferrero Group has given authorization to publish the article and the images of Kinder Surprise commercials.
2. See Appendice.
3. The emphasis accorded to the milk does not correspond to the real consumption of the fresh product. As a former study on children's food practices in Rome pointed out (N. Diasio, 2002), we can stress an important range between words and practical choices: while parents statements underline the importance of milk in some industrial products as Kinder, children's consumption of this "precious" drink is limited to breakfast only.

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Appendice

Analysis grid

Commercial no

Year:

1. Duration in seconds:

2. Video track

Number of shots:

Pace:

Description of shots:

Type of images:

Graphical features:

3. Audio track

Speech transcription (monologues, dialogues, voice overs)

Music, jingles, background noises :

4. Pack-shot/End comment:

5. Product

Present? In use?

How is the product presented? [relationship between chocolate and the surprise and between eating and playing]

Information on ingredients

6. Characters

Child

Mother

Father

Grandparents

Imaginary characters

7. Setting

Historical and geographical location:

Social milieu

8. Extra-textual references

9. Discourse strategy

Persuasive strategy :

Tone of the message:

Target :

10. Advertising genre (presentation, lesson, account, atmosphere)

Food Advertising to Children in the New Digital Marketing Ecosystem

Kathryn C. Montgomery & Jeff Chester

Children in many countries face a growing health crisis due to excessive weight gain and poor nutrition (World Health Organization, n.d.; Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, 2004). Youth who are significantly overweight are at much greater risk for a variety of serious medical conditions, including digestive disorders, heart and circulatory illnesses, respiratory problems, and Type 2 diabetes, a disease that once struck only adults (American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Nutrition, 2003; Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, 2004). If current trends continue, this generation of young people may be the first in modern history that will not live as long as their parents (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2005). Experts point to a combination of economic, social, and environmental changes over the last three decades that have contributed to these alarming health trends, including cutbacks in physical education programs; the relative decline in the cost of food; the rise in fast food, convenience food, and eating outside of the home; and the increasing availability of snacks and sodas in public schools (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2004; Zywicki, T.J., Holt, D., & Ohlhausen, M.K., 2004; Crawford, D., & Jeffery, R.W., 2005). A major contributor is the disturbing shift in the overall nutritional patterns among all children and adolescents, who now consume high levels of saturated fat, sugars, and salt, and low levels of fruit and vegetables (Institute of Medicine, 2005).

Government agencies, public health professionals, and consumer groups have become increasingly concerned over the role of advertising in promoting these “high-calorie, low-nutrient” products to young people (Schor, J.B., & Ford, M., 2007). In 2004, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, under a Congressional mandate, commissioned the Institute of Medicine to conduct a comprehensive examination of the role of marketing in children’s food consumption. Based on an analysis of hundreds of studies, the 2005 report, *Food Marketing to Children and Youth: Threat or Opportunity?*, found that “among many factors, food and beverage marketing influences the preferences and purchase re-

quests of children, influences consumption at least in the short term, and is a likely contributor to less healthful diets, and may contribute to negative diet-related health outcomes and risks among children and youth" (The National Academies, 2005). The study's recommendations included a strong warning to the food industry to change its advertising practices. Regulatory actions have already been taken in some European countries. For example, restrictions were imposed on British broadcasters in January 2007, when Ofcom's ban on "junk food" advertising during television programs aimed at viewers under 16 went into effect ("Junk Food Ad Crackdown Announced", 2006).

Most of the public policy debate, research, government regulation, and industry initiatives have focused primarily on TV advertising. But television is only a tiny part of a rapidly exploding "marketing ecosystem" that encompasses cell phones, mobile music devices, broadband video, instant messaging, videogames, and virtual, three-dimensional worlds (Singer, J.G., 2005). As food and beverage companies launch high-profile public service campaigns and announce new self-regulatory changes in their TV advertising, they have already begun to shift their marketing into a broad array of new-media efforts. "The eyeballs have moved", a Burger King executive told a 2006 Association of National Advertisers conference, as he explained his company's major push into digital marketing ("Burger King's Russ Klein: In an All-Out Gallop", 2006). Some industry observers have suggested that the public pressure over concerns about childhood obesity may be accelerating the "migration" by food companies into these "alternative platforms" (Goetzl, D., 2006). A July 2007 article in *The Guardian* reported that some of the world's leading food brands – including McDonald's, Starburst, Haribo, and Skittles – are now using the internet as a way to circumvent the new Oxfam regulations (Pidd, H., 2007).

Except for a handful of studies, academic and policy research has not been able to keep up with the pace and scope of change in the media and marketing environment (Montgomery, K.C., & Pasnik, S., 1996; Feilitzen, C. von, 2001; Christofferson, J., 2000; Machill, M., & Waltermann, J., 2000; Montgomery, K.C., 2001; Hansen, F., Rasmussen, J., Martensen, A., & Tufte, B., eds., 2002; Larsson, K., 2003; Moore, E.S., 2006; Montgomery, K.C., 2007). While controversies continue to rage over cyberporn, "stranger danger", and online safety, marketing remains one of the least understood aspects of the new digital media culture. As a consequence, its role in the health and wellbeing of young people has remained largely under the radar of most policymakers, educators, health professionals, and parents.

Our research shows that the forms of advertising, marketing, and selling that are emerging as part of the new media depart in significant ways from the more familiar commercial advertising and promotion in children's television. Digital technologies are ushering in an entirely new set of relationships, breaking down the traditional barriers between "content and commerce", and creating unprecedented intimacies between children and marketers. New interactive software systems make it possible for marketers to track every move, online and off, com-

piling elaborate personal profiles that combine behavioral, psychological, and social information on individuals, and aggregating that data across different media and over time. Companies are recruiting young people into market research enterprises, and encouraging them to promote products to their peers. Marketers are also making it easy and fun for young people to serve as extensions of ad agencies, incorporating brands into their “user-generated content” and distributing their work virally (from person-to-person) on the internet, cell phones, and iPods. All of these trends are fundamentally transforming how corporations – including food and beverage companies – do business with young people in the twenty-first century.¹

Probing “Generation Digital”

The global youth market has grown steadily during the past several decades, as children and adolescents have become an increasingly valuable demographic group. When the World Wide Web was launched in 1993, children were already positioned in the center of a burgeoning media marketplace, with a full array of brands tailored exclusively to their needs – from specialized cable TV channels to magazines to music (Linn, S., 2004; Schor, J.B., 2004). Because the digital media emerged in the midst of a highly commercialized youth culture, a large infrastructure of market research firms and ad agencies was already studying how children and teens were engaging with media. With the growth of the internet and other new technologies, a host of trend-analysis companies, consultants, and digital strategists has moved into place, making today’s young people the most intensely analyzed demographic group in the history of marketing (Montgomery, K.C., 2007: 11-34; Linn, S., 2004; Schor, J.B., 2004; Jacobson, M.F., & Mazur, L.A., 1995). Market researchers employ the expertise of an increasingly diverse array of specialists in sociology, psychology and anthropology to explore youth subcultures and conduct motivational research (Schor, J.B., 2004: 99-118). A considerable amount of contemporary market research is focused on identifying ways to tap into the critical developmental stages of childhood. For example, marketers have closely studied the adolescent process of identity formation, tailoring their strategies to the key emotional and behavioral experiences that are part of these important explorations of self. Researchers are also closely tracking how uses of digital technologies are being integrated into children’s social lives, and identifying new social and psychographic subcategories, based on sophisticated new data-gathering and -analysis techniques (Montgomery, K.C., 2007: 107-139).

For decades, the food and beverage industry has been at the forefront of marketing and market research to children and youth, intensifying its efforts in the Digital Age. Beginning in the early 1990s, food manufacturers began creating new product categories designed to take advantage of children’s increased spending power and independence. According to the Institute of Medicine (2005: 158),

between 1994 and 2004 there were “3,936 new food products and 511 new beverage products targeted to children and youth”, most of which were “high in total calories, sugar, or fat and low in nutrients”. During the earliest days of the World Wide Web such major brands as Kellogg’s, Nabisco, Oscar Mayer, McDonald’s, and Frito-Lay began setting up websites, where they developed a variety of techniques for directly interacting with children online (Montgomery, K.C., & Pasnik, S., 1996). Today, international food and beverage corporations are exploring the newest frontiers of global digital marketing, partnering with a growing number of ad agencies, market research firms, and consulting groups that specialize in developing digital strategies for targeting young people.

Redefining marketing in the 21st century

We have identified 10 techniques that are emblematic of the strategies used by food and beverage marketers to engage with young people through digital media. These are not discrete techniques, but rather a constellation of strategies that are often combined in digital marketing campaigns. Taken together – and viewed against the backdrop of the major changes taking place in the worlds of media, advertising, and market research – these practices constitute a new and fundamentally different direction for advertising.

Mobile marketing. Cell phones have become one of the most important digital marketing platforms for reaching young people. Wireless technology enables marketers to directly target users based on such information as previous purchase history, actual location and other profiling data. Mobile marketing is expected to become one of the major forms of advertising and marketing in the Digital Age. People are becoming dependent on internet-connected cell phones and other wireless devices to access essential information, learn about entertainment, participate in community events, and shop, not to mention downloading games and music, already a major pastime for young consumers.

Increasingly, mobile users will be receiving personally tailored electronic pitches, designed to trigger immediate purchases and timed to reach them when they are near particular stores and restaurants (JumpTap, n.d.). Six hundred McDonald’s fast food restaurants in California urged young cell phone users to text-message to a special phone number to receive an instant electronic coupon for a free McFlurry dessert. Youth were encouraged to “download free cell phone wallpaper and ring tones featuring top artists”, and to email the promotional website link to their friends. To help bolster the campaign, ads on buses, billboards, “wild postings” near high schools, and even skywriting airplanes promoted the “Text McFlurry 73260” message (Johannes, A., 2005).

Infiltrating IM. Instant messaging is another popular marketing platform, useful not only for its peer-to-peer distribution capabilities but also as a branded environment that can permeate and surround ongoing casual conversations, “24/7”. The three major IM formats in the U.S. – AOL’s AIM, Yahoo!’s Messenger, and MSN Messenger – all promote themselves aggressively to advertisers that want to reach teenagers, offering a variety of strategies, including “roadblocks” and “takeover ads” that flood a site’s homepage with interactive commercials, as well as branded “bots” and buddy icons. Yahoo!’s “IMVironments” (IMVs) are customized “interactive backgrounds” in the IM space, whose “unique rich media features” create “fun and effective advertising” (Jaffe, J., 2003). “On average”, explained one marketer, “we see 1.5 million people download a particular IMV, send over 100 million messages within it, and spend five to 10 minutes per user per day per IMV. This time spent is a particularly impressive statistic when you compare it to how much time in one day that user would spend watching a particular TV commercial for that advertiser” (Jaffe, J., 2003). The “M&M Always Imvironment” features the brand’s popular “spokescandies”. “There’s a new way to add a little more M&M® to your day”, the site chirps. “Chat with friends about life, love and chocolate with this cool IMV. There’s an M in everyone” (Yahoo! Messenger, n.d.).

Commercializing Online Communities. Social networking websites such as MySpace, Friendster, and Facebook are considered “the newest frontier for advertisers” (Kingdon, M., 2006). These participatory online platforms enable users to create personal home pages, where they can post profiles, photos, videos, and music. They also serve as powerful word-of-mouth engines, where people can find new friends, connect with old ones, and manage their social lives (Lenhart A., & Madden, M., 2007). Marketers have aggressively moved into MySpace and other social networking sites, taking advantage of their large, highly detailed user profiles and expanding lists of “friends”. As one advertising executive explained, “the targeting we can do is phenomenal” (Bourdeau, A., 2005). Like many of the digital marketing strategies targeted at young people, social network marketing purposely takes advantage of the identity-exploration process that is such an essential part of adolescent development. “Millions of people are defining what they are there”, explained a MySpace executive, “and for young people especially, getting feedback and evolving themselves. For advertisers, it’s the potential for a level of intimacy that they could never have dreamed of 20 years ago.... It’s word-of-mouth on steroids” (Bulik, B.S., 2006). “[S]ometimes the marketing is so embedded in the social network sphere”, observed one trade reporter, “that it draws users to interact with the brand as if they were e-mailing friends” (Halpern, M., 2006). For example, MySpace actively encourages companies to create “branded profiles” (Lerma, P., 2006). Wendy’s has acquired nearly one hundred thousand “friends” on its MySpace page, which features the fast food restaurant’s “square hamburger cartoon mascot”. By creating “a likable character” as a way of “humanizing the brand”, the campaign has been highly successful, generating

“exponential” exposure for Wendy’s every day. “It’s quick, viral and people really like it” (Bulik, B. S., 2006).

“Brand-saturated” environments. Since the beginning of the World Wide Web, one of the defining features of digital marketing has been the complete integration of advertising and content. Food and beverage companies have created their own online branded entertainment sites, seamlessly weaving a variety of interactive content with product pitches and cartoon “spokescharacters”. Designed to encourage young consumers to engage playfully with products over long periods of time, many offer “free” content, games, merchandise, and endless replays of television commercials (Moore, E.S., 2006; Montgomery, K.C., 2007: 67-106). With the growth of broadband technology, these digital playgrounds have evolved into highly sophisticated “immersive” experiences, including entire programs and “channels” built around brands. Multicultural marketers are keenly aware of the strong interest in music among both the African American and Hispanic/Latino youth, and have created branded entertainment featuring some of the most popular celebrities and offering free downloads of their recordings (Korzenny, F., Korzenny, B.A., McGavock, H., & Inglessis, M.G., 2006). Burger King recently created its own “branded online channel”, called Diddy TV, “using rapper P. Diddy’s star power to direct attention to, in his words, another ‘king’ – Burger King. Burger King is now a media entity as well as a restaurant chain” (Lindstrom, M., 2006). In a partnership with MSN, the Coca-Cola Company created the “Sprite Refreshing Wall”, a branded “microsite” that invites urban teens to paint graffiti on a virtual wall. “Spray it, don’t say it”, the site says – to the beat of funk music. “Leave your mark on the wall for all to see” (Story, L., 2006).

Behavioral targeting. Digital technologies make it possible to collect and aggregate unlimited amounts of information about consumers and to market to individuals on a “one-to-one” basis. Behavioral targeting has become a core strategy of contemporary marketing, particularly valuable for those companies targeting youth. It is a linchpin of many digital media campaigns – not only online, but also on cell phones, video games, and other new platforms.² Pepsi’s director of digital media and marketing told *iMedia Connection* in 2005 that the “growth and health of our database marketing efforts have been a secret weapon for us to jump-start programs and have a continuous dialogue with our best consumers”. Using “real-time” tracking technologies, Pepsi is now “finally able to deliver high impact online advertising”, he noted (Anfuso, D., 2005). Addressing colleagues at an industry event in 2005, the director of relationship marketing at Masterfoods USA spoke of his company’s valuable “registered user database”, ensuring the ability to “precisely target” its customers and “engage uniquely” through a variety of different platforms, including satellite, set-top boxes, and online (Perry, N., 2005). “Location marketing”, similarly, can track consumers through wireless and other mobile technologies, enabling marketers to identify where individuals are geographically in the “real world”, and, in turn, to direct marketing messages

to them on the literal spot. Through a vast data collection and profiling system known as “web analytics”, information about the online experiences and attitudes of users is compiled in order to influence individual consumer behavior (such as encouraging purchasing or some form of brand interaction). Such data, combined with mobile technology’s “right now, right to me” capabilities, will help fuel “local, targeted advertising” from “the local pizza place” to “national retail chains and brand advertisers...” (Desai, N., 2007).

Viral Video. Short online videos are an increasingly popular way of promoting brands among youth, who like to consume these “quick snacks of media” and forward the links to their friends through IM, text messaging, and blogs (Piper Jaffray Investment Research, 2007: 75). Video has become pervasive throughout the internet, migrating to cell phones and other mobile media as well. Less than two years after it was launched, YouTube – the free video sharing service that enables users to post their own videos and download millions of others – was the fifth-most-popular website, with 100 million clips viewed, and an additional 65,000 new videos uploaded every 24 hours. Attracting an avid following of 12-to-17-year-olds, the site quickly became such a hot property that Google paid \$1.65 billion in stock to purchase it in October 2006 (“YouTube”, n.d.). Investment analysts at Piper Jaffray (2007) called video advertising the new “killer app of the Web”, which is “supplementing or taking over most other forms of content”.

Domino’s Pizza revealed in January 2007 that it was the company behind a viral video that had been “capturing the attention of millions in the internet community”. To promote its “Anything Goes Deal Contest” – featuring any large pizza, on any crust, with any toppings for \$9.99 – the company placed a series of viral videos on MySpace and other popular social networking sites, using “larger-than-life characters” offering to sell big-ticket items. The first video, “MacKenzie gets what MacKenzie wants”, featured a “spoiled rich girl who wanted a blue car for her birthday but got a red one instead. Her whining persisted until she got the car she wanted and then, much to the surprise and delight of video viewers, she decided to offer her red car [a Saab® 9-3 convertible AERO] on eBay for only \$9.99”. The campaign was a hit, according to the company. “With over two million views across multiple video sites, the popularity of the MacKenzie videos earned a top spot on several video sharing Web sites” (Domino’s Pizza, 2007).

Digital “360” Buzz Campaigns. Peer-to-peer marketing (sometimes called “buzz”, “word-of-mouth”, or “viral” marketing) has become a staple among youth advertisers (Rosen, W., 2000; Lindstrom, M., & Seybold, P.B., 2003; Hughes, M., 2005). For years, companies have purposefully sought out the most influential young “connectors” within their social groups and encouraged them to promote brands among their friends. With the widespread adoption of instant messaging, mobile communications, and online social networks, the practice of peer-to-peer marketing is becoming even more sophisticated, tapping into an ever-expanding array

of new platforms to spread the word about product brands among young people. Youth are in the forefront of an “always on” media environment, guaranteeing them constant connectivity wherever they go.

Procter & Gamble launched its peer-to-peer teen network, Tremor, in 2002, carefully choosing a select group of “Tremorites” based on “internet usage, social networks, and willingness to advocate to peers”, and then giving them coupons, new product samples, and advance copies of TV program scripts to encourage their participation in research and promotion. Within two years of Tremor’s launch, P&G boasted “a sales force of 280,000 teens..., part of a massive focus group and word-of-mouth marketing drive to counter the eroding influence of conventional advertising”. The company predicted that its “Tremor Nation” was only the “first of what’s expected to be a mass movement as advertisers seek new ways to attract audiences and build loyalty” (Peale, C., 2002; Procter & Gamble, 2004). Tremor claims great successes for its clients. Its members are credited with helping Coca-Cola choose “Nothing Else Like it” as a billboard slogan (Procter & Gamble, 2004).

Viral marketing is a key ingredient in the growing number of “360 degree” buzz campaigns, which frequently involve hidden messages and coded information to lure youth into an elaborate series of games and other activities across different media, thus generating buzz within the online youth subculture, all under the public radar. Several food and beverage companies have eagerly embraced this particular strategy. For example, Cadbury Schweppes conducted a campaign for its soft drink, Dr. Pepper, built around “word-of-mouth and internet buzz”. Tagging the effort “Hunt for More”, the company hid coins in high-traffic public locations in 23 different cities. Customers could use codes in specially marked Dr. Pepper products to access a website, where they were given clues as to the location of the hidden treasure. Only one coin was placed in each city, and its redeemable value was between \$10,000 and \$1 million (Mishra R., & Ellement, J.R., 2007).

Recruiting Brand Advocates. With more and more young people creating their own online “user-generated content”, marketers are encouraging them to “co-create” and promote commercials for their favorite brands. In marketing circles, the two new buzzwords – “consumer-generated” and “brand-generated” media – are often used interchangeably, suggesting an intentional blurring of roles. The strategy is designed to foster powerful emotional connections between consumers and products, tap into a stable of young creative talent willing to offer their services for free, and produce a new generation of “brand advocates”. By encouraging consumers to create and distribute “personalized” advertising for their brands, marketers can also enhance their data-collection and behavioral-tracking abilities (Nail, J., 2006). For the 2007 Super Bowl, Pepsi’s Frito-Lay division urged consumers to produce their own commercial spots for Doritos tortilla chips and submit them online in the “Doritos Crash the Super Bowl Contest”. In addition to a chance at a first-place airing during the mega sports TV event, participants

competed for the five finalist spots, which were made available online at “Crashthesuperbowl.com” and on YouTube and other online video sites. More than a thousand video ads were submitted, with “thousands of fans” voting for their favorites. One of the finalists reported that his video was viewed 200,000 times at the Yahoo! website, with the winning entry attracting nearly 400,000 views (“Doritos Presents Crash the Super Bowl”, n.d.; Yahoo Video, n.d.; JumpCut, n.d.).

“Game-vertising”. Of the more than 25 million 12-17 year-olds in the U.S., 20 million play interactive games, according to industry studies (GaMeasure, n.d.). As research from the Interactive Advertising Bureau (n.d.) notes, “teens are tied for the most time spent playing online per week” (13 hours). Gaming takes place across many digital platforms in addition to the internet – from consoles, to hand-held devices such as Nintendo, to cell phones. Some of the biggest brands in the youth market, including Levis, Coke, McDonald’s, Kraft, Nike, AT&T Wireless, and Nokia, have been woven into the content of popular games (Bulik, B.S., 2004). “In-game advertising” (or “game-vertising”) has become such a profitable business that it has spawned a new generation of companies specializing in the creative integration of brands into interactive games. One of the biggest firms is Massive, a New York-based gaming network that has signed deals with dozens of U.S. advertisers, promising to integrate their products into such games as Ubisoft’s “Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory” and Funcom’s “Anarchy Online” (Bourdeau, A., 2005). Microsoft – which owns Xbox and produces “Halo” and other popular games – recently paid several hundred million dollars to acquire Massive. Through “dynamic product placement”, Massive (whose clients have included Dunkin Donuts, Coke, Subway, and Wendy’s) enables advertisers not only to incorporate their brands into the game’s storyline but also to respond to a player’s actions in real time, changing, adding, or updating advertising messages to tailor their appeal to that particular individual (Gaudiosi, J., 2007; Shields, M., 2006).

Recent industry research suggests that marketing through interactive games is more effective than other forms of advertising. “Pervasive product integration in video games”, an Interactive Advertising Bureau (n.d.) guide explains, “can be highly effective, leading gamers to not only recall featured brands but also recommend them to friends or rate them highly”. Food and beverage brands fared particularly well in brand-recall tests. Coke, Pepsi, Mountain Dew, Gatorade, McDonald’s, Burger King and KFC were the “most recalled brands” in an October 2006 survey (“Coke, Nike Are Tops In Video Game Ads: Study”, 2006).

Advertising through Avatars. Immersive three-dimensional environments are on the cutting edge of digital marketing. These “virtual worlds” are complex, multi-layered enterprises that combine many of the most popular online activities – such as instant messaging, interactive gaming, and social networking – into increasingly elaborate settings in which individuals create their own online identities through avatars. “Once the stuff of science fiction”, explains the website for the new-media ad agency Millions of Us, “virtual worlds are becoming central to

the future of marketing, technology, entertainment and brand-building" (Millions of Us, n.d.). Marketing through avatars is "one of the most effective kinds of advertising going", commented one advertising executive, explaining that the speed with which a "brand or marketing message can spread through a virtual world from avatar to avatar is breathtaking" (Shannon, J., 2006). Among the food and beverage brands actively engaged in avatar-based strategies are Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Kellogg, Nabisco, Kraft, Pizza Hut, P&G, and Subway (Shannon, J., 2006).

Avatars are particularly appealing to tweens and teenagers, who can use these digital expressions of self to experiment with different possible identities ("Informal Learning and Social Development of American Youth on YouTube", n.d.). As one online marketer explained, "avatars should be considered more than just an online representation"; they are rather "an online projection" that "engages multiple levels of the user's psyche and sense of self" (Shannon, J., 2006). There is a growing recognition that the avatar "represents a distinctly different 'shadow' consumer, one able to influence its creator's purchase of real-world products and conceivably make its own real-world purchases in the virtual world" (Hemp, P., 2006).

MyCoke.com is a virtual, immersive environment in which users are "encouraged to associate personal identity with brand identity" (Book, B., 2006). The site offers a multitude of interactive activities to engage teens, including chat, music downloading and mixing, user-generated video, blogs, and its own currency. Coca-Cola worked with interactive marketing expert Studiocom (part of the WPP Group) to create Coke Studios, a "massive multiplayer online environment" where "teens hang out as their alter-identities, or 'v-egos'" (Studiocom, n.d.; "Youniversal Branding, part 1", 2006; Cokestudios, n.d.). In April 2007, Coca-Cola launched a multifaceted "Virtual Thirst" marketing campaign to promote its brand in the virtual world, Second Life, inviting people to compete for the best design of a Coke "portable virtual vending machine" ("Coca-Cola Launches Competition to Design Online 'Virtual Thirst' Coke Machine", 2007; Au, W.J., 2006; Vedrashko, I., 2006). To guarantee maximum exposure for the campaign, Coca-Cola posted an array of interactive marketing materials on MySpace – including interviews with celebrity avatars, publicity photos, podcast interviews, and videos ("VirtualThirst", 2007; "Online 'Virtual Thirst' Resources", 2007).

Creating a healthy media environment for the 21st century

Many of the practices documented here will need to be investigated further before we can fully understand their implications for children and youth. But the patterns and directions we have identified raise a number of troubling issues. For example, the influx of brands into social networking platforms – where they now have their own "profiles" and networks of "friends" – is emblematic of the many ways in which contemporary marketing has all but obliterated the boundaries

between advertising and editorial content. The unprecedented ability of digital technologies to track and profile individuals across the media landscape, and to engage in “micro” or “nano” targeting, raises the twin specters of manipulation and invasion of privacy. The prospect of armies of avatars, deployed as brand “salespersons”, and programmed to react to the subtlest cues from other online inhabitants, suggests a disturbing move into uncharted territory for consumer-business relationships. On the face of it, a number of these practices are exploitive and unfair. Some may well be deceptive. Many are designed to foster emotional and unconscious choices, rather than reasoned, thoughtful decision making. When used to promote certain food products to young people, the aggregation of these new marketing tactics could have harmful consequences.

While the growth and expansion of the interactive marketing system will continue unabated, there is time to develop interventions to ensure that the twenty-first century media culture serves the health of our children rather than undermining it. However, we have a relatively brief period to establish policies and marketing standards that could help prevent today’s parents, young people – and future generations – from suffering the serious health consequences of poor nutrition. Because of the global nature of the digital media, international efforts will be necessary – involving the food and advertising industries, the health community, government agencies, NGOs, parents, and youth themselves – to protect the public health of all children and adolescents.

Notes

1. This article is based on a larger report, released in May 2007, and available online at www.digitalads.org. The research was sponsored by the Berkeley Media Studies Group and The Center for Digital Democracy, and funded by grants from the California Endowment and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The authors wish to thank the following individuals for contributing to the report: Regan Carver, Diego Castaneda, Lori Dorfman, Gary O. Larson, and Elena O. Lingas.
2. In the United States, the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) has created some safeguards in the digital marketing arena, forbidding commercial websites from soliciting personally identifiable information from children under the age of 13 without prior parental permission. But digital marketers have devised a number of ways to engage with individual children without running afoul of the law. Moreover, these protections have left teenagers at the complete mercy of database marketers. For a discussion of COPPA and its impact, as well as a survey of contemporary digital marketing strategies targeting teens, see Montgomery, K.C. (2007: 67-139).

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"Busted are Cool but Barbie's a Minger"

The Role of Advertising and Brands in the Everyday Lives of Junior School Children

Agnes Nairn & Christine Griffin

Four trends have emerged over the last decade. First, children's spending power and influence have increased. Globally they spend an annual US\$300 billion from pocket money and holiday jobs and influence a further US\$1.88 trillion of family expenditure (Lindstrom and Seybold, 2003). Second, the scope of advertising and branding activities has exploded with the advent of new technologies and the increasing challenge for companies to cut through the clutter of ubiquitous commercial messages by finding inventive ways to reach children. Advertising to children now includes internet banners, pop-ups and advergames; sms campaigns; product placements on TV shows, films and video games; increasingly sophisticated ambient advertising and a host of guerrilla advertising tactics (e.g. Shor, 2004). Third, children are targeted more directly both through internet sign-ups and direct marketing campaigns. In one recent example, the record company representing young jazz star Jamie Cullum made a personal approach to the Head girls of UK secondary schools to publicise his work and touring activities (Sherwin, 2005). Fourth, recent research indicates that children now recognise and relate to brands at increasingly younger ages. According to Shor (2004, pg. 19) children can recognise logos by 18 months; believe that brands communicate personal qualities by 3 and a half; and can name more than 200 brands by the time they start school.

However, it is our contention that the theoretical framework used in the academic marketing literature (and, by extension, in the practice of marketing) to underpin the understanding of how children use advertised brands may no longer provide a satisfactory means of appreciating the sophistication and complexity of children's contemporary relationships to marketing, branding and consumption. Our chapter proceeds as follows: first we describe the paradigm which currently dominates research in marketing to children; second we briefly review the key literature in the field; third we present the methodology and findings of the first stage of an empirical study specifically designed to be open to alternative interpretations; and finally, we discuss some alternative theoretical under-

pinnings which could enrich the marketing community's understanding of how to-day's children interact with brands.

Dominance of Piaget's developmentalist paradigm

The literature on marketing to children is underpinned almost exclusively by psychological theories. More specifically, the landmark studies into children's uses of consumption objects (notably Belk, Bahn and Meyer, 1982; Belk, Meyer and Driscoll, 1984; Achereiner and John 2003) have all drawn heavily on Jean Piaget's (1960) age-stage model of childhood cognitive and social development, sometimes termed "developmentalism". This approach has been bolstered by Deborah Roedder John's comprehensive and influential review of 25 years of children's consumer socialisation literature (John, 1999) which is also underpinned by a cognitive and social development paradigm.

According to Piagetian theory, the child's mental and interactive capacities evolve in a linear fashion through a set of biologically predetermined stages which John (1999) summarises as: "perceptual" stage (age 3-7); "analytical" stage (age 7-11) and "reflective" stage (age 11-16). The pre-eminence of this paradigm has led to a preponderance, in the best marketing journals, of studies to ascertain the effect of a child's age on the emergence and use of brand meanings (e.g. Achereiner and John, 2003). These studies tend to compare the social inferences a child makes about people from the products and brands which they own or use (consumption stereotypes) with the inferences made by adults (most notably Belk, Bahn and Meyer (1982); Belk, Meyer and Driscoll (1984). The implication is that consumer socialisation involves children "learning" these adult stereotypes.

The stance which marketing practitioners (and, indeed, government regulators) have taken towards children has also been materially informed by developmentalism. This is particularly so in relation to the somewhat controversial area of establishing an age at which it is "fair" to direct television advertising to children (e.g. Levin, Petros and Petrella, 1982; Macklin, 1987; Oates et al. 2002). For example, the decision by the Swedish government to ban advertising directly aimed at children under 12 was based on a developmentalist study by Bjurström (1994). Ascertaining this "magic" age is seen as pivotal to legislation because the underpinning assumption is that if a child has developed sufficient cognitive competence to have an adult appreciation of the marketer's intent then the advertising is deemed "fair". The age-stage view of the child's relationship with the market place is also implicit in the ubiquitous term KGOY ("Kids Getting Older Younger": see Kurnit, 2004; Sutherland and Thomson, 2003) as it implies that there is a "right" age for particular children's behaviour and that children are now behaving out of line with their expected stage of Piagetian development. Thus it is reported with some surprise that whilst girls used to play with dolls until age 13, they now spurn them at 8 (Kurnit, 2004).

However, it our contention that reliance on this single psychological frame of reference is stultifying the academic marketing community's understanding of children's relationships with commercial brands, for research using a Piagetian paradigm is not well equipped to detect the conceptual categories which children themselves use to negotiate the intense world of brands and products which now surrounds them.

Review of landmark literature

The influential researcher Russell Belk provided one of the first studies on children's understanding of the brand world, specifically in terms of social symbolism. Belk et al.'s 1982 experimental study compared the abilities of different age groups of children (preschool, 7-8, 11-12, 13-14) as well as college students and adults to match up different styles of houses and cars to different types of people (e.g. a grandfather, a mailman, smart, lucky, someone I would like to visit). They concluded that the ability to recognise the social implications of consumption choices is minimal among preschoolers, significant by second grade (7/8) and almost fully developed by 6th grade (11/12) and that taken as a whole, the findings indicated that consumption symbolism recognition develops during grade school. They also noted that more detailed work was needed to understand the role of various socialising forces on the development of consumption symbolism. The assumption underpinning the study is that adults somehow have the "right" interpretation of the brand symbols and that, as they develop cognitively, children learn to see the world "correctly". It is worthy of note that the objects of study (cars and houses) are purchase categories with which children – at least in 1982 – had limited involvement. This raises questions as to the value of the study as a reflection of children's relationship to consumption symbolism, given that these commodities are unlikely to be of central significance to their lives. It is also interesting that the notion of learning to think like an adult is unquestioningly considered to be linked with cognitive development and not simply with greater exposure to the world. It could quite easily be argued that a group of 11 year olds are more likely than a group of 4 year olds to concur that an Animal branded T-shirt is "the right attire" for a surfer because of longer and more varied exposure to messages from commercial sources and peer discussion. Equally, given direct marketing to children which by-passes parents it may well be that in contemporary society adults are unable to "correctly" match a youth brand such as "Animal" with a particular young person's culture or sub culture.

In a second study Belk et al. (1984) began to address both of the criticisms raised above. First they altered the products from houses and cars to those that were more likely to be familiar to and therefore have more meaningful consumption symbolism potential for children. Through a series of pre-tests they selected both desirable and non-desirable brands for the categories of jeans, bicycles, shoes

and video games. Subjects were either 9/10 or 11/12. Again they were testing the strength of consumption based stereotypes and they concluded again that older children hold stronger consumption-based stereotypes than younger children. They also found in this experiment that girls hold stronger consumption-based stereotypes than boys and that higher social classes hold stronger consumption-based stereotypes than lower social classes. They also noted that ownership of the product made stereotyping stronger. It is this that leads the researchers to raise for the first time the issue of the mediating role of experience in children's use of consumption symbolism. "The fact that hypothesised differences were found not only between age groups but also between sex and social class groups suggests that experience may be more important than cognitive development to the acquisition of consumption-based symbolism ... For the ages investigated in this study, it thus appears that consumption-based stereotypes gain strength and clarity as the child has more opportunity to see the product and its users." (pg. 396) However, the researchers did not seek another paradigm within which to study this subject which remained largely untouched in the major marketing journals for twenty years.

In 2003 the question of how children use brand symbolism was addressed again by another experimental study (Achereiner and John, 2003). 4 stimuli were used in the experiment: a preferred brand of jeans (Levis), a preferred brand of trainers (Nike), and a non-preferred brand of each (Kmart in both cases). Children in 3 age categories (8,12,16) were shown pictures of one pair of trainers and one pair of jeans (identical except for caption which gave brand name) and completed 3 tasks: evaluate the product; give impressions of person who would own the product; evaluate 5 brand extensions for each preferred brand. For example, a brand extension for Nike might be Nike shampoo, and for Levis, it could be Levis shoes.

The researchers concluded that the evaluation behaviour of the 8 year olds was significantly different on all 3 tasks from the older two age groups confirming that this youngest age group did not use conceptual brand meanings as a basis for their product appraisal but rather used simple perceptual recognition clues. However, they drew somewhat contradictory conclusions with regards to the influence of cognitive competence and experience. On the one hand they denied the primacy of experience over cognitive ability in children's understanding of brand symbolism:

We have argued that the emergence and use of conceptual brand meanings depends heavily on the availability of age-related cognitive abilities and social inferencing skills. Even though the formation of conceptual brand meanings requires a certain level of product experience, it is our view that underdeveloped cognitive and social skills cannot be overcome by simply providing more exposure, familiarity, or experience with the product or brand in question. (p. 215)

Yet, on the other hand they acknowledged the role of product experience in children's brand extension evaluations.

Taken together, these results suggest that product experience plays a more important role in explaining age differences in brand extension evaluations than predicted. (p. 216)

Their recommendations for further research are as follows:

Additional empirical research is warranted to better understand what occurs between 8 and 12 years of age and to test our notion that the key period of development is 10-12 years of age. (p. 217)

More research surrounding the role that experience plays in facilitating the use of conceptual brand meanings would be welcome. (p. 217)

It is our contention that our understanding of how contemporary children relate to brands is unlikely to be substantially furthered either by concentrating on what happens within the mind of the individual 8 year old or 12 year old; or by adding an "experience" variable into an experiment. We believe that we must, instead, attempt to more broadly understand the brand world from the child's point of view and to access the conceptual categories used by children themselves to navigate the symbolic potential which the commercialised consumer world offers them.

In constructing our research programme we acknowledge the influence of Ritson and Elliot's 1999 study of the role of TV adverts in the everyday lives of teenagers. Although examining a different age group, theirs is one of the few studies in a marketing journal to move outside the developmentalist paradigm. Using a participant-observational methodology in fieldwork lasting six weeks Ritson and Elliot aimed to understand how TV adverts are utilised in the world of 17 and 18 year old school students. Their work in turn draws on Stephanie O'Donohoe's (1994) earlier influential paper which used the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, 1959) to categorise how young adults (18-24 year olds) mobilised the functions and experiences of mass communications messages. Like O'Donohoe, Ritson and Elliot (1999) discovered that adverts served a number of important social functions. Moreover the social uses of adverts were so important to teenagers that they would record ads from the TV; watch and rewatch them; and learn them off by heart so that they could display mastery of this social currency and carve out their membership of different crowds.

Empirical study

We deliberately chose to work with junior school children (age 7-11) in response to Achereiner and John's (2003) call for more research on this age group. We recruited 72 children from 2 mixed UK junior schools in a small city in the south-west of England: one private in the national top 5% for academic achievement;

one state below the national average for academic achievement. This selection was made in an attempt to cover a range of socio-economic backgrounds. Given the diversified and intensified nature of contemporary branding activities our emphasis was not only on the uses of advertising but on the roles played by brands themselves. Our fundamental research question was thus: what roles do brands play in the everyday lives of junior school children?

We present here key findings of the first part of a two stage study designed to explore the child's experience of advertising and brands from the child's point of view. The full results of the two studies can be found in Nairn, Griffin and Gaya Wicks (2006).

Methodology

In terms of methodology, our study has three points of difference from previous studies with younger children. First of all, we wanted to ensure that the consumption objects discussed really were those which were meaningful to children. Thus at the beginning of the sessions, the children themselves generated the consumption objects for discussion. By contrast, in the studies by Belk et al. (1982, 1984) and by Achereiner and John (2003) the products for inclusion in the study originated from adult suggestions (even though in the latter case they were rigorously tested for relevance with a large group of children). Second, we wanted to find out how children constructed meaning from consumption objects rather than testing whether they could interpret the adult world or whether there were age differences in ability to assign fixed meaning to a brand. We did not wish to test consistency of interpretation but rather to explore the process by which interpretation takes place. Third, as the process of assigning meanings to objects is a deeply social process we wished to facilitate collective response rather than individual interpretation. This contrasts with the paper and pencil experiments used in the early studies with young children reviewed above (Belk et al., 1982, 1984; Achereiner and John, 2003).

It was not possible to use Ritson and Elliot's (1999) observational methodology as unlike sixth formers who have a defined social space where conversational interactions occur (the "common room"), junior school children are either in a structured classroom environment or running around in the playground. The only feasible way to elicit their views was to withdraw groups from classroom time and sit with them in a quiet area of the school. We thus used small group discussion settings for our data collection. Half of the children were age 7/8 (year 3) and half 10/11 (year 6). In each school a third of the groups were girls only; a third boys only and a third mixed gender. In total, twelve discussions with a total of 72 children were held (see table 1). Permission for participation and tape recording was gained from both parents and children.

The discussions proceeded through a series of set stages. First, children were collectively asked to brainstorm a list of "the things kids in your class are into at

Table 1. Characteristics of focus groups (12 groups with 6 children per group)

Private School		State School	
Year 3 (age 7/8)	Year 6 (age 10/11)	Year 3 (age 7/8)	Year 3 (age 7/8)
(1) 6 girls	(4) 6 girls	(7) 6 girls	(10) 6 girls
(2) 6 boys	(5) 6 boys	(8) 6 boys	(11) 6 boys
(3) 3 boys + 3 girls	(6) 3 boys + 3 girls	(9) 3 boys + 3 girls	(12) 3 boys + 3 girls
Total =18 children in Year 3	Total =18 children in Year 6	Total =18 children in Year 3	Total =18 children in Year 6
Grand total = 72 children			

the moment". These were inscribed on a flip chart. Second the children were asked to generate as many brand names as they could for the objects on the flip chart. Third, they were asked which words they would use to classify the various brands into either a negative or positive category. This exercise was carried out in order to understand the terminology used by children for use in the second stage of the study. Fourth they were asked to classify the objects and brands which they had generated into two columns, a negative and positive, using their preferred terms of reference. Fifth, still as a group, they were asked to brainstorm and classify TV programmes, celebrities, pop stars, styles, adverts, hairstyles, jewellery and magazines. The total process took around 30 minutes which was as long as 7/8 year olds could concentrate and was an acceptable time for teachers to release children from classroom activities.

Our dataset consisted of the lists of *"things kids are into"*; the lists of brands; the lists classifying brands and media influences; and the transcriptions of the children's taped discussions. Both researchers independently analysed the scripts and flip charts and then came together to triangulate common classifications. We primarily used qualitative thematic analysis guided by an appreciation of quantitative aspects of the data (such as frequency of mentions). We were looking for the brands which were mentioned most consistently across groups and which generated excitement, interest and debate i.e. those which form social currency for these junior school children. The brands we identified as especially significant in children's discussions during stage 1 of the study were used as a focus for further in-depth exploration in the second stage, which is reported elsewhere (Nairn et al., in press, Gaya Wicks et al., in press). In this chapter we report on insights from preliminary analysis of the stage 1 data, exploring the ways in which children related to key brands as reflected in their talk during the 12 focus group discussions.

Findings

For the British junior school children in our study, 6 types of items were most often mentioned and generated the most excitement and debate across the groups: Games Consoles (e.g. X –Box, Game Cube and Play Station), Playground Crazes

(e.g. Pokemon Cards, Yugioh Cards and Beyblades), Dolls and Action Figures (e.g. Barbie, Action Man and Bratz), TV programmes (e.g. Simpsons, Eastenders and Coronation Street), Sports Stars (e.g. David Beckham, Johnny Wilkinson, Wayne Rooney) and Pop Groups (e.g. Busted, McFly, Peter Andre, Britney Spears and Michael Jackson). From these the most discussed 14 brands were selected for inclusion in the next stage of the research (see Table 2).

Table 2. Description of the 14 brands selected

Busted	A boy band marketed at children that split up in 2005
McFly	Another boy band marketed at children, launched after Busted
Britney Spears	Singer, popular with children (NB: This study was carried out before Britney shaved her head)
David Beckham	Celebrity Captain of the England football team at the time of the study
The Simpsons	Popular American cartoon TV show
Barbie	Fashion doll which has been marketed to girls for over 40 years
Bratz	New series of fashion dolls marketed specifically at female 'tweens'
Action Man	Action figure which has been marketed to boys for several decades
Beyblades	Small spinning tops used to fight against other children's tops
Pokemon	Japanese trading card game
Playstation, X-Box, Game Cube	Three competing brands of games console
Yu-Gi-Oh	Japanese trading card game, produced after Pokemon

Whilst TV programmes, sports stars and pop groups are not brands in the sense used in the marketing literature, we have classified them together with objects such as Play Stations since it became clear from our analysis of the discussions that children conceptualise them symbolically in the same way. Thus children discussed in detail the marketing activities of Busted ("cool" for most children) with those of McFly. This constitutes our first major finding. Research and press commentary has tended to treat persuasive communications via TV programmes, advertising and celebrities as phenomena which are quite separate from products and brands that are bought and sold such as Nike or Coke. However, it was quite clear from our stage 1 research results that children classified products and brands in a quite different way from the way it is often assumed in adult writing about children and brands. Reflecting the findings of O'Donohoe (1994) and Ritson and Elliot (1999) amongst 17-24 year olds, for these children communications are commodities in their own right. The children we interviewed reported that they enjoyed adverts for beer and financial services, which were appreciated for their entertainment value rather than any effect they might have on product choice

or usage. Our respondents delighted in reeling off lists of car brands, most of which they will never own. At the same time to-day's 7-11 year olds have inhabited, since birth, a world where toys have their own TV programmes and internet sites; football players have their own range of clothing in department stores and advertise food on television; and TV characters (whether real or cartoon) release music CDs and appear in Playstation games. Thus what begins to emerge is today's junior school children inhabiting a seamless world of media and commercial influences in which games, people, products, music and toys fulfil parallel, interlinked and complementary functions. The way in which they use brands is deeply embedded in the commercial media culture which they have experienced all their lives.

A further 4 themes identified from this stage of the research are presented below.

Conscious brand awareness

In line with the research reviewed above, a comparison of the lists and discussions of the 7/8 year olds with the lists and discussions of the 10/11 year olds showed that children do develop knowledge of the concept of branding as they grow older. Thus the 7/8 year olds found it almost impossible to think of the names of brands for the particular items they had listed on the flip charts. The specific names of brands were not salient in their minds and many were very unsure what was meant by the term "brand" – even after they had been given an example such as "Cadbury's is a brand of chocolate". In one of the younger groups, TV sets were cited as a product which "kids are into". They were thus asked to generate a list of TV brands. They did list 'real' brand names such as Sony, Panasonic and Toshiba. However, their list also included Curry's (a retailer), Teletext and Sky. It is worth noting that the tape recorder in front of them during the discussion was Sony and there was a Panasonic TV in the classroom. Thus it may be that the group could only name one brand spontaneously.

Whilst this misattribution of brands to product categories was more prevalent in the younger groups, it was also surprisingly common amongst the older children. For example, when a Year 6 group (aged 10/11) was asked to list brands of games consoles (e.g. Sony Playstation, Microsoft X-Box, Nintendo Game Cube) the children also listed gaming software brands (Atari, E.A. Games); specific games (Mario, Fifa Football); and PC brands such as HP and Dell. Amongst the games console lists we also found brand names for other products that children clearly associate with playing on consoles such as Telewest Broadband, Windows, Sky and XP, whilst lists of computer brands included Ebay, PC World, Dixon's and Intel Pentium. Thus it seems that on a very fundamental level children do not consciously or cognitively relate to brands in the way assumed by adult researchers: the associative paths are different.

The brand game

Even if children could not name brands for the items of interest to them, they delighted in the game of listing brand names and volunteered inventories of brands for product categories they do not use themselves. This resulted in 30 brands of car generated by one Year 6 mixed group and the mobile phone brands Vodafone, Orange, Nokia and O2 being reeled off fluently and without hesitation by a group of Year 3 girls. It therefore seems that branding is an engaging topic for junior school children although they may not be able to easily assign brands to adult-created product categories.

Likewise, almost 100 different adverts were mentioned across the 12 groups. Recall of adverts was spontaneous, quick and prolific. From the discussions it was clear that children engage with the creative execution of the advertising itself rather than making explicit associations with any product message being put across. Many favourite adverts were for products not aimed at children. For example, John Smith's beer advertising was enjoyed by many although one hopes that few have already developed a taste for the drink. This reinforces the observation that children's perceptions of product categories, branding and media influences do not necessarily follow the assumptions that pervade most current research, media commentary and adult 'common sense' ideas about children's relationship to consumer goods. Products, brands, retailers, software, hardware, adverts, people and games inhabit an interconnected space in children's minds.

Cool and minging – negotiated concepts

Before asking the children to discuss their views of the products and brands they had listed, we asked them what words they would use to sort objects into a "good" or "bad" pile. We wanted to make sure the children were able to use their own terminology. We did not wish to impose our vocabulary which might be seen as outdated and irrelevant.

The words used by children to classify brands did vary slightly by age, with older children having a much wider range of classificatory vocabulary than younger ones. Younger groups were often happy with "good" and "bad" whereas older groups were more experimental with their vocabulary. The most frequently used positive words across the groups were "quality", "cool" and "radical" and the words used for something negative were "minging", "pants", "sad" or "rubbish". Each group decided amongst themselves which pair of words to use for the classification exercise.

What was more interesting than the specific choices of words was that each group – even the older ones – was perfectly happy to interchange a range of classificatory terms and there did not seem to be particular symbolism or kudos attached to using one or other word. There was not a "cool hierarchy" of vocabulary, at least among the children we interviewed. This was surprising to us

as we had thought that using the "right" word might be important to this age group in the way it is for teenagers.

However, in line with a strong and consistent finding from analysing the classification exercises, this appears to be symptomatic of the way in which children mobilise brands to fulfil a variety of social functions. When children were asked to classify the brands on their lists, there was rarely clear cut consensus regarding what was "quality" and what was "minging". Instead there was a great deal of debate regarding which column a brand should be assigned to. There was no sense that some objects were automatically "cool" and some were not. Instead, the majority of groups very quickly created a middle column – neither "sad" nor "cool" but in between. This indicates that there may be no agreed notion of what is "cool for 7-11 year olds". Our findings indicate that the process (when viewed from the children's perspective) is much more negotiated than this. This theme was explicitly developed in the design of stage 2 of our research, in which we selected 14 brands from the stage 1 data on the basis of their significance for children, and asked a further 56 children in similar age groups to sort each brand in terms of its position on a dimension from 'cool' to 'not cool'. Our in-depth analysis of the stage 2 data focuses on children's complex negotiations of this 'sorting' task (Nairn et al., in press).

Gendered nature of brands

Finally, we were very struck by the highly gendered nature of the discussions in every group. The concept of gender was repeatedly mobilised in order to negotiate, discuss and classify brands. Most notably during discussions of Barbie (a "minger" for most children) the notions of "girly" and "babyish" were used in an almost interchangeable way, indicating that from the age of 7 (and probably younger) children are already infantilising the feminine. Whilst girls were comfortable in admitting that they played with what the group considered a "boys' toy", no boy would admit to playing with a "girls' toy" thus showing that implicit in their thinking, boys are considered not just different from girls but somehow socially superior.

Conclusion

Our research deliberately sought to move away from a developmentalist paradigm using psychological experiments which test how children progress towards a fixed understanding of the symbolism in advertising and branding. Instead we tried to illuminate the processes used by children themselves in their interaction with brands. This chapter reports on the results of the first stage of the research. We have shown a junior school world of brands where products themselves merge seamlessly with the adverts and celebrities which promote them and the electronic media through which they are experienced. We have shown a world where

symbolic functions of brands are mobilised in a manner which is often playful but is also highly negotiated and deeply gendered. These findings imply a future research agenda which examines in fine detail the interaction between children and the rich and multi-faceted brand world which they now inhabit. This would certainly involve the marketing research community embracing new paradigms, for in contrast to the assumptions of the developmentalist paradigm, the key issue now would appear to be not the age of the child or his/her ability to interpret the adult world but developing an understanding of the way in which children interpret their own brand world.

Introducing new theoretical perspectives to marketing literature

What unifies all of the findings presented above is the way in which brands are inextricably linked with the social and cultural milieu of the child whether in the use of a product advert as a source of entertainment or in the complex peer relationships involved in deciding whether or not a brand should be classified as “a minger” or “cool”. It seems clear that these phenomena can be adequately interpreted only through a theoretical framework which goes beyond the cognitive capacities of the individual child to embrace the myriad social and cultural relationships within which brands are experienced by to-day’s children.

Within the marketing literature itself the recently presented Consumer Culture Theory – “a family of theoretical perspectives that address the dynamic relationships between consumer actions, the marketplace, and cultural meanings” (Arnould and Thompson, 2005, pg. 868) – offers possibilities, for it seeks to capture interactions rather than reactions. However, as yet, this approach has not been applied to studies of children’s consumption behaviour.

Drawing from outside the field of marketing a richer range of possibilities is encountered. During the 1980s a movement (comprising thinkers from sociology, culture theory, social psychology, geography and anthropology) which has come to be called the “New Social Studies of Childhood” emerged. Arguably the most influential writer, researcher and commentator of the movement is sociologist Alan Prout (1990/1991, 2005). In his latest book *The Future of Childhood* Prout (2005) summarizes the key differences of his conceptualisation of the child. In the New Social Studies of Childhood paradigm childhood (both in terms of development and in terms of a social institution) is seen as dependent on the environmental context rather than on a naturally evolving biological process. Studies have thus emerged which explore differences in childhood across cultures and across socio-economic groups rather than just across age groups (Joshi et al. 1999; Goldstein, 1998). The focus has also moved from the one-way effect of adult society on children to a broader conceptualisation of the socialisation construct (Archard, 1993; Ekstrom, 2006). Research and thought within this framework sees

children less as *becomings* (i.e. becoming adults) and more as *beings* (i.e. capable of social participation and agency in their own right). Attention has also turned to children in a collective context rather than as individuals (Kehily and Swann, 2003) and children are seen less as the passive objects of socialisation and more as active co-creators of their own place in society.

This approach which has been forged, honed and largely accepted by thinkers mainly from a range of disciplines outside marketing or advertising offers a substantially augmented picture of the child. Rather than the solitary child gradually acquiring the skills to decode the messages relayed by the adults in charge of society, we see children in collective groups at the same time shaped by their social circumstances and also co-opting, creating and contextualising their own environment.

Martens et al. (2004) contest that research under the banner of the "Sociology of Consumption" may prove useful in understanding children's consumption. In particular they advocate building on three key theoretical approaches within the Sociology of Consumption: "mode of consumption", "lifestyle and identity" and "engagement in material culture" to provide 4 new research themes for understanding children's consumption: "learning to consume", "lifestyle and identity formation", "children's engagement with material culture" and "parent-child relationships". We can see how these themes could be used to frame a number of our findings and future related research streams. The notion of learning to consume could be used to explore the interrelationship of peer, parental, media and commercial influence on how brands come to be seen as "cool" or "minging". A lifestyle and identity formation angle could illuminate how children's brand discourses mark out identity in terms of gender roles and peer popularity. Already we have shown one aspect of how children engage with material culture in relation to their perceptions and awareness of brands, their negotiation of the complex concept of 'coolness', and the highly gendered nature of their relationship with brands. And whilst we did not look at the parent-child relationship it would be interesting to compare parent views of children's brands with those of the children themselves.

A different possible theoretical underpinning for understanding how children use brands is the comprehensive framework proposed by David Buckingham (2005) for understanding Media Literacy of Children and Young in his literature review for Ofcom. Whilst this document has provided a framework for understanding "Media Literacy" a similar framework could be built for the notion of "Brand Literacy". This might serve to elucidate what children understand by brands, how they are influenced by brands, how brands help them to be creative, how brands oil social interactions and how brands create social divisions.

Conclusion

We hope that this chapter has shown three things. First that whilst a developmentalist paradigm has served the academic and practitioner marketing community well in facilitating understanding of children's cognitive limitations and capacities, recent developments in marketing to children demand a more inclusive framework to understand the sophistication and complexity of children's relationships with brands. Second, we hope to have shown the possibilities of an approach to brand research with children which does not rely on a quantitative psychological experiment. And finally we hope we have provided some food for thought in terms of specific alternative frameworks (Consumer Culture Theory, New Sociology of Childhood, Sociology of Consumption, Brand Literacy) which could be used by those seeking to understand why it is that "Busted are Cool but Barbie is a Minger".

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From “Buy me Something” to “I Want This”

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The phenomenon of the kid as the agent of consumption has shown in the recent years an evolution which has led kids, from the demand or acquisition of specific goods during the decade of the 50s, to the concretion of such demands into specific products. These products are offered under a brand, tangible element which will unite a complete series of objective and subjective aspects. Kids will long for these goods merely for the pleasure and wish of owning them.

However, the demand of brands amongst children starts at earlier ages and with such a level of exactitude. These kids are able to distinguish (even without knowing the complex mechanisms which organize the brand architecture) different stratum of the hierarchy of the brands themselves.

Brands are complex entities that, in the case of the child target, are specially built from their presence on television (commercials, sponsorships, game shows, prizes for programmes,...); they could be considered as another factor of child fantasy, which is perceived by children as a magic universe to which they can only accede by means of its possession and, therefore, manifesting a strong subjective character full of projections and dreams, much superior to that found in adult brands.

Kids may really believe that some cereals can make them stronger and win the match; they may believe that with a pair of trainers they can be the fastest runner, and, that a specific toy will cause amazement and admiration amongst all their companions.

Kids believe in brands and they still trust in them. This is precisely one of the main reasons for explaining the growing demand of brands, beyond socio-economic factors and beyond a logical process of imitation of adult behaviour. Besides, this is also one of the more visible signs of the evolution of this process. The progress of brands themselves, which evolves from distinctive icons against competitors and which kids demanded when they referred to a particular product with specific characteristics to a complex symbol nurtured with values and that promised better scenarios.

Evolution of the kid customer: From buy me something to I want this

Although the presence of toys throughout the different stages of human evolution, since prehistory, induces us to perceive childhood as a concept that has been historically built and which is defined by considering some special necessities. It was in the 20th century when we were able to witness a revolution of the concept of childhood. Children passed from being the subject who received the attentions of adults, to the agent of its own initiatives and decisions with regard to consumption.

We have to take into consideration that it is in the dynamics of capitalism itself, that we can start talking about kids as consumers. In this way, at the beginning of the 20th century, mass production started as a consequence of the “fordism”. A reduction in costs took place and a larger number of people were able to consume. These persons would commence to worry about satisfying the growing demand of kids.

Within this time frame which includes the years after The Second World War, McNeal (1993:23-28) placed, historically, the real origin of the kid as a consumer, the so-called “*Kid customer*”. This could be explained from the convergence between the *baby boom* phenomena and the period of economical prosperity which followed the worldwide disaster provoked by the afore mentioned war.

After the demographic explosion in the decade of the 50s, the economical prosperity in the 60s had repercussions on the money kids could obtain in order to spend. But it was during the 80s when the importance of the child consumption began to be evident, and a real boom of new products and services aimed at kids took place: media, hotels, banks...

The next leap is located in the decade of the 90s, when authors such as Lindstrom quoted by Schor (2006:67), explained that a brand was more important for kids than the function of the product itself.

It is at this point when the transition from the kid customer to the brand-consumer kid took place. This transition will be more important during the first years of the present millennium and it is backed by the socioeconomic situation which was summarized by Brée (1995:22-24) into five postulates:

The decrease and delay in birth rate; the progressive loss of a well-marked distinction between the world of infancy and that of teenagers; the redefinition of roles in the family structure and the increase of purchase power, which will allow us to find an explanation for the large quantity of money that current kids have to spend compared to past generations.

Kids not only have money to spend but they also have at their disposal a wide range of products to spend their money on: sweets, magazines, collectables, toys, clothes, amusement parks, fast-food restaurants, hairdressers, trips, home decoration, cinema, sports, hygiene and personal care,... we could also include categories which are traditionally aimed at adults such as perfumery, cosmetics, telephones or jewellery.

Besides, the sociological and economical changes, the technical innovations and the abundance of advertising messages, which have been taking place in

the western world, have resulted in the birth of a new generation which some authors have strived to label as radically different from the last generation. It is *"The age of compression"*. Lindstrom and Seybold (2004:1-2) argued that *"They've grown up faster, are more connected, more direct and more informed. They have more personal power, more money, influence and attention than any other generation before them"*. These authors also stated: *"They spend more money and time with a casual carefree attitude: they get what they want when they want it"*.

In this way, new models of consumers have arisen in this context: the so-called KGOYS, acronym of Kids Are Getting Older Young: refers to the fact that kids grow up or mature sooner and the "tweenagers", term which comes from the understanding of these two words: "twens" and "teenagers", which allude to the age span between eight and twelve, and are those who behave as teenagers. All this results in the *"strengthening of preferences of brands for products to which this brand was not relevant amongst the youngest"*. (Schor, 2006:77-79).

In this context, where the period of time for childhood is shorter due to the acquisition of teenage and even adult models, a new paradigm of consumer kid emerges: the brand-consumer kid.

According to this, Lindstrom and Seybold (2004:13) exposed this idea in the illustrative book entitled *Brandchild*: *"A quick survey will reveal that brands are as hot as ever amongst today's tweens. The familiarity of brand adds security and offers a framework to their world. And in the best spirit of the marketers, brand have become symbols for an identity, offering the opportunity to be trendy, cool, rich, outrageous, rebellious or just plain stylish"*.

Juliet B. Schor (2006:39) was emphatic when she stated that *"Nowadays, when a kid asks for something, he is asking for a specific brand"* and she quoted a study carried out by Nickelodeon in 2001 in which she revealed that a ten year old kid was able to store in his memory around 300 or 400 brands. What is more, 92% of the products kids between 8 and 14 asked for, were specific brands.

According to this authoress, when kids are eighteen months old they are able to recognize logos, and before they reach the age of two, they are asking for products by their brand name. When kids are three or three and a half years old, these little consumers start believing that brands express their personal characteristics. That is to say, these brands are modern or new, strong or denote intelligence (Schor, 2006:31).

Ross and Harradine (2004:12) also carried out a very interesting research about the knowledge of brands amongst schoolchildren, especially those brands related to sports goods. At the same time, they quoted similar studies carried out by Hogg *et al.* (1998), who tried to explain how kids develop preferences and loyalty to a brand, Hite and Hite (1994), who stated that kids are the millstone of traders because they are the ones who have influence on their parents. They also stated that the dependence on brands is firmly established in kids when they are two years old. Jobber (1998), Brassington and Pettitt (2000) and De Chernatoy and McDonald (1998), for all of them the loyalty of child consumers produces benefits on a long term basis. This idea is also shared by Edgecliffe-Johnson (1999).

Matthews (1999) and Novakovitch (1999), who are mentioned by Ross and Harradine (2004), commented that kids recognize brands at earlier ages and they also suggested that kids are able to distinguish between products before they reach the age of five. Oates, Blades and Gunter (2003:402) quoted Weller (2002), who pointed out that kids recognize logos and brands when they learn to read.

The researches carried out by Brée (1995:252-253) showed that kids at six or seven are able to clearly indicate those brands which they like or not, into different product categories such as sweets, shoes, jeans, toys and even the detergents used by their mothers.

In 1989, in a research carried out by Mc Neal to determine what shopping meant for kids, it was noted that the awareness of brands existed amongst second, third and fourth graders.

It was perceived that almost in 38% of the drawings, brands were present although these brands had not been suggested. In 53% of the categories of the product, brands were represented, and in 32% of the 271 drawn products, a name product appeared, especially in the sectors of food, toys, clothes, discs, sports, perfumery or televisions (Mc Neal, 1993:85-98).

Therefore, we realized that kids recognize brands at an earlier age each time. In this way, the demand and consumption of brands starts earlier. However, this reality proven by researches leads us to ask ourselves what brands mean for kids or what do brands represent for them.

Besides, age should be another factor to be considered in the relationship between kids and brands. In this sense, Nguyen y Roedder (2005) explained that the youngest kids perceive brands or products through tangible characteristics (package, colour,...) meanwhile for the eldest, there are other dimensions such as their taste which give more sense to those brands or products; values directly or indirectly associated to the brand.

Methodology

To determine the demand and knowledge of brands in child target, the letters written by Spanish kids to the Three Wise Men at Christmas were collected. These letters are the equivalent to those sent to Father Christmas or Santa Claus in other countries.

The reasons why we selected this technique against quantitative studies, such as the known surveys, are several. On the one hand, the complexity of the public which is the object of this study makes the use of surveys impossible. On the other hand, the necessity of provoking spontaneous responses in kids, without inducing them to certain answers to items or questions posed. The main advantage found in the use of this technique is the elimination of those problems derived from the interaction between the interviewer and the subject of study, as it was proven by other previous applications, such as the following researches carried

out by all these authors: Enrique Gastón, 1978; José Manuel Esteve, 1983; and the one by O'Cass and Clarke, 2001 which was about the letters which had been sent to Santa Claus.

In order to elaborate the sample, two schools in Alicante (Spain) were chosen at random, one of them was a state school located in the surrounding suburbs of the city and the other one was a state subsidised private school located right in the centre of Alicante. The groups which covered the following ages were taken as a sample: 3-4 year olds, 7-8 year olds and 11-12 year olds, which correspond to early age, middle childhood and late childhood respectively. They are significant groups of each of the evolutionary stages of childhood.

During the first week of December, permission was requested at the two schools mentioned above, through a letter addressed to the coordinators and people in charge of each cycle. The development of the activity was explained to them. Later on, some telephone calls were made to confirm their participation and to fix details.

The teachers of the different age groups had to ask students, individually, to write in a letter the presents they would like to receive at Christmas and at the Three Wise Men festivity, along with the following socioeconomic data: grade, sex and school name. Teachers were warned not to give any kind of indication or comment or have any influence on the answers of the students.

The same teachers delivered blank sheets, without any instruction, in order that kids could write their petitions. Students were given 15 minutes, enough time to think about their wishes. Besides, contact amongst students was avoided so that they could not copy each others answers.

The idea was to provoke a spontaneous reminder of the brand and their knowledge of it. This had to be made without formulating specific questions which could influence the answers and at the same time which could increase the number of branded petitions.

With the group of the small kids of 3-4 years, it was the interviewer himself who asked the question: Which presents are you going to ask for this Christmas? Then, he noted down the answers. Interviewers avoided suggesting the presence of brands, but, on the other hand, helped kids to express their answers verbally, since some of them had real difficulties in expressing themselves.

The letters were collected a week before the Christmas Holidays and they were grouped according to the age span and the different types of schools, state school or state subsidised private school. From all of the letters collected, 10 of each age group were selected at random (five written by boys and another five written by girls) and 10 from each of the schools. As a result, we collected a total of 60 letters.

Then, the analysis of these letters was carried out. The following variables were taken into account: type of school, age span, sex, demand of brand (which referred to any kind of brand: product name, brand range or familiar brand and umbrella brand), if this last answer was affirmative, a distinction was made between the three types of brands mentioned before.

We considered the definition of brands proposed by Zikmund and D'Amico (2002:16) "a characteristic of identification which distinguishes one product from another, more specifically any name, term, symbol, sign or design or a combination of all these united", as well as the distinction established by these two authors between: individual brand or product name, familiar brand (grouping a line of products related) and brand of the maker or umbrella brand.

Results

A quantitative analysis made evident that there existed a high level of knowledge of the brands, which continued to improve as the subject of the study was getting older.

In this way, we can state that age is a factor that really determines the level of knowledge of brands. 28% of the three year old children in the state school and 58,5% in the state subsidised private school asked for a toy by its specific name or according to the brand range, without noticing outstanding differences with regard to the sex of the children. However, there existed differences in the category of the products demanded. According to girls, they asked for baby dolls, such as the *Baby Born*, or for mannequin dolls, such as the *Barbie*. In some occasions they even indicated which specific *Barbie* they wanted.

Amongst the boys, the brands of licensed products were particularly significant. In this way, the manufacturer of the toy was omitted in all of the cases, and the character itself, whose popularity is due to the film or cartoons they star in, is the one who is really important. That was the case of Spiderman or *CARS* at Christmas in 2006.

At this age, the presence of different kinds of brands is complementary. That is to say, if a child names a product by its name, he does not add the brand range to which it belongs and vice verse. For example, girls asked for a "Dancing Princess" (from the film "12 dancing princesses") or a Barbie. However, in their petitions the two existing types of brands were not mentioned in either case. Nevertheless, if girls were asked: "*What's the name of the dancing princess?*" Most of them answered, "*Barbie*".

Children do not distinguish the different parts which form the architecture of brands. These are generally really complex and they are formed by names which contain several syllables, therefore, children are not able to understand.

In this way, children, at this age, do not understand the concept of a brand. But this does not mean that they will not ask for them. For example, Adrián who was three years old, when he was asked if he wanted a car of a specific brand he answered, "*yes, purple*", referring to the colour of the car. However, his friend Carlos answered that same question with "*yes, modern*". Although, when some girls who had asked for a doll, and they were asked, "*Which one? There are many*

dolls." They shrugged their shoulders and answered "I don't know, any doll", referring only to the category of the product and never to the brand itself.

On the other hand, the type of school to which these kids attended, taken as an indicator of their socioeconomic differences, influenced the demand of brands at this early age span. The demand of brands doubled the percentage in the case of the state subsidised private school located right in the centre of the city against the school located in a surrounding area of the city.

The demand of brands increases significantly with the group formed by the 7-8 year old children, since in this age span, 96% of the kids in the state subsidised private school (all kids except one), and 72% in the state school included in their letters, at least one petition, which alluded to a brand, by the product name or the brand range, and never by the umbrella brand. However, the confusion at the time of describing the different components of the architecture of the brand was still obvious. In this way, for example, an 8 year old child asked for "*The gameboy is called pesepe*", that is to say, the PSP Gameboy". This is a clear allusion to the confusion provoked by advertising. In this case, the child did not distinguish between the Game Boy by Nintendo and the PSP by Sony.

At these ages, petitions related to videogames are clearly outstanding. The long names of these videogames were transcribed more or less correctly, even though these names were occasionally formed by three words in a language which generally was not Castilian. What is more, they were not able to copy the name from a catalogue.

In the case of the videogames, the conjunction of two types of brands is particularly perceived. This is verified because of the high percentage of petitions which include the name of the videogame along with the name of the games console in which this videogame is played.

With regard to these types of products, at this age, the brand of licensed products was also significant once again, even though these referred to different celebrities from the group of kids between 3 and 4, for example, Star Wars or sportsmen who belonged to football clubs such as the "Real Madrid" or the "F.C. Barcelona".

As far as girls at this same age are concerned, licenses related to celebrities such as those taking part in Barbie films or in the Witch or Winx serials which are explicitly aimed at this genre, are very important.

Significant changes are found in the last age span. 85.7% of the eleven year old kids in the state school and 82% in the state subsidised private school asked for brands. Then, although a decrease in the demand of brands is noticed, this decrease could be explained by the increase of the demand of useful products, especially clothes, money or school material. The reason for this is that most of these children know the truth about the legend of the Three Wise Men. As a result, other types of products which need the mention of the brand, as would be in the case of those toys and videogames mentioned above, are not in such demand.

However, the accuracy in the petition of branded products was something normal in this age group in both schools. Despite the decrease in the percentage

of letters which include petitions with brands, the number of petitions which contain brands in each letter have increased. The concretion of such brands is also more significant. Not only the name of the brands or the brand maker is included, but also the two together or the complementary brands are also named, such as the game console “Los Sims” for *Playstation 2*”.

Besides, at this age, a more important presence for umbrella brands or brand names of the maker was noted. That was the case of the Nokia or Motorola mobiles which were asked for by this age group.

The genre of children is not considered, in any of the age spans, a determined factor which could influence the demand of brands. We observe a very similar behaviour in both sexes. The category of the demanded product is the only difference found, and especially the audiovisual licenses; these are presented under a marked distinction between those aimed at boys and those aimed at girls.

Conclusions

We are certainly facing the consolidation of a child consumer, who is better informed, more self-confident about the decisions he takes and is more precocious. He is getting more autonomous when deciding which products he wishes to consume. According to his consumption of decisions, we include a high percentage of brands.

Along with the socioeconomic changes occurred, which are extrinsic to the subject nature, such as for example, the demographic changes or the economic growth, we perceive other factors which influence directly on the demand of brands.

Age is one of the main determining factors. Important differences between the group of the youngest, 3-4 year olds, and the remaining age spans have been observed. However, from a specific age, the knowledge of brands does not advance, as can be seen with the group of the 7-8 and 10-11 year old children. With regard to these two groups, the level of exactitude when naming the product is more correct according to its complex architecture, because they include not only a type of a brand, but also different levels of its hierarchical structure.

In this way, the socioeconomic differences established from the two selected schools for this sample, are also another factor through which we can explain this demand of brands.

It is perceived that a better knowledge of brands in the state subsidised private school, where middle and high-middle classes are grouped, than in the public school where the classes grouped are the middle and low-middle class. But this distinction is only evident in the age span of the 3-4 year olds, and it decreases as they get older.

At this age span, the main factors of socialization are the characteristics of their closer environment; that is to say, the family and the social core into which this

family interacts. This leads to a higher demand of brands amongst the children who belong to the higher and middle class.

Therefore, when the family is replaced or is completed by other factors such as school, friends and particularly the media, the differences between one social stratum and other are not so noticeable. They both are exposed to very similar stimuli. Thus, the percentage of children who belong to the group of the 10-11 year olds and who demand brands are really very similar.

In conclusion, it must be emphasized that the demand of brands is not the final stage in this evolution of the kid customer. This process began to be evident in the decade of the 50s and it is just one of the stages in the evolution towards the demand of experiences or of perceptions in which those brands inspire them. Therefore, they do not become consumers of products but consumers of life-styles.

In this way, it is necessary to open future researches which are focused on the evolution of the meaning of the brands at different ages, as well as on the motivations which lead children to wish for the possession of these brands. Thus, while at early ages, brands have a mainly deictic function, specifying the product they want; at later ages, we start perceiving the symbolic functions characteristic of adult ages.

What is more, we could deduce that the aspirations which take part in the desire of buying a product with a specific brand are superior and much more complex in the case of children, because of the high degree of fantasy implied in childhood and their credibility for these types of offers. For adults, this line or border which divides the promised scenarios and the reality offered by the product is more clearly defined.

And really, who is the child who does not like dreaming?

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Why Don't They just Show the Product?

Tweens' Reception and Conception of TV-advertising

Lars Pynt Andersen

The sub-teen consumer segment called 'tweens' or 'tweenies' is now looking more and more like an established segment and a market in its own right (Cook and Kaiser, 2004; Lindstrom and Seybold, 2003; Siegel et al., 2004; Dibley and Baker, 2001; Brzezinski, 2004). The public and scholarly debate continues to spark controversies as the frontier of childhood innocence is fought in battles with images of children that are either marketing literate, competent consumers (e.g. Lindstrom and Seybold, 2003) or highly vulnerable, incompetent children (e.g. Linn, 2004), even though many researchers would agree that the probable answer is that they are both, or perhaps something in between (Buckingham, 2000; Brembeck et al., 2004; Cook, 2004). The tween segment is placed right in the middle of this controversy as the conceptualization of 'in-be-tween child-and teenhood' also suggests, and there can be no doubt that some of the marketing industry takes a vested interest in charting the borders of childhood so that the cultivation of the tween segment becomes a legitimate business (consider for example the title of the book "The Great Tween Buying Machine, Capturing Your Share of the Multibillion-Dollar Tween Market" (Siegel et al., 2004).

A popular phrase often related to the tween concept is that "kids are growing old, younger" or as acronym: KGOY. This is an idea that in itself is not very new (Cook and Kaiser, 2004), and it is a postulate that is still far from being substantiated or elaborated (for example; what is really meant by 'older?'). More likely to be of importance is that children born in the nineties are growing up in an entirely different media landscape than those in the seventies where most of the research on advertising and children was conducted (Mallalieu et al., 2005). The call for research on tweens (and also younger children) that tries to get beyond the either/or propositions is therefore imminent. It is, however, surprisingly difficult to 'transcend' these discourses because they are loaded with implicit and conflicting value claims on central concepts such as childhood, parenting, marketing and advertising (Cook, 2004). Particularly emblematic of this difficulty is

the subject of TV-advertising in relation to children (Buckingham, 1993; Gunter and Furnham, 1998). The purpose of this article is to look at tweens' reception and conception of TV-advertising. In an attempt to get beyond simplistic either/or propositions on tweens' understanding of TV-advertising, the problem is approached in a qualitative framework. Rather than simply ask: "do tweens understand TV-advertising?", the main question is: "how do tweens understand TV-advertising and what meanings do they find relevant when interpreting TV-advertising?" Insight into this question is important to marketers when considering marketing communications targeting tweens, either directly or indirectly, and also to interest groups and policy makers, as TV-advertising related to children is highly regulated in many countries (for example Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Greece and UK (Mallalieu et al., 2005)).

The tween segment

The construction and development of a term such as 'tween' is a very interesting research subject in its own right. Now it is a term with expanded sociological meaning and a term used by interest groups etc., but the tween concept is first and foremost developed from a pragmatic marketing context of segmentation (Siegel et al., 2004). Unfortunately, this context does not leave room for elaboration on this, but it should be considered that whatever the tween concept may end up signifying is by no means a given or natural thing (and this article is now part of this construction).

The segment is usually defined in terms of age and has been defined in various ranges from 7 to 16 years of age, but the definition in marketing is usually from 8-12 years (Siegel et al., 2004) or 8-14 (Cook and Kaiser, 2004). In this article, the focus is narrowed to the older tweens, being 10-12 years of age and corresponding to the level of 4th-6th class in the Danish school system.

This is theorised to be an age that spans some development but also with some experience and knowledge on media, advertising and consumption (Gunter and Furnham, 1998; John, 1999). The Danish 10-12 year olds also have considerably more money to spend at their own discretion than the younger tweens (Hansen and Halling, 2002) which in some respects makes them more interesting from a marketers' perspective than younger children.

Research method

The choice of a qualitative methodology is appropriate and necessary considering the purpose of getting beyond the simplistic dichotomizing of tweens as 'competent' or not, 'social beings' or 'social becomings' etc. The difficulties in using

children as respondents means that focus groups are often used (Oates et al., 2003; Mallalieu et al., 2005). Recent research suggests that in-depth interviewing may also be appropriate, even with children as young as seven years of age, as long as interviewing techniques are appropriately designed and applied (Kellet and Ding, 2004). In the present case of 10-12 year olds, the use of verbal feedback is less problematic than with younger children.

In the present study, pairs of children were interviewed in setup where two children were interviewed by two researchers (the present author and one of three other researchers, the author only participated in half of the interviews). The interviews were semi-structured with an 'out of focus' approach. This approach was chosen because it allowed for some dialogue between the children and was assumed to be less straining and intimidating, while also allowing for some interpretations of the experiences as related to the socio-cultural context of the individual respondent (Mick and Buhl, 1992), which focus groups do not, or only to a very limited degree. The interviews lasted about an hour and were conducted in a separate room at the school. The initial questions for sketching the children's socio-cultural context were on leisure time activities, general interests, friends and family. Roughly the last half part of the interviews focused on specific TV-ads or websites and was conducted in front of a TV or a computer connected with the internet.

The approach included a very extensive sampling procedure. Four public schools situated in different geographic areas were chosen in order to ensure that the study covered a diversity of the Danish cultural and social conditions. The areas can be described as follows:

- 1) Country side area. Characteristics: growing economy, focus on local (rural), cultural values.
- 2) Suburban area, very close to large city. Characteristics: economic, social and cultural stability. Middle class.
- 3) Suburban area close to large city. Characteristics: very good economy, social and cultural stability. Upper middle class.
- 4) Suburban area close to large city. Characteristics: economic, social, cultural and ethnic diversity. Lower middle class and below.

220 questionnaires (with questions on leisure activities, media use and knowledge as well as attitudes towards advertising) were collected from children attending 4th, 5th and 6th class in the four schools. On the basis of a careful analysis of these, 48 children were chosen for interviews in pairs.

The classic studies of children and TV-advertising have shown media consumption to be an important factor in explaining attitude and responsiveness to TV-advertising (Rossiter, 1979). A selective sampling procedure was used in order to control that the sample of the children interviewed were not biased in the sense that we only interviewed children with high or low levels of media consump-

tion. It was also suspected that the access to leisure-time activities could be important. The children were placed in one of the following four categories based on their pattern of media consumption and leisure-time activities:

- 1) Children with a use of media characterised by variety (especially regarding new media). Many leisure-time activities.
- 2) Children with a use of media characterised by variety (especially regarding new media), but a low consumption. Some leisure-time activities.
- 3) Children with a wide knowledge and use of different media. Some leisure-time activities.
- 4) Children with a limited use of media. Very few or no leisure-time activities.

The children paired were always of the same gender and school-class. When selecting the children for the interviews the school teachers were consulted to ensure that the selection and pairing of the children would not be a problem. We did this to ensure that the interview situation could be as relaxed and productive as possible and to avoid unpleasant situations for the children. We could otherwise have sampled and paired two children that had a problematic relation, for example two boys with a history of fights, or girls with 'cold air'. This procedure led to only few changes in the children interviewed. The children screened out were replaced with other children of the same category (the media/leisure categories mentioned above).

The selected TV-ads

The ads were selected on the basis of targeting the tweens directly and explicitly, targeting tweens as only part of the target group or not targeting tweens at all (at least not explicitly). Even though the concept of tweens is not new, it is hard to find TV-ads that clearly and solely target tweens. Perhaps this is due to ethical constraints, but there may also be financial constraints as it may not be profitable to address this very narrow segment with expensive mass-marketing such as TV-advertising. Of the ads listed below, only the first ad for school milk can be said to target the tween segment directly and exclusively.

Looking into tweens' reception of ads not intended for them might seem to be a misguided effort and a waste of time. But there are many arguments to propose a closer look into tweens' reception of advertising that is only partly addressing tweens or even advertising for products illegal for tweens to buy. If tweens have anywhere near as much influence on parents' purchasing decisions as the literature mentioned above suggests (whether one subscribe to simplifications such as 'pester power' or not), it is of great importance for marketers to include the tweens' reactions in their considerations when designing and evaluating

marketing communications. TV-ads have been claimed to influence children's perception of brands they might use in the future, even if they have no immediate use of the products (Gorn and Florsheim, 1985). In this sense, TV-advertising for products less relevant to present tweens, is actually building brands for the future in the minds of the consumers to be. In the case of sweet alcoholic beverages, there are important moral and legal implications of the tweens' advertising receptions which make it even more relevant to include these ads, even if the advertiser would claim not to target tweens.

The ads shown were:

1. "Skolemælk.com": a Danish 'pop-star' celebrity (Christina Milton)¹ is shown in a concert in front of children dancing and drinking milk directly from small milk cartons (sold by subscription in school). The ad is targeting children to engage them in an internet competition where they can win a concert with the pop star to be held at the school premises.
2. "Faxe Kondi 2": a carbonated soft drink endorsed by two Danish sports celebrities (a man and a woman). The spot shows the two celebrities playing with a imaginary ball in a crowded underground metro station. No dialogue.
3. "Familien Tomsen": a sit-com parody with actors dressed up as chocolate bars talking 'candy language'. It is an umbrella/corporate branding strategy with the TOM's corporation presenting their TOM's universe of many different candy brands owned by TOM's.
4. "Smirnoff Ice – life is calling": a lyrical, surreal montage with fantastic imagery of the exciting nightlife where 'anything may happen'. Smirnoff Ice is a sweet vodka-based ready-to-drink beverage, often referred to as a "starter brew". Verbal voice-over in English throughout the ad.
5. "Jaegermeister – ice cold": Jaegermeister, an alcoholic shot drink, presented by two very dorky-looking young males. The ad's exaggerated twist is that the drink is so cold that the glass sticks to their lips and fingers. No dialogue. Voice-over in sign-off is in English.

The ads 2 and 3 are ads presenting a style and a product that would normally be thought to appeal to tweens, but not solely. The Faxe Kondi 2 soft drink is a brand that is targeting young consumers and is only consumed by adults to a limited degree. The brand "Kondi" is Danish and has good domestic brand awareness. The same can be said about the TOM's brand, both for its corporate brand (TOM's), and the product brands of the advertised chocolate bars, for example "Yankie Bar" and "Holly Bar".

The ads 4 and 5 are advertising for products that, because of their alcoholic contents, cannot be marketed to tweens. However, according to Lindstrøm's (2003) and Siegel et al.'s (2004) construction of tweens as "teen-wanna-bees" with a taste for the fantastic, it could be inferred that the imagery of the Smirnoff ad and that

the young 'jackass'— like the characters in the Jaegermeister ad would appeal to tweens.

Method of analysis

The interviews were transcribed in verbatim and analysed with the use of Atlas.ti, (a windows program assisting qualitative data analysis). Even though the software such as Atlas.ti and Nudist quite often are related to the use of 'grounded theory' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), the analysis was primarily driven by the research questions mentioned above and therefore the analysis and methodology is not, and was never intended to be, 'grounded'. However, as the research question is rather explorative in nature, the coding approach was also quite open and explorative.

Tweens' general perception of TV-advertising

In the interviews, the tweens clearly stated that TV-advertising is seldom exciting, and some even claim to avoid the ads by leaving the room or switching channels. Even though many of the children did find a few ads to discuss in appreciative terms, they would have to be prompted to do so in almost all cases. Sometimes, the examples of ads shown to them could trigger some positive ad-experiences, often quite unrelated to the examples. Just as often, however, the ads shown to them would lead to associations of annoying and insulting ads.

Many found it difficult to conceal that they found the subject so boring they simply had to stretch their patience to the outmost when we tried to bring up the subject of TV-ads.

For example, these two boys of 4th grade (area 1):

B1: They are annoying!

B2: Yeah!

(INT): Don't you sometimes also find some ads a bit funny?

B1: Well, yes, some times.

B2: Not very often!

The boys yawn and stretch and look out of the window, even though they were very excited about the interview when it started.

These two girls are more elaborate (4th grade, area 2):

G1: I honestly think that on TV2 they just show ads all the time, and even if they say something is on at 8 o'clock it is really not until ten minutes past sometimes. I think that's annoying. Or on TV-Danmark, if you watch something and then suddenly they shows ads. That's really very annoying. [...]

INT: Don't you like some ads? Can't you think of some?

G1: No, not really.

INT: What about the TOM's ads? Have you seen them?

G1: Yeah, I like them, they are quite funny.

In these interviews we had the advantage that the children had previously provided examples of their favourite ads (if they had any) in the questionnaires. So we had a list with popular ads before the interviews, but even when bringing these examples up it could be difficult to generate interest.

Only internet pop-ups are referred to as more annoying than TV-ads, and surprisingly, outdoor billboards are often mentioned in very positive terms: The 'slowness' of the billboard media, the interactive quality that you can read and study these at your own pace, is appreciated as a positive quality. The tweens would choose to read them while waiting for a bus for example.

As a girl puts it (4th grade, area 3):

G1: Well, if you are at a bus stop and feel very alone, then there is stuff like that you can look at, and I like that. I think that's very nice.

INT: Any of those ads you particularly like?

G1. Perhaps the ones for movies, and those sorts...

TV-advertising and internet pop-ups are experienced as intrusive communications that are forced upon you, and a form of advertising which is deliberately avoided, while billboards are experienced as communications chosen of your own free will.

Tweens' conception of TV-advertising

None of the tweens in this study are likely to be confused about what is TV-advertising and what is programme content. They are quite self-confident, as they generally believe to have 'figured them out' as the persuasive communications TV-advertising actually are. But, while tweens' conceptualisations of the persuasive nature of advertising are impressive, they are not quite as advanced or equal in nature to what might be expected from young adults (O'Donohoe, 1997; O'Donohoe, 2001).

In one of the most technically impressive examples, these two ten-year-old girls deconstruct a specific ad for the white goods retail chain, *Punkt 1*, from memory:

G1: There are two Punkt 1 ads that are shot down at the Kongevejscenter.
[...]

G1: I just think it is a very good place to shoot them, down at Kongevejen.

INT1: Why?

G1: I just think it is a very good place because it is very spacious.

G2: Also, the shop is so wide that you can look into the store [from the outside].

INT2: Did you recognize it from the ads?

G2: You can recognize it, because there is also some greenery you can recognize.

G1: You can also recognize the sign over the door, and the door, because it is different. If it was a mall door, it would just be glass doors, but these are real doors.

She comments on the choice of location and store, and she can even indicate the exact street, (which is not easy from the brief and fragmented exposition in the ad): a perfect background for the comic action. One of the girls later explain that her grandmother had a bad experience with a specific shop in the chain before the chain changed its name to *Punkt 1* (the chain changed its name and corporate design from *Snebvide* to *Punkt 1* in 2003), and that this experience made her take a very negative attitude to the chain. But she also comments that she might one day try another shop in the chain when she grows up to buy white goods. This story of her grandmother's consumption experience shows impressive understanding of the mechanism of branding and re-branding of retail chains and how service may vary from store to store. It also implies that she actually considers the experience of the TV-ad as an experience in its own right, *but still through a pragmatic aesthetics of commercialism*. She judges the ad based on a criticism of persuasive strategy.

The examples above indicate a quite sophisticated knowledge of the genre conventions and the persuasive nature of advertising. For example, when a tween comments on the sound and rejects the (artificial) laughter of an audience in the TOMs sit-com ad, it indicates that the child is able to understand that this is a strategic element, something dubbed on for effect. But also the child's very pragmatic assumption of persuasive advertising communication: that the ad is supposed to be as appealing to her as possible, which makes her reject this element as 'an imperfection' of easily recognized artificiality rather than a cue to the self-conscious ironic style (which is the case, appreciated or not).

The example of the Skolemælk.com ad shows that nearly all tweens reject the ad as being 'bad', and most of them explain it as a case of being 'un-exciting' in an 'out-of-key' way, rather than simply being boring or presenting a boring product. Only some of the children are very good at explaining this explicitly and exhaustively, but this is to be expected as our sample of children was designed to include children with diverse demographics and varying levels of media consumption. John R. Rossiter's studies on childrens' attitudes towards TV-advertising have shown heavy consumption of TV and TV-advertising to be related to a more positive attitude towards TV-advertising (Rossiter, 1979; Rossiter and Robertson, 1976), but no such differences appeared evident as all the children in the interviews were very skeptical and negative. However, the quantitative methodology of these studies makes comparison of the findings difficult.

The interviews in this study show that children with high and diverse media consumption (groups 1 and 3, as explained above) are better at analysing and discussing their experiences of advertising (on TV as well as in other media). This is perhaps not surprising, but media consumption is not likely to be the only important factor in this, age has also been suggested as a very important factor

(John, 1999; Rossiter and Robertson, 1976; Rossiter, 1979; Siegel et al., 2004), particularly the idea of stages reminiscent of Piaget. Deborah R. John suggests a distinction between the “analytical” and the “reflective” stage at the age of 11: “Eleven to twelve-year-olds were more discriminating, using nuances of voice, manner, and language to detect misleading advertising.” (John, 1999). In this study, the ten-year-olds were just as likely to be elaborate on these subjects as the 12-year-olds, which is perhaps surprising. Also, in relation gender there were no important differences.

None of the tweens were able to appreciate an element of self-reflexive irony or symbolic, surreal imagery. The tweens do not appreciate the complex self-reflexive, ironic meanings of some advertising (Andersen, 2003; Brown, 2001) or advertising that offers no immediate product or brand-relevant meanings (such as self-appraisal, benefits). This suggests that the term ‘reflective’ chosen by John (1999) cannot be understood in a complex sense involving reflection of genre or meta-communicative layers of irony or symbolism.

Tweens’ conception of advertising is what rationally and easily can be connected to selling. Advertising is not supposed to be obscure, but to be presenting a product as loudly, clearly and as truly desirable as possible.

In relation to the Smirnoff ad, the children try to use their knowledge of advertising in order to make sense of it, and to offer a constructive critique.

Boy (6.th grade, area 3):

B1: If you didn't see that last thing [the sign-off with logo], you would never know what they were advertising.

INT: But do you know now?

B1: Yes, Smirnoff Ice.

The Smirnoff ad is failing miserably in the eyes of the tweens, as it simply makes little sense. It does not fit the tweens’ conception of what advertising should be like.

Gratifications and the search for meaning

As with adults (McQuarrie and Mick, 1996; McQuarrie and Mick, 1999; Mick and Buhl, 1992), the tweens’ appreciation of advertising is depending on the ability to construct a relevant meaning, and only the ads making this possible are appreciated.

Out of the ads shown in this study, the unanimously most appreciated one is the TOM’s candy comedy. Also the ad for Faxe Kondi 2 gains some adherence, but it is nowhere near as popular as the TOM’s ad. Interestingly, the only ad directly targeting tweens (Skolemælk.com) was sneered at for being insincere and condescending, and neither the ads for Smirnoff Ice nor Jaegermeister appealed to the tweens at all, because they simply made little sense to them.

To these tweens, the good ads are the humorous ones, which concurs with the literature (McNeal, 1999; Gunter and Furnham, 1998; Siegel et al., 2004) . The gratification offered in the popular TOM's ad is related to its use of puns, wordplay on chocolate and candy brand names, in rhetorical terms also known as *paronomasia*, which creates a surprising semantic 'jump' (Eide, 1990). For example, the agency responsible has called the ads a "slik-com" which is a paraphrase for "sit-com" ("slik" is Danish for candy). The gratification seems to be the surprising playfulness in the language games of candy-talk and the high level of puns-per-minute.

Even though the ads in this campaign are quite silly and seem far from a straight appraisal of attributes and benefits, they make perfect sense to the tweens. The children do construct a relevant meaning of all the candy gibberish because of the product relevance in the puns, and the closed nature of the candy-comedy universe. In contrast, the liquor ads fail in this respect.

However, the slightly self-conscious use of irony and genre pastiche in the TOM's candy sit-com that may appeal to their 'Generation X' parents seem to be wasted on the tweens. They do not need the inverted commas or 'retro' posture to enjoy the ads. Some even suggest the obviously artificial background laughter (a sign underlining the pastiche) should be removed (two girls, 4th grade, area 3):

G1: I just think that perhaps the sound, the background where they laugh. I think that's a bit over the top, and I think it's annoying that they laugh. Also all those movies with someone laughing in the background, that makes me annoyed.

G2: If they hadn't laughed, it would have been a perfect ad.

When the children mentioned other preferred ads these were almost always involving comic elements, for example the ads for white goods retailer, Punkt 1, which features a continuously dissatisfied customer always screaming at the top of her lungs, along with elements of physical comedy. But the use of comedy and humour is by no means a guarantee of success with the tweens. For example, one boy, spontaneously and sarcastically, paraphrases a particular ad with the 'funny' orang-utan Rynke, an ad for fruit juice, which he finds insultingly stupid and bad ("Rynke" means "Wrinkle", and refers to the brand name Rynkeby). In contrast, he finds some of the earlier ads in the same campaign OK. This is a very clear indication of the subtle details in an ad-execution that may go wrong and lead to a total rejection.

The ad for Skolemælk.com was rejected as the worst of the ads shown. To adults, this is perhaps a bit puzzling, as the ad's strategy is far from boring didactics and seems to have 'tween appeal' with elements such as celebrity, popular music and competition. But the ad has at least two fundamental problems: it comes across as insincere, and the celebrity chosen only appeals to some of the tweens. Some might argue that the problem is the product, that milk is not exciting. But compared to the appeal of advertising for white goods (the Punkt 1 ad mentioned above), it seems that low product involvement does not have to be a problem for the appeal of the ads.

Why does the Skolemælk.com ad seem insincere? It shows the pop-star celebrity singing in front of enthusiastic children drinking milk, and also the celebrity in a backstage setting chatting and laughing with a small group of children. But the setting is not credible: the children do not think anyone would ever drink milk out of a milk carton at a concert, they do not think the star would behave in this friendly way, and they find no relation between the product and the prize (a concert). The chosen celebrity is not the essence of cool, but broadly accepted, and it would probably not solve all the ad's problems if you had a different celebrity. These two girls drink milk; know the web site; like the singer and the song but not the ad (4th grade, area 3):

G1: The whole audience is drinking milk?!

G2: I think that's odd, you don't do that at a concert.

G1: And then the singer probably wouldn't drink milk after she has been singing. She would probably drink water instead.

INT: So this seems wrong?

G2: [...] I don't think you would get to talk to her like they show in the ad.

The girls are quick to suggest alternative creative strategies that could have been exciting: how about a cow that jumps out of a fridge? How about milk that is alive? They also suggest that an exclusive visit to a dairy would be a more relevant and exciting prize than the concert. Admittedly, some tweens say the ad's creative idea might be kind of cool if they could win a personal concert with their absolute favourite music idol (for example Eminem or Madonna), but they are always very blasé about this: "Come on! They would never be in such a stupid ad."

The Smirnoff Ice ad that lures with a montage of fantastic and surreal images of the nightlife where 'anything may happen' is a complete turn-off to these tweens. It is not because they do not know the product, a few admits they have actually tasted it when offered by elder siblings. Even the tweens that seem to be highly media literate in other respects simply cannot make sense of this ad. Two girls (4th grade area 3):

G1: It is about some liquor. My younger cousin drinks it and my mom. But the ad is not really about it! And why does it have to be in English? It is much easier to understand in Danish.

G2: I just think it is strange!

G1: And then he just stands there looking at the clock, it has nothing to do with that!

G2: It is about something completely different than it should be.

The last comment by the second girl is very descriptive of the way we make sense of communications. She has certain expectations of the advertiser's intentions and how these should manifest themselves as a text belonging to a genre called advertising. Genre has also been described as a "horizon of expectations" (Jauss, 2000), and the meaning of any text is highly dependent on these expectations.

But tweens' conception of advertising makes it difficult for them to construct a relevant meaning out of both the Smirnoff Ice – and the Jaegermeister ad. It is a conception based on fairly rational rules of positive product presentation, and when the ads deny these to a high degree, they become an unsolvable puzzle. The TOMs ads are in contrast a solvable puzzle, a genre-relevant play with brand names and category of candy and chocolate.

Conclusions and perspectives for further research

An academic discourse on children and advertising must continuously ask for the basis of the communication, the conception of advertising, or as put in Jauss' terms: re-construct the likely horizon of expectation for the communication. Simply asking 'do children understand advertising' or 'do they know it's persuasive' makes little sense in itself. In this study, the focus is on Danish tweens, and the findings are that all the tweens expect advertisers to "just want to sell" and they find advertising to be highly persuasive. It is striking that the tweens' idea of what advertising discourse should be like seem to be stuck somewhere in the 1950s. These children may be competent users of state of the art information technology, but their conceptions of good advertising are slapstick comedy, USP and glamour lifestyle. By the standards invoked in almost all literature on this subject they should pass the 'exam on advertising' with flying colours: high level of scepticism, high awareness of the persuasive nature of advertising. But advertising is no longer just 'hard sell', even in the old-fashioned TV-media, the 'hard sell' is increasingly being replaced by what might be termed 'small talk' of entertaining comedy or symbolism and irony (Andersen, 2003; Brown, 2001). The proliferation of new and interactive media, brand placements, sponsorship and events only makes it more relevant to leave post-war hard-sell as the paradigm for advertising literacy. Perhaps it could even be inferred that the dislike for complex and symbolic advertising is really an advantage in the sense that advertising for alcoholic beverages should never appeal to tweens in the first place, so ironically, ignorance may become protection? No, perhaps not the ideal position, but trying to develop new concepts of ad-literacy could help, especially if we focus on a much broader ideal of consumer competences instead of cultivating "hidden persuaders"-advertising-paranoia such as Susan Linn (2004). Understanding the many persuasive strategies of advertising is good, but without a sense of economics (of a family etc.), the social-token (and social-anxiety) nature of brands, and other complex issues of consumption and marketing, tweens are hardly competent consumers.

Note

1. A national winner of the 'Pop-Star' tv-show.

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Television Promotion of Children's Snacks

Food for Thought?

David Marshall, Stephen Kline & Stephanie O'Donohoe

The commercialization of childhood has been a perennial issue in marketing since the 1970s when the FTC first investigated the regulation of direct-to-children marketing. Since that time the primary agents of consumer socialization (media, family, peers, and schools) have been studied, with growing attention paid to marketers' use of television to influence children's brand knowledge and preferences (Goldberg and Gorn 1978; Linn 2004) as well as children's own spending and influence on family consumption (Ward et. al, 1977, Valkenburg and Cantor 2002). Underlying these critical studies of consumer socialization, we often find a conception of the consumer child as 'a not-yet competent, not-yet complete social actor who is at risk' (Cook 2005: 156) and thus requiring protection in the deregulated global marketplace. Such studies support a common refrain in sociological circles, evincing a 'lingering suspicion and concern that corporate ingenuity, sophisticated market research and the lure of the televisual can overwhelm even the most savvy child consumers' (Cook 2004: 148).

Yet other writers have contested this idea of a 'vulnerable child consumer', proposing a savvy, choosing child who engages with marketing as a zone of freedom and identity construction in an expanding arena of individual consumer choice (Lindstrom and Seybold 2003). In the postmodern era, such writers suggest that we must talk of an empowered child who is 'an active, knowing being who makes her or his own meaning out of every morsel of culture' (Cook 2005:156) – particularly witnessed in their daily consumption practices. Acknowledging that child consumers are actively watching a diversity of television programming, and engaging both critically and pleasurably with brands, this rhetoric of an agentive, competent child is often invoked to sanctify direct corporate engagement with savvy child consumers as liberating them (often from parental control) in the domain of consumption. In this chapter, we review the obesity panic surrounding food marketing to children, and seek to offer a more nuanced and contextualised account of the relationship between children and food promotion

on television. Our account draws on a range of marketing, communications and health-related literature, as well as primary data from Canada, America, Britain and New Zealand.

Obesity panic and food marketing

On a global scale around 155 million children (1 in 10) are overweight, overshadowing the health issues attributed to malnutrition (World Health Organization 2000, International Obesity Task Force 2004). In the wake of the WHO's reports on the 'globesity epidemic', obesity rates have continued to rise, so that by 2010 almost 287 million children are expected to be overweight or obese (International Obesity Task Force 2006). In 2006, 40% of 5-18 year-olds in the Americas were estimated to be overweight, including 13% who were obese, while in Europe the corresponding rates were 32% overweight and 8% obese (International Obesity Task Force 2006). Similar trends can be found in Canada (Tremblay & Willms, 2003), New Zealand (Ministry of Health 2003) and the UK (SIRC 2005), with predictions that by 2020 over 50% of British children could be obese (House of Commons Health Committee 2004). The International Obesity Task Force (IOTF) reports have identified a number of contributory factors, including increased sedentary recreation, greater media exposure, promotion and marketing of energy-dense foods, and increased opportunity for purchase of foods high in saturated fat, free sugars and salt. Philip James, Chairman of the IOTF is reported as saying 'The first step must be to start protecting the health and well-being of our young children, who are being damaged because we are not yet willing to provide them with a safe environment where they can experience and learn the value of good food and play' (BBC 2003).

Although the rise in child obesity is generally attributed by medical researchers to both poor diet and lack of exercise, it has also been linked to fast food culture (Kline 2004, Schlosser 2001, Schlosser and Wilson 2006, Spurlock 2005, Young 2004). The growing debates about fast food culture and deregulated child marketing have highlighted many issues of children's exposure to and influence by marketing aimed directly at them. Indeed, by drawing these two concerns together, the issue of food marketing to children has become a particularly emotive one, with a recent British campaigning report claiming to "expose the top twelve 'dirty' marketing tricks that food companies use and which parents may not even be aware of" (Consumers Association 2006:2).

Analyses of our increasingly 'obesogenic environment' of media-saturated domesticity have noted the growing medical evidence concerning the relationship between heavy television viewing and excessive food consumption (Boynton-Jarrett et al. 2003; Coon and Tucker, 2002). The Saturday morning television networks in the USA have long been a favourite venue for food advertising – much of it falling into the fast food/snack category. Many commentators note that energy-dense foods, such as fast foods and snacks, tend to be advertised rather

than the vegetable and fruit balanced diets recommended by nutritionists (IOTF 2006, Gamble and Cotugna 1999). This 'unhealthy' bias promotes high fat, sugar, salt and energy-dense food brands in children's time TV (Kotz and Story 1994; Hastings et al 2003). Moreover, many of these campaigns employ marketing techniques such as celebrity testimonials, pester power, animated narratives and overstatement that in the past have been considered difficult for children to understand (Kline 2004).

Hastings et al (2003) reviewed the international research literature on the effects of children's marketing, concluding that:

- There is a lot of food advertising to children.
- The advertised diet is less healthy than the recommended one.
- Children enjoy and engage with food promotion.
- Food promotion is having an effect, particularly on children's preferences, purchase behaviour and consumption.
- This effect is independent of other factors and operates at both a brand and category level.

The authors acknowledge, however, many limitations in this body of research, calling on future research to provide more nuanced accounts of the role of food advertising in children's consumption practices, and noting in particular the increasing importance of integrated food marketing campaigns that go beyond advertising and include a range of activities such as on pack and in-store promotions, celebrity endorsement, product placements and on-line activities targeting children. Similar trends and concerns have been discussed elsewhere (Ambler 2006; Consumers Association 2006, Food Commission 2005, Story and French 2004; Wootan 2003, Hawkes 2004).

Recent studies have demonstrated the potential impact of marketing on children's preferences and consumption practices (Buizen and Valkenburg 2003, Laczniaak and Palan 2004, Halford et al 2004). Researchers note that children's heavy use of commercial TV puts them at risk for obesity and overweight (Tremblay and Willms, 2003, Hancox and Poulton 2006, Schor 2004, Linn 2004). Several factors might account for this: exposure to food marketing, habitual snacking and eating during media use. Moreover, the growing popularity of computer and video games confounds the problem of children's increasingly sedentary lifestyles associated with media, by displacing healthier active leisure pursuits like sport, play and work (Vandewater et al., 2004, Kline et al. 2003).

Changing promotional strategies involved in food marketing on children's television

In the remainder of this chapter, we outline our work towards a more socially contextualized and nuanced account of the relationship between television advertising and children's food choices. We are particularly interested in snack foods, since we believe that children are likely to have greater autonomy and influence over such choices. This makes the influence of marketing communications a more pressing question in this context, not least because snack foods are often high in fat, salt and sugar.

We argue first for the need to understand the systemic biases of food promotion as an environmental factor in the context of changing national and global marketing practices. We begin by outlining the international regulatory frameworks in which advertisers operate and reviewing previous content analyses of food advertising to children. We then draw on our own data, which allow us to compare food promotion in children's time and prime time TV in the USA, Canada, and the UK, and to explore the implications of different regulatory frameworks and market contexts for snack food promotion. Whilst documenting the promotional material directed towards children is important, focusing solely on what children might see is problematic on two fronts. Firstly, it conflates exposure with effectiveness, and secondly, by ignoring children's perspectives and voices, it exacerbates the "adultism" (Scott, 2000) noted and lamented in much research about children. This chapter, therefore, draws on surveys and focus groups/interview dyads involving children aged 8-11 in Canada and New Zealand, regarding their experiences of snack food marketing on television. It should be stated, however, that the primary research reported here is not based on a single cross-cultural study. Although they were not undertaken simultaneously and did not follow exactly the same procedures, both studies were based on similar questions and motivated by similar concerns about children's diet and their responses to food promotion on television.

By presenting these related strands of analysis together, we seek to address limitations and disciplinary biases that seem to plague the body of knowledge informing policy questions concerning children's exposure to and use of branded advertising in their discretionary snacking decisions.

The viewing and regulatory context: food advertising to children

Some have argued that there is little value in regulating marketing directed at children because young people's viewing patterns tend to include prime time TV, thus exposing them to unregulated food ads. Is it not better, argues the industry, to encourage responsible food advertisers to self-regulate by promoting

healthy lifestyle practices in their advertising? Coke's withdrawal from children's time advertising and McDonald's repositioning around teen markets are trumped as examples of the acceptance of corporate responsibility by the food industry (Sanders 2005). Yet given the strategic nature of competitive markets, with leading brands spending vast amounts to position themselves carefully in relationship to children's consumption, there are many questions about the usefulness of self-regulatory correctives in children's marketing. Answering these questions requires, at the very least, a solid understanding of children's viewing patterns, the nature of the food advertising they see, and the regulatory context in which this advertising operates.

Despite the growth of integrated marketing communications, television advertising continues to dominate the promotional budgets of food marketers (Hastings et al 2003; Story and French 2004). Certainly, television represents an attractive medium to marketers targeting children, who watch on average 2-3 hours per day in Britain, Canada and the US (Ofcom 2006; Statistics Canada 2006; Collier Shannon Scott 2005). It appears however, that the proportion of television advertising devoted to food has been decreasing in recent years. In the UK, the share of TV advertising spend accounted for by core category products (i.e., food, fast food restaurants and soft drinks) fell from 18.6% to 14.4% between 1999 and 2005. For 2005, this expenditure translated into 16% of all commercials seen by children (Ofcom 2006). It is worth noting that because so much of what children watch is outside children's airtime, less than 6% of the total core category advertising seen by children in 2005 came from children's airtime, either on terrestrial or extra-terrestrial channels (Ofcom 2006).

Direct comparisons with the US are not possible, but across the Atlantic, where food advertising is generally more intensive, there is evidence of a long-term decline in food and restaurant advertising. Between 1993 and 2004, food and restaurant advertising's total share of total advertising impressions fell from 33% to 28% (Collier Shannon Scott 2005; Ippolito 2005). On this basis, it has been estimated that the average American child sees 5,000 food and restaurant commercials each year (Collier Shannon Scott 2005).

Given such high, if falling, levels of expenditure and exposure, it is hardly surprising that television advertising to children is highly regulated across the world. Commissioned by the World Health Organization, Hawkes's (2004) 73-country study found that 85% of these regulated children's television advertising in some way, and 44% had specific restrictions on its timing and content. Twenty-two countries had some form of regulatory or self-regulatory clause on food advertising in particular. Such clauses tended to prohibit the promotion of unhealthy diets and misleading claims concerning nutritional value, and exhort advertisers to promote good dental health. As Hawkes (2004:iv) observes, however

Importantly, existing regulations do not consider food as a special category from the viewpoint of public health; regulations aim to guide the content and form of promotions, not to minimize their ability to encourage consumption of certain foods.

As Hawkes (2004) illustrates, the regulatory environment surrounding food advertising to children varies considerably between cultural contexts. In the US, for example, although there are particular regulations such as the Food & Drug Act, self-regulation is the order of the day. As the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) found to its cost in the 1970s, the First Amendment leaves little scope for introducing statutory restrictions. Indeed, President Bush and the majority members of Congress are on record as opposing restrictions on the scope of food marketing (Kelly 2005). The FTC is currently working to effect change within these parameters, however: it joined with the Department of Health and Human Services to organize a joint workshop on marketing, self-regulation and childhood obesity in June 2005 (AEF 2005). The issue has received further public attention due to the publication in December 2005 of an Institute of Medicine Report into food marketing to children and youth, which in turn stimulated a lawsuit against Viacom and Kellogg for unfair and deceptive practices related to the "marketing and sale of foods of poor nutritional quality" to children under the age of eight (Center for Science in the Public Interest, 2006). The Federal Communications Commission's recent establishment of a taskforce to study the relationship between the media and childhood obesity (WARC 2006) is likely to stimulate further public debate on this issue. In Canada, although Quebec has banned television advertising to children, the current system is also largely self-regulating.

A less laissez-faire approach is evident in Europe, however: the EU has proposed bringing new legislation into force in 2007 concerning the nutrition and health claims made in food advertising and promotions (European Parliament 2006). In the UK, there has been considerable statutory regulation and intense public debate surrounding food advertising to children. Public debate has been particularly intense since 2002, when the Government Chief Medical Officer's report highlighted rising child obesity levels. The following year saw the publication of the Hastings report (Hastings et al 2003), commissioned by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to review evidence concerning the nature, extent and influence of food promotion to children. This report led to Ofcom, the communications regulator, being asked to tighten the code regarding food advertising to children, and to the development of a nutrient profiling model to enable ads for products high in fat, salt and sugar to be identified. By 2005, the food advertising industry had conceded a "point of no return" and a "new reality" (Advertising Association 2005). Whilst part of this new reality related to the regulatory context, it also reflected the growing moral panic surrounding children's diet. A recent TV series, *Jamie's School Dinners*, showed celebrity chef Jamie Oliver's attempts to encourage schools to serve, and children to eat, healthier school meals. This programme caused a great deal of public soul-searching about children's diet, in and beyond school, and led to a range of government initiatives in this area (Oliver 2006). Further watershed moments for the industry were the publication in 2006 of a consultation document regarding new restrictions on food advertising (Ofcom 2006), and the subsequent announcement of restrictions applying to a wider age-range than anticipated (Campaign 2006). By addressing

the volume as well as content of food advertising, Ofcom has acknowledged that the whole system of food promotion needs to be reviewed.

The content of food advertising on television: prior research

Moving from the context to the content of food advertising to children, many studies have expressed concern about the kind of foods promoted to children, and the ways in which these are promoted. Hastings et al's (2003) systematic review of studies examining food promotion to children refers to 41 content analyses of children's food advertising, spanning three decades and many countries including the UK, USA and New Zealand. These studies indicate that food has dominated children's television advertising, and unhealthy food at that: across countries, "a clear pattern emerged that the advertised diet was too high in fats, sugars and salt and also that it was lacking in meats, fruit and vegetables (especially fresh, non-processed meat, fruit and vegetables)" (Hastings et al 2003:84). Even where 'healthy' foods were promoted, this tended to be in their least healthy form, such as sweetened breakfast cereal or deep-fried vegetables. Turning to creative strategies, several studies found animation was common, sometimes combined with live action to show children interacting with cartoon characters. The most popular appeals were hedonistic, emphasizing taste, humour, fun and action-adventure. There was relatively little evidence of overt attempts to encourage pester power, or of widespread use of celebrity endorsements. Premiums or competition prizes were found in up to 25% of children's food ads, however, particularly for cereals and fast foods.

Studies published after the Hastings et al (2003) report do little to disturb this picture. In this section, we review recent analyses of advertising content from North America, Britain and New Zealand, before moving on to our own content analysis of advertising in the UK, US and Canada. Our review of recent content analyses focuses on four studies, two in Britain, one in the USA and one in New Zealand. The different sample sizes, compositions and dates – not to mention the different categories used – indicate the difficulties of making comparisons across different studies. The two British studies examined commercials screened in children's time and adult time TV programmes; Ofcom (2005) reports on 900 terrestrial ads screened between September and November 2003, whilst Ofcom (2006) examined 12,839 ads, from terrestrial and non-terrestrial channels, screened between March and April 2005. The American study (Harrison and Marske 2005) refers to 1,424 ads from Spring 2003, drawn from the top-rated children's TV programmes; they then used a variety of measures to code each programme as primarily targeting children or a general audience. Finally, the New Zealand study (Wilson et al 2006) reports on 858 food ads from free-to-air channels screened during children's viewing time in February-March 2005.

Food ads were found to represent 20-21% of children's television advertising in the UK (Ofcom 2005, 2006), 30% in the USA (Harrison and Marske 2005) and 37% in New Zealand (Wilson et al 2006). The only published Canadian study (Østbye et al 1993), covering prime time and Saturday morning television, found 28% of all impressions were for food products broadly defined. Consistent with earlier studies, the nutritional value of the advertised diet gave cause for concern; 83% of American food ads shown during the top rated children's programmes were for candy, sweets, soft drinks, convenience foods, or fast food restaurants (Harrison and Marske 2005). In New Zealand, Wilson et al (2006) found 73% of children's food ads were for less healthy food. They also found that fast food advertising became more intense as weekday afternoon slots progressed, suggesting the targeting of children near meal time. In the UK, Ofcom (2006) reports that 45% of core category ads were for chain restaurants, confectionery, soft drinks or savoury snacks. Cereal ads – such as those for Kelloggs CoCoPops Crunchers – accounted for a further 20%. Fast food was advertised most intensively in children's terrestrial airtime.

As Hawkins et al (2004) observe, public policy makers should not only concern themselves with the advertised diet: the portrayal of food in television advertising offers children opportunities for vicarious learning and role modeling in relation to diet and eating behaviours. Although such issues were beyond the scope of Wilson et al (2006), they were addressed in the other studies. Examining the American food ads in programmes targeting children, Harrison and Markse (2005) found that 91% contained no health-related messages (claims of “natural ingredients”, the most common message in this category, accounted for 5% of food ads targeting children). Over 80% of characters were depicted as of average body size, suggesting “that anyone can eat a diet low in fiber and high in fat and salt and still remain slender” (p.1572). Snack time was the most common eating occasion across the sample, accounting for 58% of child ads and 40% of general ads. Consistent with this, when characters were shown eating, this was in locations other than homes or restaurants in 56% of the child ads, and in 54% of general ads.

In the UK, Ofcom (2006) reports that 14% of core category ads used product tie-ins; not surprisingly, this proportion rose to 22% for cereal ads and 52% for chain restaurants. Although celebrity advertising was not common, characters were used in 27% of core category ads overall, 36% of chain restaurant ads, and 59% of cereal ads. Animation was used exclusively in 27% of core category ads, but in 47% of cereal ads. Only 20% of core category ads were set in the home, whilst 32% (47% of cereal ads) were set outdoors. A nutritional or health-related claim was made by 45% of core category ads, but there was considerable variation by product type: only 7% of cereal ads, but 98% of confectionery ads, made no such claims. Such “claims”, however, were often *disclaimers*, such as “enjoy as part of a balanced diet”.

Food advertising on British and North American television: study one

Our British data is composed of 1,302 ads taped from three terrestrial channels, covering children's programmes (child-time) and early evening programmes (general time) in February 2005; this compares with the Ofcom (2006) study's timeframe of March-April 2005. The North American dataset comprises 3,361 ads, drawn from two sweeps of advertising from seven networks, including two Canadian dedicated children's channels, in February 2004 and 2005. The analysis is ongoing, taking into account such variables as food type, eating occasion and environment, portions and servings, character gender, ethnicity and social relations, appeals, devices, and verbal messages, and the motivation for and effect of food consumption. Issues of marketing responsibility are also examined, such as the nature of any health claims made. In the following section, we present some preliminary findings to show the different patterns emerging across cultures.

Turning first to the UK database, 16% of the total sample comprised ads for food and drink (the umbrella term "food ads" is used below), with the proportion varying according to timeslot: 17% of ads from general time were for food, compared with 11% of those from child-time. The limitations of the small sample size (205 food ads in total, 31 of these from child-time) must be borne in mind when examining the following data. It should be noted that whilst the overall proportion of food advertising identified in this study was lower than the Ofcom study (16% vs 20%), the proportions reported here for cereal, confectionery, dairy and fast food ads are broadly similar to those reported by Ofcom (2006).

Bearing in mind the small sample size, the greater intensity of cereal and fast food advertising in child-time programmes is noteworthy (Table 1), and again consistent with Ofcom's (2006) findings. No child-time soft drink advertising was evident in this study, however, in contrast to the Ofcom study, which found this category accounting for 15% of terrestrial children's airtime ads. This discrepancy – between studies conducted in similar timeframes – indicates the potential impact of specific campaigns and seasonality on content analyses.

Table 1. Food type by timeslot in British advertising (per cent)

Food type	Total	Child-time	General time
Cereal	14	23	12
Beverage, juice	10	–	12
Confectionery	14	13	14
Savoury snacks	4	6	3
FF restaurants	9	19	8
Convenience food	26	19	27
Dairy products	14	7	16
Fruit/vegetables	1	–	1
Other	9	13	8
Base (n)	205	31	174

Note: Percentages may exceed 100 due to rounding.

The North American sample comprised 555 Canadian and 408 American food ads (Table 2). Although there were some differences between the American and Canadian ads, the overall patterns were similar enough to justify their treatment as one North American sample for purposes of this chapter. It should also be borne in mind that the North American sample is drawn from two time periods, whereas the British ads are drawn from one. Nonetheless, there are some striking differences between the two sets of ads. First of all, 29% of all ads in the North American sample were devoted to food, nearly twice the level of British advertising. Secondly, whilst only 15% of the food ads in the British sample came from child-time, this was the case for 63% of the North American ads (61% for the Canadian sample and 67% for the American sample). Whilst a whole range of social, cultural and economic factors may explain such a dramatic discrepancy, we may expect the British regulatory context and high profile public debate to have circumscribed the actions of British food marketers in this sensitive arena.

Table 2. Food type by timeslot in North American advertising (per cent)

Food type	Total	Child-time	General time
Cereal	15	22	3
Beverage, juice	10	9	12
Confectionery	20	23	15
Savoury snacks	9	11	5
FF restaurants	27	20	40
Convenience food	14	11	18
Dairy products	3	3	5
Fruit/vegetables	-	-	1
Other	2	2	2
Base (n)	963	612	351

Note: Percentages may exceed 100 due to rounding.

Different patterns in terms of advertised food types were also evident. Fast food restaurants, for example, accounted for 27% of North American food ads, three times the UK proportion. In North America, this category featured twice as prominently in general time as in child-time advertising, whilst in Britain, the reverse was true. In the case of cereals, whilst both datasets showed similar proportions of cereal advertising in general and a skew towards child-time advertising, the dominance of child-time advertising was much more dramatic in North America.

The two tables also indicate the different food cultures in operation. It may be, for example, that the higher levels of fast food advertising in North America reflect a greater tendency for consumers to eat out in such restaurants, whilst the higher levels of convenience/prepared food in the British sample reflect greater reliance on such foods when preparing meals in the home. Dairy products also featured more prominently in the British ads, as did bread and bakery products (represented in the “other” category). As might be expected, the advertised diet in Canada also differed somewhat from that in the US: bread was an advertised

category in Canada but not in the US, for example, and Canadian ads included more for cereal and convenience food, but fewer for confectionery and snacks.

In terms of presentational issues, only a brief outline of some relevant findings can be provided here. In general terms, a “naughty but nice” theme emerged from the appeals used in the British advertising, whereas the North American ads generally appeared to be more unapologetically hedonistic. The family meal was notable by its absence, since it was rarely depicted in food ads, particularly in North America. This may be related to the food categories advertised, since they suggest different consumption settings. It is worth noting, however, that only one in five ads across the sample was set in a kitchen or dining room, suggesting that the advertised diet is consumed away from traditional eating locations.

Finally, in light of increasing concerns about food marketers using integrated marketing communications to target children, it is worth noting the extent of cross-promotions (promotions undertaken jointly with partner organizations, such as product tie-ins) in the two samples. Cross-promotions were evident in 12% of British, 15% of American and 17% of Canadian food ads. They were most common in cereal, fast food and confectionery ad, and during child-time advertising, especially in Britain: 39% of child-time ads, but only 7% of general ads in the UK featured a cross-promotion, compared to 19% of child-time and 8% of general ads in North America.

Children's experiences and uses of snack food advertising on television: study two

Our discussion below draws on primary research undertaken in Canada and New Zealand. Our focus here is on preadolescent children aged 8- 11 in both countries; at this age children have considerable brand knowledge and can ask for products by brand name (Lindstrom and Seybold 2003), but are still in the process of developing their schemata for understanding the workings and strategies of branded advertising (Roedder John 1999; Boush et al 1994). Using focus groups, interview dyads and a questionnaire, we explored what advertising they recalled and how the children themselves perceived it – in other words, their own accounts of advertising and their experiences with the brands promoted on television (Gunter and Furnham 1998; Lawlor and Prothero 2002). The New Zealand study comprised eight focus groups and a classroom survey (n=95) with 8-11 year olds in two Dunedin schools in 2005. In the Canadian study, 80 interview dyads were undertaken with 5-11 year-olds (we limit our analysis here to the older children) in two Vancouver schools in 2004, along with a survey completed by 160 children in grades 3-7. Both samples were recruited with permission from Head teachers and parents, and with children's consent as well. The focus groups and interview dyads were transcribed and the survey data in both studies cleaned, coded and entered into SPSSx for analysis.

Our focus here is on Canadian and New Zealand children's perceptions of, and experiences with, snack food marketing on TV, especially on their own accounts of food advertising on TV and how this relates to their preferences and discretionary consumption of branded snack food. As these issues cannot be divorced from questions of competence, not least from a policy perspective, we preface our discussion of findings with a brief review of research on children's advertising literacy and nutritional knowledge.

A number of studies have looked at children's comprehension and understanding of advertising intent (Bulmer 2001; Young 2003; Macklin 1987; Chan and McNeal 2002; Goldberg and Gorn 1978). Questions about children's understanding from an information-processing perspective have also been well documented. Roedder John's (1999) enormously influential review of consumer socialization presents children as passing through three overlapping stages: perceptual (aged 3-7), analytical (7-11) and reflective (11-16). Relating these stages to advertising competence, she notes how the "major steps or building blocks of advertising knowledge" tend to fall into place in a particular sequence. Broadly speaking, the ability to distinguish commercials from programmes comes first, and is usually in place by the age of five. This is followed by an understanding of advertising's persuasive intent and an ability to recognize bias and deception, which typically emerge by the time children are eight. Around this time, children also develop some cognitive defences against advertising, with knowledge of particular advertising tactics and appeals developing in early adolescence as they become increasingly skeptical (Bousch et al 1994, Mangleburg and Bristol 1998). However, even within age groups there are variations in how children respond to advertising related to their experiences and cognitive abilities, raising some concerns about age-based models (Kunkel and Roberts 1991, Pine and Veasey 2003).

In recent years, questions of children's competence have often been framed in terms of advertising literacy, a term coined and used loosely by practitioners to reflect consumer sophistication in understanding a range of advertising styles, content and vocabulary, and their ability to make inferences from minimal verbal or visual cues (Lannon 1985). More recently, theoretical leverage has been obtained by engagement with research in the field of literacy studies. Young (1990), for example, related advertising literacy to developing linguistic and metacommunicative abilities in middle childhood. Similarly, Buckingham (1993) argues that the understanding of advertising demonstrated by the 7-12 year-olds in his study were "manifestations of metalinguistic competencies". In his study, all but one of the youngest groups was aware of the selling and persuasive intent of advertising. Generally active and cynical, the children commented on advertisers' target audiences, intentions, and on the quality of particular advertising executions. Some studies have also begun to explore how advertising literacy is experienced as part of young people's everyday advertising experiences (Bartholomew and O'Donohoe 2003, Ritson and Elliot 1995).

Although the development of literacy or competence is generally seen as a defense against the effect of advertising, Gunter et al (2005) and Livingstone and Helsper (2004) challenge this view; the latter note that previous studies have found mixed

effects for children aged six and under, but greater effects on older children. Whilst advertising literacy may inform children's response to food ads, broader consumer and nutritional competence is also likely to play a role. Researchers such as Moschis and Churchill (1978) have noted the importance of such knowledge in children's food choices, while Signorielli and Staples (1997) found a correlation between the amount of television viewed each day by children and their preference for unhealthy rather than healthy food in a set of hypothetical paired choice situations. There are, however, some indications that nutritional knowledge might have little consequence; Davis and White (2006) found that of the 67 Australian 7-12 year-olds taking part in their study, 96% could identify the healthier of two options in at least five out of six cases, but when offered a real choice, 83% chose relatively unhealthy snack foods rather than fruit; as Davis and White (2006:16) put it, "[t]hey do know what is healthy, they just do not choose to eat it".

Advertising literacy and food ads

Our study explores aspects of children's advertising literacy before going on to describe their preferences among food ads and brands, as well as what they liked and disliked about food marketing directed at them.

Advertising literacy is defined here simply as the ability to recognize the selling intent of ads and to be sceptical about advertising claims. It is often suggested that children who become advertising literate are able to make better discretionary choices. To this end, we asked children to complete an ad literacy questionnaire. We first asked 'Do you know what advertising is?'. This elicited a wide range of responses and we found that our sample displayed a range of ad literacy levels, which we classified into four categories: 'Limited', 'Product Stories', 'Selling Intent', and 'Skepticism'¹ (Table 3).

Table 3. Four levels of advertising literacy (per cent)

Advertising Literacy Level	New Zealand (n=92)	Canada (n=150)
Limited	41	6
Product stories	12	34
Selling intent	47	52
Scepticism	–	8

Amongst the Canadian children, very few demonstrated a limited understanding of ads; i.e. those who could not provide an adequate definition of an advertisement, provided a confused definition or described ads in simple, positive terms. Just over one third produced product stories in response to our question using simple descriptions, story lines or occasionally referring to ads as 'little programmes'. These children referred to specific campaigns, for example, "*commercials, like for McDonald's McFlurries*" or showcased a product ("*when people want*

to show you their product"); yet they failed to make a connection between ads and selling intent. Over half of the Canadian children (52%) made the connection between ads and selling intent. These children were able to provide a more complex definition of ads than the previous groups, associating ads with buying ("*something the companies use to make people buy their stuff*") and selling ("*trying to sell their product*"). The responses reflected a number of different aspects of advertising from the informative – '*you get to go on TV and tell the world about the stuff you're advertisin*'; through to the more nuanced accounts that reflect the breadth of exposure to advertising across different media and the more persuasive aspects – '*short videos on TV, radio, post boards to attract customers – ad-dictive*'. Fewer than ten percent of the sample displayed a sceptical attitude towards ads. These children described ads as "*trying to make people buy things they don't need*", and as "*tricks*". Overall then, most of the children in our Canadian sample could be classified as advertising literate, since 61% understood the buying and selling intent of ads or displayed a sceptical attitude towards ads.

Almost half of the New Zealand children were aware of the commercial nature and intent of food advertising, describing advertising as trying to inform viewers about products or persuade them to buy. This was demonstrated by references to advertising as '*trying to get you to buy stuff*' or '*things to encourage you to buy the thing advertised*'. Although the proportion of New Zealand children describing advertising in such terms was broadly similar to that in the Canadian sample, there were marked differences in the distribution of other responses². A much smaller proportion of the New Zealand responses related to product stories, jingles, or descriptions of the ads, 40% displayed a limited understanding of advertising. Furthermore, while 8% of Canadian children were skeptical of advertising, this dimension was entirely absent from the New Zealand children's descriptions, and inconsistent with other research involving New Zealand children (Bulmer 2001). This may reflect regional differences in the sample, and different methodologies; our data was drawn from individual questionnaires, whereas Bulmer's came only from focus groups. In our New Zealand focus groups, however, children tended to express dismissive rather than skeptical attitudes towards advertising: several talked about advertising as interrupting programmes, although this could be positive, providing a convenient break, giving the children time to visit the bathroom, or go and get a snack:

Adverts is breaks after you watch the movie when it is like safe to go to the toilet when the programme is on.....'

.....'They are really annoying because they stop at a good part and you have to wait for about 5 minutes before the show is back on (10-11 year old girls, NZ focus group)

When asked about the source of funding of TV programming the most popular survey response from the New Zealand children was. "Don't know" (37%), followed by Government (27%), then companies (14%). Other responses included

TV stations, banks (7% each) and sponsors (4%). This again displays a fairly limited understanding of the advertising industry and who funds the advertising campaigns. Similarly in Canada, the children showed a limited understanding of the workings of commercial media systems: of the 72% who had an answer, the most popular response was 'taxes' (41%) followed by 'companies' (14%) and 'advertisers' (12%). A further 8% offered the comment that 'people' or 'viewers' ultimately pay for programming.

Favourite ads

Two thirds of the New Zealand children (66%) and over half of the Canadian children (55%) responded to the question, 'What are your favourite ads on TV?'. Just under half of the Canadian children and one fifth of the New Zealand children listed three or more favourite ads. When asked about their favourite ads, 63% of Canadian children answering the question included one or more food ads in their favourites. Beverages were the most popular food item advertised on TV for this sample, with 25% including a drink ad in their list of favourites. Fast food ads were also popular, (17%) as were candy ads (15%). In the New Zealand study, 31% of favourite ads were for food or beverages. Of these, 39% were for candy, 17% for fast foods, and 12% for beverages.

Although food advertisements accounted for around one third of favourite ads in both New Zealand and Canadian surveys, the majority of favourite ads cited were not for food, but for games, shoes, toys and media products: 49% of the Canadian children responded that they had a favourite toy or media commercial. Advertisements for toys and games accounted for just over one fifth of favourite adverts listed by the New Zealand children.

Most of the focus group discussions about advertising involved describing favourite advertisements and recalling scripts, or describing characters, or singing jingles. For example, the following account of an advertisement for chicken nuggets describes a scene where a daughter is portrayed as a good negotiator who is rewarded with chicken nuggets:

S: Well there is this girl and she won't come inside and her father goes "it's chicken nuggets every night of the week". . . And the little girl goes "very nice" and the father goes "all right so let me in" Then the little girl when they are back inside takes all the chicken nuggets on to her plate.

V: just about all.

S: Half of them on to her plate and he put one on his fork and goes (All join in) "Good negotiators don't come cheap".

Moderator: And who is selling the chicken nuggets do you know?

ALL SAY: Teegal

Moderator: So are they chicken nuggets that you have at home?.

S: Yes (11 year-old girls, New Zealand focus group)

This advertisement was clearly familiar to others in the group, as evidenced by the discussion that ensued and the collective identification of the brand name by the group. Food advertisements discussed in the group often appealed in terms of either the product being advertised, for example chicken nuggets, or fast food outlets, or typically because the advertisement was funny, or made them laugh, which is consistent with Bulmer's (2001) findings. Perhaps not surprisingly, the children recalled and discussed ads that were relevant to their discretionary snack consumption – those for fast food, chocolate, sweets, cereals or retail stores – and ads that were running on television at the time of the research.

Brand awareness

In order to gauge brand awareness, we asked the children if they had a favourite brand of cereal, chips (crisps), chocolate and ice cream. The Canadian data suggests that children's brand knowledge is high for these food items. 63% answered the question 'Do you have a favourite brand of cereal?' Of these respondents, 95% referred to cereal in terms of a specific brand (e.g. "Cheerios", "Fruit Loops" or "Lucky Charms"). The question on chocolate got the highest response with 67% of children responding to this question and 99% of these naming a favourite brand. Fewer children answered the chips question (40%), but all of these mentioned a chip brand. Only 22% of children responded to the ice cream question but 97% of these named a favourite brand.

In a separate but related set of questions, posed with respect to breakfast eating, the Canadian children were asked if they had a favourite *type* (as opposed to brand) of cereal, bread, and milk. The data reveal the saturation of cereal marketing on children. 78% responded to the question 'Do you have a favourite type of cereal', and of these children 98% responded with a brand name, indicating that they understand cereal not in terms of its type (i.e.: flakes, oats, or chocolate), but with reference to a brand. In sharp contrast to the cereal data, the children answered questions about their favourite type of bread and milk with reference to type (i.e.: white, brown, bagels; chocolate milk, 2% milk). 75% of our sample responded to the question 'Do you have a favourite type of bread?', and of these children, only 13% named a favourite brand. 87% of our sample responded to the question 'Do you have a favourite type of milk', yet of these, only 5% named a favourite brand.

In the New Zealand study 83% responded when asked if they had a favourite brand of cereal. 'Weet-Bix' proved the most popular (23%) followed by 'Coco Pops' (16%). The response rate was higher at 95% when asked about their favourite type of breakfast cereal and of these 91% made reference to a specific brand. 'Coco Pops', (29%), 'Weet-Bix' (22%) and 'Nutri-grain' (11%) were listed as favourite cereal brands. Brands of chocolate proved popular among the 80% who answered the question. Cadbury's brands dominated the category accounting for 65% of the responses, although given the presence of Cadbury World in Dunedin, where the survey was

conducted, this is perhaps not surprising. Favourite brands were much less evident in the chips (crisps) category but Bluebird was the most popular brand (37%) and a fifth of the children referred to a favourite flavour of crisps. Flavours also dominated the ice cream category, and of the 74% who answered the question just under one third mentioned 'Tip Top' as their favourite brand of ice cream. How the children answered the question was interesting. Some clearly (mis)interpreted favourite brands to mean flavours; in other cases children simply said 'no' when asked if they had favourite brands of cereal (16%), chocolate (5%), chips (17%), or ice cream (18%). When asked about their favourite type of bread children used generic descriptors such as 'white bread' or 'brown bread' rather than specific brand names. Similarly, milk was identified by the colour of the top (indicating full or half fat milk) or the flavour. No brands were mentioned in either of these two categories.

Advertising slogan recognition

Table 4. Advertising slogan recognition (per cent)

Percentage slogan recognition	New Zealand (n=92)	Percentage slogan recognition	Canada (n=150)
McDonalds	97	McDonald's	89
Weet-Bix	91	Tim Horton s	63
Nike	43	Nike	48
Warehouse	99	Dairy Queen	15
Pringles	30	Pringles	33

A high proportion of the children were able to recognize a range of food and non-food advertising slogans and match them correctly with the brand³, providing some evidence that young audiences do connect with certain food marketing campaigns. Not all slogans were equally well known. In Canada, McDonald's was the most recognized slogan by far: 89% children associated it with 'I'm lovin' it', suggesting saturation advertising levels amongst this audience. Tim Horton's (non-food) slogan 'Rrroll up the rrim to win' was the second most recognized slogan, with 63% of children associating the slogan with the brand. Nike was the third best known slogan, with close to half of the children (48%) associating the slogan 'Just do it' with the brand. Other slogans were less well known, with Pringles at 33% and Dairy Queen at 15%. In the New Zealand study children were asked to match specific New Zealand brand names to the relevant slogans. Of those who answered the question⁴, the most widely recognized slogan was McDonald's 'I'm lovin it' with 97% correctly identifying it. The Weet-Bix 'kids are Kiwi kids' slogan was correctly identified by 91% of the children, illustrating very high levels of recognition for this brand. Some 43% of the children recognized 'Just do It' as the Nike slogan. Pringles 'once you pop, you can't stop' was correctly identified with that brand by 30% of the New Zealand children.

Perceived marketing influence

Table 5. Influence of advertising

Have you ever seen something on TV and	New Zealand (% answering sometimes/often)	Canada (% answering sometimes/often)
...wanted to buy it?	78	64
...felt hungry?	67	58
...asked your parents to buy it?	66	35

The perceived impact of television advertising is reflected in the finding that 78% of the New Zealand children and 64% of the Canadian children claimed that seeing an advertisement on television made them want to buy the product ‘sometimes’ or ‘often’. Among the Canadian children 58% said that food advertisements made them feel hungry ‘sometimes’ or ‘often’; this rose to 67% for the New Zealand children. In both cases around 10% said it had no effect. In terms of asking their parents, 66% of the New Zealand children reported that ads made them ask their parents ‘sometimes’ or often’; whereas 18% said they never asked their parents after seeing an advertisement on television. Just over one third of the Canadian children asked their parents. In their account of who influences their choices about snack foods – they or their parents mostly – 30% of the Canadian sample reported that they had little choice and their parents made most of the snack food choices (we can think of this as *mandated* consumption) whereas 17% reported that they could get what they wanted and their parents exerted little influence (*discretionary* consumption). However, 53% of the 150 reported a complex and balanced negotiation in which they and their parents both had some say in the snack food decisions (*negotiated* consumption). In the New Zealand study, which used a slightly different measure, 52% said their parents mostly chose and the remainder said they chose their own snacks.

In summary then we can say that these children

- exhibited various degrees of advertising literacy, although few had developed skeptical attitudes towards advertising
- had a broad repertoire of favourite advertisements, of which around one third were for food or beverages
- displayed highest brand awareness for cereal and chocolate products
- were able to recognize a number of food and non-food advertising slogans
- tended to report that “sometimes” or “often”, advertising made them want to buy products, made them hungry, and encouraged them to ask their parents

Conclusions

It seems that national culture and policies do imply differences in the food marketing practices between countries. This was evident both in the weight of different categories advertised and the representational practices we identified in British and North American advertising. Although it is a global marketplace, we cannot assume that marketers address children or adults in a uniform voice, or practice their strategic communications in a uniformly responsible manner around the world. Unfortunately, given the changing marketing strategies adopted in deregulated media environments (McChesney 2003; Lisosky 2001, McAllister and Giglio 2005), there is scant research that helps us understand contemporary child consumers' daily exposure to and levels of engagement with brands aimed at them in the different national media-saturated landscapes of today, let alone their influence on children's consumer lifestyles within family and peer groups. Monitoring regulatory frameworks is an essential part of understanding the nature of advertising practice in different countries and provides an important context for studying advertising and consumer choice in relation to food.

Several commentators have suggested "media literacy" education as a way forward in relation to food advertising to children, either as an alternative to tighter legislation (Gunter et al 2005) or as part of broader framework of mandated educational interventions. Livingstone and Helsper (2004) suggest for example that education in media literacy, focusing on the recognition of advertising production purposes and techniques, could reduce the effects of advertising on younger children in particular. There is evidence in our study of a degree of advertising literacy, especially amongst the Canadian children, where some deeply skeptical views were expressed. In both New Zealand and Canada, there was also evidence of high brand awareness of heavily promoted products such as cereals, confectionary and fast foods. Moreover, such ads were recalled and enjoyed by the children, even though the majority had some comprehension of advertising intent. In their everyday experiences with advertising however, these young people found them marginally influential, although our studies do not allow us to determine the impact of brand knowledge and interest on purchase behaviour. In short, advertising literacy may be unrelated to preference formation and discretionary choices.

Our evidence therefore supports a middle ground position between the manipulated and savvy theories of young consumers. In both countries, children took advertising for granted, as part of the commercialized mediascape they grow up with. They did not really understand much about how the commercial media work, and certainly did not pay rapt attention to all ads. They liked some ads and disliked others, and generally did not think much about the rest. Some adopted a critical perspective, seeing advertising as a form of mass persuasion, but still liked some of the ads and brands they encountered and appeared no less likely to report being influenced by ads. In short, the notion of 'savvy consumers', as defined by 'recognizing selling intent and brand persuasion', is not tantamount to being a fully informed critical consumer. Yet perhaps, given some of the ad-

ditional comments made by the children in our discussions of junk food, mounting public concerns about food and nutrition may be beginning to trickle down to children, thanks to media celebrities like Jamie Oliver or films like *Supersize Me*. In this sense, media literacy, which has been shown to be of limited value anyway, may be less important than consumer risk literacy in the long run. Maybe nutritional literacy can have a more positive influence on their discretionary snacking and food choices in the long run.

As Livingstone and Helsper (2004:6) remind us, public concern ultimately revolves around children's diet and health more than advertising's influence. Even if television promotion has a greater effect on children's discretionary snacking than other areas of their food consumption, parent-child dynamics in this particular consumption arena are also likely to play an important part. The children's own accounts indicated that parents played an important role in their food consumption practices, but the balance of power and influence in this area requires further research. If researchers continue to only ask *whether* food promotion affects children's food choices or *whether* they are 'competent' to understand the sophisticated techniques of a changing marketplace, polarization will continue, along with methodological disputes and calls for further research. Asking instead what affects children's food choices – and how – opens up the debate and allows a broader examination of policies that can help to solve the globesity crisis. As Hall et al (1995) remark, "the triadic (multi-adic) interaction of mother, father and children in family decision making is still a relatively unexplored area". In particular, we suggest that more detailed analysis is needed of the power dynamics involved in negotiating food consumption within the family. To this end we suggest that researchers pay attention to the distinction between mandated, negotiated and discretionary domains of consumption in children's lives – and begin to map more carefully children's path towards more empowered consumption.

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Notes

1. The following guidelines were used to categorize the responses. *'Limited'* displays no definition/confused definition: "I don't know how to explain it"; or positive definition: (simple, positive terms) "to show they're awesome". *'Product Stories'* offers a simple descriptive definition: "they are little programs"; "short videos, on TV"; or product story definition: "little skits to show products like Coke"; "commercial with products". *'Selling Intent'* keywords such as 'buy' and 'sell' are used: "people try to sell you stuff"; "let people know about products/make them buy them"; or corporate selling intent definition: (when buying & selling are connected to corporate interests/companies) "companies try to sell something"; "company has a product it wants people to buy". *Scepticism* shows evidence of some more 'critical appreciation/skepticism/persuasion

- definition: "they are things that make your pocket money-less"; "things that brainwash you into buying whatever they are advertising"
2. While the children in both studies were of the same age the samples were not matched and so any direct comparison between the two studies is not possible.
 3. The high levels of recognition may reflect the wording of the question which did make some reference to the companies associated with the slogans and the fact that the survey was completed in the classroom.
 4. In this question the highest response rate was for the Warehouse and McDonald's slogans with around 95% response rates. While Weet-Bix elicited 80% response rate, only 40% answered the question on the Nike and Pringles slogans. The higher incidence of missing values may indicate that the children did not know the answer and so failed to complete the question. Taking this into account we still have 95% slogan recognition for the Warehouse, 91% McDonalds, 72% Weet-Bix but 13% Pringles and 17% Nike.

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Children's Nutritional Understanding

Levels of Knowledge and Sources of Influence

Sabrina M. Neeley

According to both the International Obesity Task Force (IOTF) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), overweight and obesity in children and adolescents has risen to epidemic proportions since the 1970s, and there are 400,000 more overweight children every year (IOTF EU Platform Briefing Paper 2005; NCCDPHP 2004). In an IOTF report for the World Health Organization (WHO), it was estimated that one in every five children in Europe is overweight (IOTF 2004). In the U.S., the American Obesity Association estimates that 30.3% of 6-11 year olds and 30.4% of 12-19 year olds are overweight, and that slightly over 15 percent in both age groups can be classified as obese (BMI >95th percentile) (2002).

Overweight in childhood and adolescence is a strong predictor of overweight and obesity as an adult; "overweight children between 10-14 years of age, who have at least one overweight or obese parent, have a 79% likelihood of overweight persisting into adulthood" (American Obesity Association 2002: Fact Sheet). Overweight and obese children are also more likely to suffer from medical conditions such as asthma, Type 2 Diabetes, hypertension, orthopedic problems, and sleep apnea, as well as psycho-social effects like low body-image, stigmatization, and ridicule (American Obesity Association 2002).

Both the IOTF and the CDC acknowledge that reducing overweight, obesity, and resulting short and long-term health problems requires promoting healthy eating, increasing physical activity, and creating cultures and environments that support these behaviors. Creating this supportive environment and "successful public health nutrition strategies requires the active collaboration of all stakeholders in the promotion of healthy diet and lifestyle patterns", (Gassin 2001, p. 1445) including health professionals, academic researchers, educators, the government, and the food industry.

Policy initiatives

Policy interventions have been, and are being, developed in many countries to address the variety of factors related to childhood nutrition and physical activity. In the U.S., The National Cancer Institute and Produce for Better Health created the 5-a-Day for Better Health Program in 1991, to encourage Americans to eat more fruits and vegetables each day. Additionally, the Secretaries of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health and Human Services revised the food pyramid¹, originally created in 1992, and released the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005 (USDA Release No. 0012.05 2005). Well-known figures have joined the fight as well. Former U.S. President, Bill Clinton's foundation (the William J. Clinton Foundation) has teamed with the American Heart Association to form the Alliance for a Healthier Generation (www.healthiergeneration.org) to combat childhood obesity and its related diseases. In 2002, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control implemented the VERB campaign (<http://www.cdc.gov/youthcampaign/>) to encourage 9-13 year olds to be more physically active. In Europe and Canada, various initiatives related to food subsidies, food distribution networks, encouraging the consumption of local produce, school nutrition programs, and regulating food advertising and promotion to children have been initiated (British Medical Association 2005).

Many of these new campaigns and initiatives focus on educating children, parents, school leaders, and others about the dangers of overweight and sedentary lifestyles. Websites contain information on nutritious foods, how to make changes in school meal programs to increase nutritional value, and activities that children (and parents) can do together to be more physically active. However, as many health professionals and government officials recognize, there is often a large gap between dietary recommendations, and what people actually eat. "Only about 25% of U.S. adults and 21% of young people eat the recommended five or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day" (NCCDPHP 2004). A 1997 study of 2-19 year olds in the U.S. found that 16% of kids did not meet any of the daily nutritional recommendations, and that overall meeting of recommendations varied by food group from 30%-36% (Munoz et al. 1997).

Nutritional education and information

Encouraging people to eat healthier foods requires that basic information about food nutrients and healthy diets is available, and understandable, to consumers. The Nutrition Labeling and Education Act of 1990 (NLEA) was passed by the U.S. government with the goal of providing more complete, useful, and accurate nutrition information than had previously been available on food packages (U.S. Food and Drug Administration 1995). This act standardized serving sizes, created uniform definitions and daily values, mandated the reporting of nutritional

information on fourteen different nutrients, and regulated product claims about the relationship between nutrients and disease or health-related condition, for most food products (U.S. Food and Drug Administration 1999). The goal was to create standardized labels that are easy to read and allow consumers to make better food choices.

While adults may have difficulty putting nutritional guidelines into practice for a variety of reasons, most have a basic level of nutrition knowledge and know where to locate nutrition information on product packages. However, kids may not only have difficulty understanding guidelines, but may also have difficulty even understanding basic nutritional information that can help them make healthy food choices. If federally-mandated nutritional information is supposed to increase consumer knowledge and assist in making better consumer choices, more facts are needed about how children (age 12 and younger) and adolescents (age 13-18) access and use nutritional information.

Children's nutrition knowledge and understanding

Past research has demonstrated that children (age 12 and younger) face a disadvantage in the marketplace because of reduced cognitive abilities. They often cannot process and understand information, particularly abstract information, to the same extent as adults (John and Cole 1986; Roedder 1981; Ward, Wackman and Wartella 1977). While cognitive abilities increase with age, many children still have difficulty understanding abstract and hypothetical concepts until the age of 11 or 12 (Singer and Revenson 1996). The way nutritional information is presented is often abstract to children. Kids cannot see nutrients, calories, or vitamins, and the complete understanding of these concepts requires that a child be able to understand abstract ideas, hypothetical situations ("if you don't eat your vegetables, you won't have any energy"), or even future ramifications of non-compliance ("if you don't get enough calcium, you'll get osteoporosis when you're older"). We should expect that kids have some difficulties understanding nutritional concepts and relating nutritional ideas and recommendations to actual food choices. However, few studies have examined children's nutritional knowledge and understanding so we do not have a strong foundation for understanding the nature of the difficulties, how children compensate for the difficulties, and how different parties (i.e., schools, parents, the media, food marketing) may influence this nutrition knowledge.

A 2000 study conducted by the CDC's Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity (DNPA) and Westat² examined adolescents' nutritional knowledge, the various types of influencers on food selection, and how kids process nutritional information. This study examined 98 eighth- and ninth-grade (14 and 15-year old) girls and boys in twelve focus groups, segmented by race (African-American, Mexican American, and white) in two large U.S. cities (Atlanta, Georgia and San Antonio,

Texas). Participants in the study said they knew about good nutrition habits such as eating in moderation and limiting fat and caloric intake, but they often did not choose healthy food because they preferred unhealthy food. Those who admitted reading nutritional labels often did so out of boredom, rather than information, and many times after the food had already been consumed (NCCDPHP 2000).

Influences on nutrition knowledge

Children's nutrition knowledge is often influenced by a variety of sources. Parental and family influence appears to be one of the most important factors in a child's eating and food selection habits, as many of the nutrition and health education websites offer suggestions for parents. However, other agents also serve as influencers, particularly as the child ages and peers take on a more important role in a child's life. Additionally, children may be exposed to nutrition education at school and also through the media.

Parents and other family members often serve as a primary source of information and influence in children's food choices. Parents make the initial food choices for their children, when children are too young to make the decision themselves. Additionally, parents introduce foods to children, establish eating rules or guidelines, control the information about food that enters the home, and communicate nutritional values to their children.

A recent study examined psychosocial correlates of adolescents' fruit, vegetable, and dietary fat intake. The study found that family support/encouragement to eat fruits and vegetables and household rules about provision of healthy foods were significant correlates of adolescents' fruit and vegetable intake, and limiting of dietary fat (Zabinski, et al. 2006). For females, family support was of particular importance in consumption of fruits and vegetables, and for younger children, household rules about provision and availability of healthy foods was the only significant correlate to fruit and vegetable intake (Zabinski, et. al. 2006). These findings support previous studies which suggest family influence has a significant effect on children's consumption of fruits and vegetables (Cullen, et al. 1998; Cullen, et. al 2001) and a study which suggested that 12-15 year olds' food consumption was highly related to consumption of the same foods by family and friends (Woodward, et al. 1996).

The media is often blamed for its influence on children's attitudes, opinions, and behaviors. In many cases, the attention is placed on the influence of advertising on children's food attitudes and choices, but rarely are television programs the focus of inquiry. The December 2005, Institute of Medicine report, *Food Marketing to Children and Youth: Threat or Opportunity?* suggests that food and beverage marketing to children puts their long-term health at risk. The report specifically admonishes the advertising of low-nutrition foods to children, who tend to have reduced cognitive abilities.

A 2003 study conducted by The University of Strathclyde, on behalf of the UK Food Standards Agency, examined hundreds of previous studies and produced a comprehensive review of the effects of food promotion to children. The review of research specifically investigating television viewing and nutrition knowledge found mixed results. In some studies, children who viewed more television demonstrated lower levels of nutrition knowledge, but the results were not unanimous across multiple studies (Hastings et al. 2003).

The current study

The objective of this study was to qualitatively examine U.S. children's (7-12 year olds) knowledge of nutrition information, determine the various sources from which they learn nutrition guidelines and information, and then explore how they make nutrition inferences and decisions when choosing which foods to consume. The role of food marketing is considered as an important source of information and influence on children's food choices, as such, this study examines how children use food package information and labeling in food choice decisions.

Method

Four, gender and age-split focus groups were conducted (7-9 yr old females, 7-9 yr old males, 10-12 yr old females, 10-12 yr old males). Focus group participants were recruited via a snowball sampling technique and the focus group discussions were held in participants' homes. Each focus group took approximately one hour.

Additionally, ten individual, one-hour interviews were conducted to further explore children's nutrition knowledge, and to gain in-depth understanding of how they infer nutritional understanding from information on product packages. All procedures for gaining written consent from parents/guardians and verbal assent from the participants were followed, as specified by the university Institutional Review Board.

Participants

Participants in this study included thirty children ages 7-12 years old. Children in this age group often have considerable experience with selecting or giving their opinions about different types of food purchased for consumption in the home. These children typically have well-developed verbal skills and enjoy sharing their ideas with others. Additionally, this age group is young enough to avoid some of the communication difficulties that occur with teenagers, who do not like to share their thoughts with adults or are self-conscious in focus groups with peers.

Procedure

Focus group participants were led to a dining table and were told that the purpose of the discussion was to find out their thoughts about food and nutrition. As a brief warm-up discussion, participants were asked to state their first names, what grade they were in at school, and their favorite sport or activity. This discussion was used to establish rapport with the moderator. The participants were reminded that their participation was voluntary and were encouraged to talk to each other during the discussion and to elaborate on ideas that the other children introduced.

During the focus groups and interviews, the children were asked for top-of-mind words and pictures that they associated with the terms nutrition, healthy food, and junk food. The interviewer also prompted and probed the children to discuss the various places they hear and see nutrition information, including parents, other family members, other adults, school, and media sources of information.

The interviewer also placed a set of empty food packages (*Cheerios*®, 2% milk, *Oreos*®, plain *Lays Potato Chips*®, and a gelatin/fruit cup) on the table in front of the participants, to serve as visual aids and references for the children during the discussion. The children were also shown an empty box of *Kashi Mighty Bites*® (“healthy” children’s cereal) because the researcher assumed this cereal would be less familiar to the children.

Results

The children participating in this study seemed to have varying levels of understanding of what the term nutrition means (Neeley 2006). Many children either said they could not think of anything when prompted with the word “nutrition.” Some children who seemed to understand the concept named specific vegetables like broccoli and carrots. Other children who appeared to have less understanding offered associations such as “food”, “health”, “air”, and “hospital.” Overall, the children possessed some basic knowledge of the elements of good nutrition (i.e., they should eat fruits and vegetables and limit sweets). They generally stated that a person did not want to consume too many calories, fat, or sugar.

When prompted for associations with “healthy food”, almost all the children named specific vegetables and fruits such as broccoli, carrots, spinach, tomatoes, bananas, and strawberries. In some children, associations with “healthy food” were more complex:

- “It won’t make you get cancer and heart attacks” (F 8)
- “makes you strong” (F 10)
- “eating the right amount is healthy” (M 12)

Perhaps indicative of increasing body image and diet concerns among U.S. children, the 10-12 year old female participants in the focus group and interviews listed various diets and branded food products when prompted for "healthy foods" (South Beach Diet, Atkins Diet, Weight Watchers, Smart Choice foods).

When the discussion was prompted for associations with "junk food", most of the children laughed and listed foods that they also stated were "good to eat", such as ice cream, cake, cookies, french fries, chips, etc.

One 11-year old boy offered the following analysis of how he determines whether food is good for you, or not: "You don't want to eat junk food, it's greasy. They throw away all the good stuff...You have to see what color [the food] is; brown isn't good, green is good for you. It's good for you if it didn't look like somebody made it. If it tastes good, it's junk food."

Two children's comments suggest a much broader and more complex idea of health and nutrition, "The U.S. is known for obesity. Lots of kids don't eat healthy; everybody gets hamburgers and fries and pizza", (M 12) and "My next door neighbors mostly have junk food at their house; the kids want to trade food with me when we have a picnic because they eat packaged foods" (F 10).

Although many of the children had basic knowledge of the food pyramid, both the old and new pyramids, they stated that the pyramids didn't make sense, or that they didn't use them (See Footnote #1 explaining changes to the U.S. Food Pyramid). One participant indicated that she thought the old pyramid made much more sense (F 12) and was easier to understand and apply.

Family influence on nutrition knowledge

The children in this qualitative study stated that their parents, or other family members, had great influence on their nutrition knowledge. The children reported examples of how some of their parents were strict about foods purchased and consumed. One 11-year-old female stated that her mother did not allow the children (daughter and two sons) to eat sugar. She stated that when she and her brothers grocery shopped with their mother and asked for a new food product, the mother would require the child to read the nutritional label and then they would discuss whether the food met household rules about healthy food. The participant explained that because she has always eaten healthy foods, and that low-nutrition foods had been restricted, she actually preferred fruits and vegetables to sweets.

In another case, a 10-year old female stated that both her parents were nurses and they came home and talked about the people they worked with at the hospital who were sick and how sometimes these illnesses were attributable to eating. Additionally, the children were very aware, and could give some details, about diets their parents' were currently following, especially Weight Watchers and the Atkins Diet.

The children in the study also indicated that their parents often validated nutrition information learned at school, but sometimes these validations from parents took the form of statements meant to scare the children (Neeley 2006):

- “If you don’t eat your vegetables, you’ll get cancer in your liver” (M 12).
- “I heard that too much sugar can give you bad skin cancer or something” (M 9).

In some cases, children did not feel their parents were as knowledgeable about nutrition, and they sought information from other family members. In one family, a grandmother who had a college degree in health was often consulted for nutrition information.

Peers

When asked about other influences, the children in the study suggested that peers did not really influence their nutrition knowledge or behavior because they only ate what they liked. This finding was surprising, given the assumption that peer influence increases with adolescence. However, Zabinski and her colleagues (2006) did not find peer influence to significantly contribute to adolescents’ fruit and vegetable consumption either.

School

Schools would seem to be an obvious source of influence on children’s nutrition knowledge and understanding, as teaching of nutrition concepts may be incorporated into science, health, or physical education classes. Results of this study suggest wide variance in 7-12 years olds’ nutrition education experiences.

Children enrolled in public or private schools indicated that they typically learned nutrition concepts as part of their health or science curriculum, and that this curriculum usually started around 4th grade (approximately 9-10 years old). The older study participants (9-12 year olds) suggested that there were great differences in how much students in their own classrooms paid attention to the nutrition lessons. These children described their peers’ reactions to nutrition education as “kids think it’s boring”, or “they only memorize it for the tests.” One 12 year-old female stated that her teachers tried to use games and activities to increase learning and make the nutrition lessons fun, but that the kids were rewarded with candy for correct answers, even on nutrition-oriented games.

Participants who were home-schooled appeared to receive little, if any, nutrition information in their curriculum and their knowledge tended to come from informal discussions with a parent or other family member. One home-schooled child’s nutrition lessons were obviously influenced by the family’s religious be-

liefs, “natural, God-made food is better than people-made food” (F 11). Two home-schooled children indicated that the only nutrition education they remembered was a lesson about how food is grown on a farm (M 10 and F8), and two 11-year old females in the focus group discussed how their health textbook presents information about manners, but not nutrition. The home-schooled kids suggested they had very little knowledge of even basic nutrition concepts like calories and fat.

The commercialization of schools in the U.S. has prompted many parents and advocates to wonder about the ramifications of children being exposed to commercial messages on a daily basis, in an environment which has traditionally been free of influence by corporations. Decreases in educational funding in some areas have resulted in school districts adopting educational materials produced by companies, and in many cases, these materials contain blatant persuasive or brand-building messages about food products (i.e., textbook covers, fundraising opportunities, school contests and incentives, educational workbooks and videos) (Center for Science in the Public Interest 2003).

Participants in this study did not offer examples of commercialized educational materials or their influence on nutrition knowledge. It is not known if, or how, these materials may influence students, but perhaps, the subtle exposure to corporate brands and information may influence children in ways they cannot recognize. While academic research has not adequately examined the question of how, or how much, corporate messages in a school setting influence children's product choices, perhaps media education discussions and persuasion knowledge programs in the classroom may serve to reduce the influence on children (Wright, Friestad and Boush 2005).

The Media

Some of the children interviewed in this study offered that occasionally they watched television programs that dealt with health and nutrition-related subjects. One child stated that her school had Channel 1 and that the programming always talked about health and science, “how bad things mess up your body, how you shouldn't smoke, and how oxygen is good for you.” (F 11)

The 7-9 year-old male focus group offered the following exchange: “I heard that the more overweight you get, the more you want to eat...This one man he drank milk every day and got sick...I heard something about some fat guy and it interested me. So, I watched it until it got too gross. So I turned the channel and that's what it said.” Another child in the focus group responded with, “One time on TV I saw this man that was really, really fat. I saw one guy that was so fat it was hard for him to breathe.” When questioned by the interviewer about how the child thought the man got that way, the child replied “McDonald's.”

As its use has grown, the internet has come under fire as a media source that may influence children's nutritional understanding, attitudes and behavior. Food

company websites are the new target of academic research and advocacy action, particularly for their “advergaming” (sponsored games with embedded brand messages). In a recent study, funded by the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, seventy-seven (77) food manufacturer-sponsored websites with content attractive to children were examined. “Seventy-three percent of those sites had one or more games containing food brands” (Moore 2006).

These food-sponsored gaming sites are well known to the children in this study. Interview participants suggested that the internet played a role in some children’s nutrition knowledge and understanding, though most of the kids said that when they used the internet, it was mostly to play games. One child said his father showed him something about cancer on the internet (M 12); however, another child (F 11) stated that she went to the Nabisco.com website, but for the purpose of playing games, not to gain information. One 10 year-old female who was computer savvy said if she wanted to find information about health and nutrition, she would either go directly to the weightwatchers.com website, or just type in nutrition.com.

Food package information

In the NCCDPHP 2000 study, the eighth- and ninth-grade boys and girls said they read nutrition labels, but only when they were bored, and typically after the food was already consumed. They did not read the package to obtain nutritional information.

Similarly, in the current study, participants stated that they did not use nutrition information on a product package to make food choices; they only read the information when they were bored and already eating. One child stated, “I really didn’t care now, but when I get older I’ll regret it” (F 12). Perhaps this child is indicating that she understands that poor nutrition can lead to health consequences, but would rather focus on immediate gratification of food desires now, rather than think about the future effects of her food choices.

Several of the children in the study said they just tend to “know” what foods are healthy and not healthy, suggesting the use of nutrition or food schemas:

- “Everybody knows candy, sugar, and fast food are not good for you.” (M 12)
- “If it’s in a package, it’s not good for you.” (M 11)
- “If there’s toys in it, it’s not good for you.” (M 11)
- “It says Nabisco. Nabisco doesn’t sound healthy, they make snack food like crackers and cookies. There aren’t any fruits and vegetables in Nabisco.” (F 12)
- “They’re not healthy, they’re Oreos” (M 12)

- “It comes from Frito-Lay; they only have chips” (F 11)
- “It comes from General Mills, so it’s healthy” (F 10)

When the children in the study were asked to look at the food labels, they tended to be confused about some of the more complex or abstract information on the label, such as different types of nutrients, recommended daily allowance (RDA) percentages, serving sizes, etc.

- “I don’t know what sodium is” (M 11)
- “this has 160 of something, gallons of something” (F 10)
- “the percents are confusing” (F 10)
- “this says there are 8 servings per container; most people eat the whole bag” (F 11)

Interestingly, the kids suggested they turn to other information contained on the product package as a surrogate for nutritional information. For example, a picture on a cereal box of the typical “well-balanced” breakfast of cereal with strawberries is used as a cue that this cereal is “healthy”, whereas a picture of cereal with marshmallows is “unhealthy.” When looking at cereal boxes during the testing, the children offered un-prompted comments about one brand of cereal being healthy because it had a picture of a doctor on the box, and a picture of a boy flexing his muscles. The children stated that if a food package has a picture of a toy or cartoon character on it, the food was automatically deemed unhealthy.

In general, the children suggested that while they had some understanding of basic nutritional concepts and guidelines, their food choices were primarily made on what they liked to eat. Several participants said they knew foods like french fries and sugary cereals were not good for them, but they ate them anyway. Comments were made about how kids don’t really care about nutrition and eating healthy, they just want to eat food that tastes good and they would worry about the healthy effects when they got older.

Evidence that children are becoming increasingly skeptical of marketing claims was revealed, as children offered comments such as the following:

- “Lucky Charms says it has calcium, but it might be lying” (M 12)
- “[the cereal] says ‘growing bodies and developing minds’, they’re exaggerating” (F 11)
- “the news says milk is healthy, then unhealthy” (F 2)
- “Commercials tell you if it’s healthy, but I don’t believe the commercials” (F 10)

Implications and opportunities for research

This article presented an overview of the concerns regarding the growing incidence of childhood overweight and obesity. The increase in overweight, and its often subsequent health conditions, has prompted parents, health officials, advocates, and governments to examine and propose changes in how food is marketed to children. Concerns about nutritional messages that children are receiving at school, at home, and from the media are being addressed as well.

Results of the qualitative study presented here provide preliminary and exploratory evidence that kids have some basic, but little extensive knowledge of nutrition, and that this knowledge is quite varied. While some children understand and can discuss concepts such as the general need to increase consumption of fruits and vegetables, decrease consumption of sugar, and monitor caloric intake, other children could only state that they knew vegetables grew on a farm, or that they did not understand concepts such as fats or calories. There is clearly a need to better understand, and perhaps re-examine, government-mandated standards for nutrition-education.

Parents appear to have a strong influential role in children's nutrition knowledge and food choice. Children whose parents have nutrition-specific discussions with them, and engage in nutrition education activities, appear to be more knowledgeable than their peers and more conscientious about the foods they eat. A need exists to better understand the collaboration and negotiation behaviors that take place between parents and children in food choices, and also to seek ways to help parents present nutritional information to their children at younger ages.

Children use media, particularly computer and online media, quite extensively. Children are comfortable with technology and as children get older, parents may exhibit less control over media/online use. The growing controversy over food-sponsored websites and advergames demonstrates the growing recognition of this issue. While studies are emerging that examine the extent of these websites and games, very little is known about the effect these games may have on children's nutrition knowledge and food choices.

Kids typically do not read food packages, and even when they do, they have difficulty understanding nutritional information. These difficulties are even more pronounced among younger children. Additional research is needed to better understand the nature of the communication difficulties and deficits. For example, kids may have a reasonable understanding of the concept of vitamins, but do not understand the different types of fats. Additionally, a better understanding of kids' comprehension of serving sizes is needed; children do not seem to have a good understanding of appropriate serving size and often assume that a single package is equivalent to a single serving size.

Additionally, collaboration is needed between marketers, researchers, the food industry, health officials, and the government to discern whether or not the current labeling regulations are appropriate for children. Are there other alternatives, such as other visuals or graphics that could be developed, that provide repre-

sentative information to comply with government regulation, but does so in a format that is easier for children to understand and apply to their daily food choices?

There is also a need to better understand the role of affect and situation in children's food choices. Children will often admit that they have a basic level of nutrition knowledge, and they generally know what types of foods are healthy and unhealthy. At the same time, they will state that they often do not make their food choices based on knowledge, but on taste, desire, or situation.

The purpose of this article was to provide basic information about kids' nutrition knowledge, and the sources of that knowledge. Hopefully, it can provide motivation and ideas to other researchers who are interested in finding ways to combat rising rates of children's poor food choices, overweight and weight-related health problems.

Notes

1. The original food pyramid, created by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 1992, graphically represented recommended guidelines for the daily consumption of grains, fruits, vegetables, dairy products, meats/proteins, and fats/sugars. The pyramid was comprised of boxes, presented horizontally inside the pyramid, relative in size to the recommended amount of daily consumption of the item (see <http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/fpyr/pmap.htm>). The revised food pyramid represents the same nutritional recommendations for daily food consumption in vertical bands within the pyramid, the width of each band proportional to the recommended consumption level. The new pyramid also includes a graphical recommendation for regular exercise (see <http://www.mypyramid.gov> for more details).
2. Westat is a research corporation serving agencies of the U.S. government, businesses, foundations, and state and local governments. For more information see <http://www.westat.com>.

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Celebrity Endorsement

Theory and Experiments with Children

Brian Young

Much research in the field of advertising to children, with a few notable exceptions (John, 1999; Friestadt et al., 2005)) has been characterised by a lack of theoretical development as well as a range of different methodologies each with their weaknesses as well as their strengths. The purpose of this chapter is to theorise the field using concepts drawn from communication theory and developmental psychology and to report on our¹ experimental findings at the University of Exeter in one aspect of advertising to children – the use of celebrity endorsement. I have deliberately adopted a style that is exploratory where the narrative is not necessarily focussed on the results of experiments or how the research went logically through various stages starting with research problem, through hypothesis testing and ending up with results and discussion. In my experience this is not how research proceeds and the end result (the research paper) is not a history of the research but rather a framed discourse within a strict set of conventions. Although this is obviously appropriate given the traffic in scientific communications so that harassed students and researchers know where to look for the important bits, it certainly does not reflect how the research was actually done. So let's start.

My initial forays into the world of advertising theory in the 1980s were not particularly rewarding. The language of cultural theory and semiotics is pretty opaque and verges on the incomprehensible for a psychologist and much of the effort seemed to be in mastering a jargon that members of 'the club' shared. In addition I was trained as a developmentalist with a particular interest in early childhood and there was nothing there that informed my understanding of growth and change. Where are the structures or rules that describe this communicative genre so we can plot or predict how the child's understanding and behaviour will change at different stages of development? Can we borrow concepts like literacy that would explain the limited skills of the preschool child right up to the postgraduate student who is struggling with her PhD in communication theory?

At the time I was a member of a group of postgraduates and young lecturers who met occasionally at the University of Manchester in the North of England to discuss the analysis of discourse. Discourse analysis was emerging as a fashionable method of enquiry that also fitted in well with the growing political awareness from both radicals of the left and feminists and Manchester has always welcomed such ideas and encouraged progressive thinking. Part of our discussions and debates centred round what is known as pragmatics in linguistics (see for example, Levinson, 1983) and there were I think two developments at that time within that tradition that influenced me. One was a growing awareness that communication was not just about transmitting information in a succinct, unambiguous, and relevant way. Within pragmatics there was a particular approach exemplified by the work of Grice (1975), and Sperber and Wilson (1986). They assumed that communication between people is governed by certain principles of conduct and that these principles are recognised mainly when they are breached rather than when they are observed. Grice's main principle can be paraphrased as: in co-operative conversations people contribute to the ongoing talk by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which they are engaged. Grice puts forward several maxims that derive from this principle and they can be summarised by saying that participants in a co-operative exchange should communicate with sincerity, being relevant and clear while providing sufficient information. Of course people don't do this. The point, however, is what happens when a hearer recognises an apparent breach or break with these rules. Inferences are made as to the communicative intent of the speaker. Perhaps a mistake has been made or the lapse is due to external causes such as the presence of empty wine bottles. But more importantly, irony, sarcasm, and other figurative uses of language can be accounted for as deliberate breaches of these rules and the recognition of this by audiences. So the essence of this argument is that everyday communicative conduct is governed by rules which can be framed as consisting of a basic ground rule (Grice's principle). Although this rule does not operate in all cases or even, in some conversations, in any of the cases, it still provides a satisfactory account of language use and in particular figurative communications which are essentially seen as parasitic on the basic canonical set of Gricean rules. The riposte would be – satisfactory for whom? It certainly did not do justice to what at that time in the 1980s was called 'women's talk' where the dominant governing rule was driven by the social relationships that were being negotiated in communication and women were struggling to escape from their role in the 'canonical-parasitic' dichotomy imposed (as they saw it) by dark patriarchal forces. For example talk by women about social relationships was often characterised in popular culture as 'gossip' and consequently derogated as a genre.

So a challenge to the Gricean paradigm was present at that time in our discussions. In addition there was debate in our group as to whether it might be possible to set up alternative Gricean-based rules to cover different genres of communication. This would necessitate abandoning the assumption that *all* communication has an inevitable canonical form that governs communicative conduct

so that if rule-breaking occurs in any communication then we have to make further inferences and do some cognitive work to establish what is going on. At the time I was teaching a course to probationary police service personnel on communication and was struck with the extent to which they made assumptions about their professional dealing with suspects – that these people were lying. All their communication patterns with this group were based on that premise and many were concerned about the extent to which this rule or principle ‘spilled over’ into their own relationships with their family and friends.

My attention was then drawn to a relatively unknown paper by May (1981). Although there are a few attempts to describe advertising using pragmatic theory, most notably by Forceville (1996) and Tanaka (1994), it is not such a popular route to advertising enlightenment as perhaps semiotics or post-modernist turns provide. May (*op. cit.*) claimed that there was a particular rule for ‘interested’ (as opposed to ‘disinterested’) communication and that was ‘to treat the case that is put as the strongest that can be made’. Interested communication seemed to be a very appropriate term that could be applied to both interpersonal communication and media communication and I would suggest that an essential part of the comprehension of the genre of promotional activity is applying this rule. For example advertising candy on TV will present the positive sides of the purchase or consumption experience, and will not mention that candy might contribute to dental caries or obesity. A communicative rule for understanding advertising and other forms of promotion such as self-promotion by people both emerge at about 7 or 8 years of age (Young 2000). The other aspect of promotional communication is an awareness of the discourse structure of advertising where the ‘topic’ is the brand and the ‘comment’ is the rest of the promotional communication (Young, 1990). Again we use concepts borrowed from linguistic theory and apply them to audio-visual communication in advertising. Using this basic conceptual equipment, one can then generate hypotheses about celebrity endorsement and its understanding at different ages.

We know of no empirical literature on the child’s understanding of the basic discourse structure of advertising although summaries of research in the field of advertising to children are widely available. However it seems that at some stage between 3 and 5 years an understanding that spot advertising (on TV usually) is distinct and different from programming emerges² and the concept of ‘brands in different places’ including ad-on-TV is mentally represented. The context provides a comment and is assumed to be there on TV ads for fun. There is practically no dissent in the literature about the dominance of the entertainment function in the early years.

At some time from about 5 to 8 years of age the child begins to acquire an understanding of the promotional nature of advertising in the sense that May described and gradually we assume children will infer that the comment serves the function of enhancing the topic. This should emerge at a similar time in middle childhood as children realise advertising is there to ‘get you’ to do something such as buy the brand or pester Mum to do that. At least that would be our hypothesis.

So a celebrity endorser would simply be seen as a fun person by the little ones and indeed Ronald MacDonald, a clown, fits the bill perfectly. Later we anticipate the child beginning to understand that the celebrity endorser is there with a specific function to enhance or add value to the brand (although not expressed by the children using these words). Why? Because ads are designed to get people to buy the brands advertised and they are intentional communicative acts. Homer Simpson is not there by accident – he has an important role to play. We also know that children from the age of 4 years are capable of understanding that other people have beliefs and intentions that can be different from their own desires and knowledge and that children in middle childhood are capable of describing other people using basic psychological descriptions of their character. However understanding celebrity endorsement is more than just mental growth and developing a deeper understanding. It also requires knowledge of the world of commerce and business and this thread of economic socialisation is as equally important as Vygotsky's 'line of natural development'³ in children shows (Van der Veer and Valsiner, 1991; p223).

The theoretical development of what it means to add value to a brand for children has been developed by us using a basic visual metaphor which will be recognised by generations of marketers. At the centre is the 'hard core' of benefits that are characteristic of the product. This provides strictly utilitarian rewards and justifications for consumption. In other words the product works as it should and I want it. These benefits and costs are estimated by some sort of rational utilitarian calculus⁴. But as we all know and recognise the world is not like that and there are layers of intangibles added – things like branding, emotional attachment to the product, appeals to our status and all the rest of what is (conveniently) dumped into the category of soft, psychological added value. We stress the need to recognise these extra layers of value and incorporate them into any model of branding with children.

There is a distinct difference between value added by virtue of simple branding and value added by attachment. This is particularly important with children where attachment to possessions can be strong (Kleine and Baker, 2004). In our experience these two have often been confounded in research. Attachment is accrued over a history of interaction with material objects and possessions and is part of the deep emotional world of the child and (often) the adult. The added value of a brand on an article of clothing owned by a 'tweenie' or an adolescent on the other hand is often identified with identity and the management of status and social identity in the eyes of one peers and significant others.

Having established a sound theoretical framework before even talking to a child, we then tried to determine the different research factors that it would be necessary to explore when devising a programme of research into celebrity endorsement. This emerges analytically and the following are by no means exhaustive:

Understanding of 'fame'

What are the features of 'being famous'?; do children understand the self as a brand?

Levels of representation

Are real (e.g. soccer heroes) more effective than cartoon (e.g. *Homer Simpson*) endorsers?

'Fit' between activities of endorser and brand use

On what dimensions do children establish congruence⁵ between endorser and brand?; relevant skill?; level of fame?

To what extent do celebrity endorsed brands have perceived added value for children?

How can we measure this?; points of indifference and their assessment.

There is a small literature on celebrity endorsement that further informed our research. Wilson and Weiss (1992) demonstrated how the use of popular characters (whether real or fictional) from children's programmes may make it difficult for children to distinguish between advertisements and programmes. There is also ample evidence that TV advertising, including celebrity endorsement, plays a dominant role in shaping children's product preference. Ross et al. (1984) showed how using celebrities to endorse a product could increase children's preference for that product and their belief that the celebrity was an expert on its subject. Similarly, a study by Atkin (1980) examined 5-7 year olds' perception of trade characters from food advertisements that did not feature in surrounding programs and found that children actually believed characters like Fred Flintstone & Barney Rubble knew about breakfast cereals and accepted them as credible sources of nutritional information. They found that this finding was stronger for heavy viewers of television. Likewise, Bandyopadhyay, Kindra and Sharp (2001) showed how children feel validated in their choice of product when a celebrity endorses it.

Empirical work

Next, we turn to the research evidence that has emerged from our own work at the University of Exeter. As this is in progress, conclusions at the moment are tentative.

Preliminary work in 2005 at Exeter established that there was a developmental trend in understanding celebrity endorsement. Ninety children aged between 6 and 11 years were presented with two posters advertising a new chocolate bar called *Boom*. One was endorsed by a famous person that the child had first chosen as 'having seen before' from a range of 10 well-known celebrities and the other was endorsed by an unknown (to the child) colleague of the experimenter. They were then asked why the famous person would be on an ad like this and why or why not they think this is a good ad. We found that a tripartite scale (which had been used in this field since the pioneering work of Ward et al., 1977) could be used. Responses were categorised and scored as showing no (e.g. 'because he's funny'),

partial ('because he's famous'), and full ('because he'll make more people buy *Boom*') understanding of celebrity endorsement. It was concluded that a full understanding of celebrity endorsement only emerged in 10-11-year-olds and the majority of younger children were not able to show this complete understanding.

In another study from that year 55 children were presented with four cans of a (hypothetical) new soft drink called *Zest*. All the cans were covered in *Zest* livery. Two were 150ml, 1 was 330ml, and 1 was 440ml. One of the 150ml cans showed *Bart Simpson* on it and the other didn't. Using a forced choice paradigm with two alternatives, it was found that about half the children said their friends would pay more for the endorsed 150ml can than the non-endorsed 150ml can, and a half said they would pay the same amount with no age differences. However when the endorsed 150ml can was compared with the 330ml or the 440ml one then practically all the children said their friends would pay less for the endorsed can. We can conclude from this experiment that any 'added value' that is perceived to accrue from the celebrity endorsement is not matched by an increase in quantity. This experiment raises basic questions about the meaningfulness of the concept of added value by celebrity endorsement with children. For example we are working on a more graduated method for simulating an increase in size of the non-celebrity endorsed alternative in order to measure a point of indifference. But theoretically there is not really any way of knowing whether an inability to ascertain points of indifference in children below a certain age reflects a cognitive immaturity in the child or a lack of understanding.

In 2006 we attempted to design and validate a scale suitable for assessing the child's understanding of celebrity endorsement, using a set of nine statements. These were response scaled using a 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, don't know, disagree, strongly disagree) which was also accompanied by 5 associated 'stars' differing in size; the largest denoting 'strongly agree' and the smallest 'strongly disagree'. The 9 statements are given in order of presentation in Table 1.

Table 1. Order of presentation, attitude statement and rationale for selection

Order of presentation	Statement	Theoretical rationale
1	The celebrity is used for fun	Ads entertain
2	The celebrity is used to grab attention	Ads get your attention
3	The celebrity is used because he likes the product	Literal endorsement
4	The celebrity was used to make you like the product	Detached analysis of ad - affect
5	The celebrity was used because he was paid	Detached analysis of ad - actor's interest
6	The celebrity was used to make you buy the product	Detached analysis of ad - consumer purchase
7	The celebrity was used to get you to remember the product	Detached analysis of ad - consumer recollection
8	The celebrity was used because he knows about the product	Source credibility
9	Celebrities always tell the truth	Source authority

In addition each child was given a standard set of four items designed to assess understanding of TV commercials; ‘what is a TV commercial?’, ‘why are commercials shown on TV?’, ‘what do commercials try to do?’, ‘what is the difference between a TV commercial and a TV programme?’ (see Ward et al., *op. cit.*). These measured the child’s understanding of advertising intent.

Two groups of children were used. There were 43 5-6-year-olds and 71 10-11-year-olds. In addition a small convenience sample of 11 adult students was chosen to establish an adult benchmark.

Eight versions of the same poster advertising a new “cookie jar bar” were designed. Four of the posters contained a cartoon celebrity endorser chosen for their popularity amongst both age groups (either Bart Simpson, Lisa Simpson, SpongeBob SquarePants or Wilma Flintstone) and four contained a famous human celebrity endorser (either David Beckham, Robbie Williams, Victoria Beckham or Kylie Minogue). The real life celebrities were selected on the basis that they represent two distinct categories of fame: pop and sports stars, and that it was possible to obtain each character with a similar facial expression and front-on camera shot. There were two male and two female endorsers in each category in case any gender specific preference was made. In addition the eight characters were displayed separately without the product on their own laminated, white cards (each measuring 10x11cm). These were presented prior to the adverts being shown to enable the children to pick their favourites, one from the cartoon set and one from the human set. Two manipulation check questions were used to test recognition of the endorser (any participant who failed to answer the manipulation check questions was excluded from the analysis). Once each child had chosen their favourite poster from the cartoon character set and the human celebrity set, he or she was then asked ‘which of the two posters would make you want to buy the cookie jar bar more?’ and that was then used as the poster for the child to respond to.

Results for each group are given in Table 2.

Each child was asked ‘which do you think is the main reason’ after responding to the 9 statements. Results are shown in Table 3.

Both of these tables confirm that the entertainment function of advertising is seen as less important as a reason for this particular advertising technique of celebrity endorsement with the older group of children. This result confirms what is already known about the child’s understanding of advertising intent at a young age – that it is there to entertain (John, 1999) although we know of no literature that has explored the use of rhetorical techniques and reported this finding. The older children recognise that the celebrity endorser is there not because he likes the product (younger children differ from older children in Table 2) but because he is trying to grab your attention (Tables 2 and 3) and wants you to buy the product (Table 3). They recognise the function of rhetoric although they do not always see the distal⁶ function as dominant over the proximal one. There is some evidence using the Likert scale methodology that younger children are more likely to think that celebrities actually like the advertised brand whereas older children

Table 2.

Order of presentation	Statement	5-6 group (n=43)	9-10 group (n=71)	Students (n=11)	Signifi- cance
1	The celebrity is used for fun	1.63 (1.16)	2.38 (1.02)	3.09 (1.38)	**
2	The celebrity is used to grab attention	3.42 (1.56)	1.87 (0.83)	1.18 (0.41)	**
3	The celebrity is used because he likes the product	2.07 (1.39)	2.97 (1.12)	4.36 (0.67)	**
4	The celebrity was used to make you like the product	1.88 (1.37)	2.15 (0.95)	1.73 (0.91)	NS
5	The celebrity was used because he was paid	2.60 (1.50)	3.04 (1.30)	1.64 (1.21)	NS
6	The celebrity was used to make you buy the product	1.93 (1.24)	2.00 (1.03)	1.45 (0.52)	NS
7	The celebrity was used to get you to remember the product	2.02 (1.44)	2.44 (0.97)	1.73 (1.10)	NS
8	The celebrity was used because he knows about the product	2.40 (1.51)	3.37 (1.05)	4.36 (0.67)	**
9	Celebrities always tell the truth	2.58 (1.53)	3.75 (1.09)	4.64 (0.51)	**

Note: Entries are mean (standard deviations) of group response on each attitude statement (1 = strongly agree; 5 = strongly disagree). Significance based on one-way ANOVA with students removed.

Table 3.

Order of presentation	Statement	5-6 group (n=43)	9-10 group (n=71)	Students (n=11)
1	The celebrity is used for fun	16	9	0
2	The celebrity is used to grab attention	0	27	1
3	The celebrity is used because he likes the product	2	2	0
4	The celebrity was used to make you like the product	3	3	2
5	The celebrity was used because he was paid	1	5	2
6	The celebrity was used to make you buy the product	3	16	5
7	The celebrity was used to get you to remember the product	4	5	1
8	The celebrity was used because he knows about the product	0	0	0
9	Celebrities always tell the truth	7	2	0

Note: Entries are number of respondents selecting that reason as ‘the main reason’ for the celebrity being on the poster. (Column totals do not add up to group size because of missing values)

are more likely to claim that they know more about the brand than younger children (Table 2). The well-known increase in scepticism with advertising with increasing age (Mangleburg and Bristol, 1998) is confirmed here (Table 3) as older children are less likely to choose ‘celebrities always tell the truth’ as the main reason.

Children were asked why they thought the celebrity was on the poster and replies were content analysed. Comprehension levels (1, 2 and 3) were assigned to each response. Level 1 indicated little or no understanding of celebrity endorsement, level 2 meant some understanding and level 3 was assigned if the child had a full understanding of celebrity endorsement. Each child then received a score from 1 to 3. Judgements were made independently by each researcher and a significant inter-rater reliability measure (Pearson $r = 0.82$) was obtained. Examples of each level of understanding of celebrity endorsement are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Levels of assigned to each child in response to question: "why do you think the celebrity is on the poster?"

Understanding of celebrity endorsement	Example
Level 1	<i>"makes it funnier" / "don't know"</i>
Level 2	<i>"because people like him"</i>
Level 3	<i>"it's saying if you want to be like David Beckham do this or eat that"</i>

The four items used to assess the child's understanding of advertising intent had a reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of 0.86 and we can conclude that they are scaleable on a criterion of internal consistency i.e. they are measuring the same construct. Consequently a total score was computed and correlated with the understanding of celebrity endorsement measure described in Table 4, giving a Pearson r of 0.61 ($p < 0.01$). We can conclude that understanding advertising intent and understanding celebrity endorsement are related parts of a general advertising literacy which increases with age. One-way analyses of variance on the data showed, as expected, a significant effect of age on both measures in the expected direction.

Discussion

We suggest the following developmental trajectory based on theory and already published research evidence. By the age of two years many brands are recognised with pleasure by children, independently of the context in which they occur whether on TV, in the home, or in a supermarket. Any advertising context is understood as having only one function – to entertain. If the context of the brand-in-the-ad includes a celebrity endorsing the product, then that person will be seen as entertaining. The prototypical example of this is Ronald MacDonald, a clown whose main existence is in the world of that brand.

At some point in middle childhood (usually 7-8 years of age), the child begins to understand the enhancement effect of the context using the promotional rule.

From this time an understanding of the role of celebrity endorsement develops and celebrities are perceived as being there not just to entertain but as having been chosen to promote the product.

In conclusion I have described some recent research undertaken in the School of Psychology at the University of Exeter in England on children's understanding of celebrity endorsement. The applied importance of such research cannot be underestimated as celebrity endorsement has been frequently mentioned as a significant issue in the advertising and marketing to children debate. The implications for marketing and associated policy recommendations cannot be underestimated. For example it appears that there is a developmental trend underlying children's understanding of celebrity endorsement that is similar to the well-researched trajectory on the child's understanding of the intent behind advertising. If further research bears this out then the consequences would be that the case for regulating advertising to young children is strengthened. Not only will they tend to have a limited understanding of intent but they will also have similar limitations in their understanding of endorsement. Both celebrity and character endorsement are used extensively in marketing to young children in 'tie-ins' (McDonalds and Disney), pack livery and display, and advertising.

But equally importantly I hope I have convinced you the reader that it is necessary to embed this research in a sophisticated set of theories of communication and psychology. Our research will only progress if theories and hypotheses emerge from advanced theory and the subsequent research informs the body of theory. Science means theory and scepticism. Otherwise we are at the mercy of the demon of 'common sense' and will be subject to attacks from zealots of all persuasions.

Notes

1. I am indebted to my students as always and especially to Sophie Hall, Karen Betts, and Hannah Robins (in chronological order) from 2004-06 who worked with the children in the research.
2. I have deliberately avoided discussing the changing media landscape but obviously advertising is not now limited to TV spots (if it ever was) and these changes will keep us – as researchers – in gainful employment for years to come. Hopefully.
3. Vygotsky while recognising that cultural influences have a major role to play in child development did not ignore the biological or growth and maturation factors which he called 'the line of natural development'.
4. My position on the various challenges to rationality by appealing to cognitive biases in 'real' human beings is that we can factor these into the utilitarian model. The extra layer of intangibles I am describing often operates in a very different irrational way.
5. The idea of congruence has been explored in one of the few academically powerful papers in children's understanding of marketing techniques: see Zhang, S., & Sood, S. (2002). "Deep" and "Surface" Cues: Brand Extension Evaluations by Children and Adults. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29, 129-141
6. I have used these terms 'distal' and 'proximal' to distinguish respectively between the 'bottom line' goal of advertising which is purchase and one of the immediate goals – to get attention.

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Family Culture

Accomplishing Family through Toy Consumption

Jan Phillips

Much about modern toys, it seems, strikes us as troublesome; after all, they sharpen our ambivalence about childhood leisure and intensify our anxiety about corporate influences upon the most vulnerable among us (Best 1998). Perhaps as a result, analysts of recent toy-related consumption continue to stress the ways adults stage-manage their children's material happiness, a conceit lessened only when (adult) observers underscore how mass media, the toy industry, or both together seem to erode parental influence (Sutton-Smith 1986, and Cross 1997). Not surprisingly, children in such accounts remain seen but barely heard – and then as diminutive, poorly equipped consumers vulnerable to raw want, advertising, and “pester power”. In fact, a core tenet in the so-called consumer socialization literature is fully competent adults (read: mothers) not children, the latter assumed to need adult protection or instruction – or, in a few cases, sanction. Rare is a full accounting of children's participation, rarer still any sense of mutual, co-constitutive adult-child engagement around consumption.

In contrast, the present work explores the ways family members, including children, negotiate the items, uses, and agency in (toy) consumption, arguing that this form of interaction helps define and construct not just family members as consumers – the “deserving” child, say, or “generous” parents – but, more importantly, the social essence of family as well. I build a framework for family-as-accomplished using current literature and drawing on 141 retrospectively elicited childhood memory texts written by both traditional-aged (18-22 years old) and older, “non-traditional” aged college students in the United States. Accomplishing or “doing” family in this sense involves paying special attention to interactive toy consumption practices that involve and matter to family members, and that reflect family ideals as well as reality. I suggest that “doing” family around the consumption of children's playthings isn't just about bending to the pressures of established social structure; it is also about defining important social-cultural sites as needing the upkeep of recurring and everyday work – *family accom-*

plishment – by way of consumption practices. Put more generally, we *accomplish* or *enact* family through a broad array of routine, recurring practices of consumption, some of which (putting away groceries, listening to the car radio, rearranging furniture) we may hardly consider “consumption” (Gronow and Warde 2001).

Family consumption from an interactional perspective

In emphasizing children and adults engaging in family enactments through consumption I ground my work in the social constructionist paradigm, an approach that has helped uncover how such core aspects of identity as gender, sexuality, race, and age get enacted differently across time, place and social groupings (West and Zimmerman 1987, Laz 2003). Constructionists insist that we create and maintain our identities in the ordinary interactions of everyday life; we accomplish and in large measure continuously perform our identity through “often routine, sometimes impressive but always ongoing, recurring social and collective work” (Laz 2003: 506).

When, for example, we celebrate birthdays (perhaps making a point of drinking on our twenty-first birthday), work *past* retirement or retire *early*, dye our hair into our seventies, or change our diet and exercise to “stay youthful”, we demonstrate that “we perform our own age constantly, but we also give meaning to other ages and to age in general in our actions and interactions, our beliefs and words and feelings, and our social policies” (Laz 2003: 506). In this way, “doing” gender or age always engages us in normative enterprise: done “wrong”, we see it for the accomplishment it actually is; done “right”, the work involved is made invisible and gender or age becomes a part of who we are rather than what we do (West and Zimmerman 1987). Moreover, we often cannot avoid performance, sometimes undertaking it neither deliberately nor consciously. Laz (2003: 506) notes that age, for example, “is often mediated through mechanisms like competence, dependence, or maturity without awareness of the way these function as proxies for age”.

The self *in relationship with others* may be seen as similarly accomplished. This has led David Morgan and others to focus on family *practices* in order to highlight how active, fluid, open to diverse interpretation yet historically grounded our everyday taken-for-granted family worlds really are (see Morgan 1996 and 1999, DeVault 1991, Silva and Smart 1999, and Naples 2001). Insisting that we shift from conceptualizing and studying family as “a thing-like object” to envisioning it as an active process, these authors define as relevant practices not only the actual activities done by and linked to families but also rhetorical narratives used to make sense of such activities (including children’s narratives, I would emphasize). In fact, says Morgan, routine talk about family obligations, duties, constraints, enjoyments, and burdens can be a very significant form of “family

practice" (Morgan 1999: 29), especially when family members interject into the families they live *with* a ghost image – the idealized, normative families of myth and ritual that they live *by* (Gillis 1997).

Of course, we cannot assume family-constructing practices will bring forth only smiling faces; work underway by Margaret Nelson reminds us that constraint, control, the exercise of power, and exclusion also stain relevant practices. Still, whatever face we focus upon, it is not that we learn more about the form family takes from examining ways of family living; in this rendering it is rather that the practices themselves actually constitute family. Family is therefore "less of a noun and more of an adjective or, possibly, a verb" (Morgan 1999: 16). Or, as Elizabeth Silva and Carol Smart, the editors of the volume in which Morgan's most recent work appears, put it even more succinctly, families "are" what families "do".

Since a significant part of what contemporary American families "do" centers on household consumption, we do well to examine consumption practices for family-making. We do better still to place children alongside adults as full co-constructors of such consumptive family practices. Rather than treat children as incompletely socialized "others" still preparing for life, thereby creating a generational gulf, children deserve to be studied as competent social actors (including consumers), capable of helping to construct their own life and family trajectories with worthwhile desires, abilities, and contributions (Chin 2001, Cook 2006, and Ekström 2006).

To be sure, adult-child negotiation over consumption does not happen on some "frictionless plain" but rather under the perceived constraints of generational hierarchy and contemporary capitalism. Moreover, the families we accomplish by way of consumption practices can be harmonious or, alternatively, fragile or contentious. Often the constructing will be linked to specific places (home, stores, traveling in the car, eating out), and always it relates to a much larger social structural context. In one instance it might be shaped by a multinational toy or food industry. In another, it might be structured in reaction to the labor market or health care delivery system. Nonetheless, constituting family through consumptive interaction between adults and children requires activity and normative labor. This view posits not only adults but also children as active and skilled creators and users of culture, and it means here that toy consumption practices helping to construct family need not be overloaded toward adults. Desiring a toy, for instance, may be a powerfully child-centered activity that moves easily between family, peer relations, and media; actually acquiring that same toy might depend heavily on adult consent and initiative; and then, once the toy is possessed, forms of child agency may again emerge as most important.

In any case, consumption practices are one arena in which we can watch children and adults actively "dialog and negotiate" (Ekström 2006) the hierarchies and boundaries, as well as the freedoms and liminality, of everyday family life. They are practices that suggest a very different approach to the study of family, not as a naturally occurring object, not as agreed upon structural arrangements,

but as dynamic and recurring interactive processes – a concept and institution that is created, maintained, challenged and transformed not in a millennium but in minute moments every day.

Collecting consumptive memories

My exploration of the ways we accomplish family through consumption practices features qualitative content analysis of 141 retrospective childhood memory texts, written by a non-representative group of U.S. college students. Over the past six years, I have asked students in childhood and society as well as introductory sociology courses to relate children to the activities and material objects that in large measure constitute everyday consumption.¹ Students do so in an intensely personal way through several assignments, one of which asks them to write a prose or poetry ode to a favorite childhood toy. (Other assignments ask them to recall early “helping” memories, which also frequently center around family consumption practices, and to interview someone older than 65 about their remembered childhood play and work.) In the toy ode, students note why it was their favorite toy, how they acquired it, what it meant to play with the toy, and what it permitted them to do or do better. I also ask that they generalize from their experience of this particular toy to comment on the role toys play in social life. The resulting odes, up to six pages in length, recollect not only the material artifacts themselves but also issues of selfhood, intention, desire, and relationship that accompany what Sherry Turkle (2007) and her collaborators call “evocative objects”. Profound attachments and emotions thus get reflected in astonishingly creative odes, which sometimes have been accompanied by in-class visits from the toys themselves.

Studying such memories moves us beyond merely recognizing children’s important possessed objects; in the end, it allows us to shift focus from admittedly unsung childhood behaviors to the situated *accomplishment* of generational and family dynamics. As earlier work (Phillips 2005) on similarly recollected memories of childhood helping demonstrate, these sorts of memories prove a particularly robust site for negotiation over age, age divisions, and family – the kind of negotiation, in fact, that helps us understand family more clearly as “socially created, historically changing, filled with ambiguity and contradiction, and continually negotiated” (Thorne 1993: 6). In a very real and everyday sense, childhood memories reveal an age- and family-*making* locale where our perceptions are constantly revisited, redefined, repaired and/or reaffirmed. Rather than treat memory only skeptically, as “partial, malleable, and shaped by later experiences as well as by conventions for remembering” (Thorne 1993: 7), we can use it to explore the very sorts of family practices suggested by Morton.

Remembered consumption practises

We may think that if we are constructing anything through family consumption it is our household's relation to culture and capital – in a postmodern world of commodities, consuming toward what we want to be in both realms – but in fact remembered consumption practices demonstrate how family itself has to be constructed, and reconstructed. Specifically, these childhood memories about toys, especially those 25 (18%) excerpted verbatim in the analysis that follows, highlight through a commodity discourse what consuming families value or don't value (including children's desire and enabled material possession), how we work across generations through issues of gaining and displaying human agency (in the process, establishing consumptive cohorts and clarifying the manner in which such cohorts give or share), how and over what families idealize themselves as their members collectively undertake consumption, and how constraints in the families we live with (especially race, class, gender and ethnicity) impact our consumption-based enactment of family.

Childhood desire and possession practices

Toy memories reveal most immediately that we must move beyond thinking of toys as primarily objects, economic artifacts situated in the sphere of production and distribution. In this sense, toy acquisition (admittedly often by way of purchase) is but one consumption practice, and an overemphasized one at that. In fact, toy consumption, like every other type of consumption, “covers not only activities of buying but also social relations connected to provision, use and disposition of goods and services” (Gronow and Warde 2001: 30), any of which might feature such interactive processes as communication, empowerment, constraint, identification, and, not least, longing.

The latter is of considerable interest, for as historian Gary Cross (2002) emphasizes, consumer desire is both essential to modern market society and problematic in light of the value adults continue to place on childhood innocence. Adults, in this rendering, awaken desire and fantasy more generally in children – and then find themselves reacting to that desire, using it one moment as the reason to get frustrated about or restrict children's spending even when the next moment they “spend for the sake of evoking delight in children to meet parental needs” (Cross 2002: 442). In other instances, adults are slow to grant children even the capacity to desire. Bernard Mergen (1992: 89), for example, insists that children actually accord less importance to toys than adults do; they learn to value toys, he says, only as “part of growing up”.

Why, then, do children in this work's toy-ode memories again and again make the world meaningful by way of their toy *desire*? To be sure, these are adult-remembered memories, but still they reveal quite young and quite profound family-constructing “practices” brought to life through longing for toys. Repeatedly,

we witness children using their desire to make claims and position themselves within their family, to solidify age cohorts and culture, to steer and appropriate adult indulgence, and to resist the powerful adults they live with.

Many of the 141 toy odes talk openly, poignantly about childhood desire and material possession. Nearly a third (44 odes) use the explicit language of desire, with such phrases as *had to have it*, *anticipated*, *wanted*, *desired*, *waited for*, *begged for* or *craved*. For instance, one 36-year-old female² starts her ode about a desired bicycle in this way: “For weeks I’d been begging, pleading and praying”. Another student, a first-year female student (≈19 years old), writes of her stuffed animal, “Since the time I first saw you alone up on the shelf/ I knew I had to have you all for myself”. As this memory reveals, the familiar refrain of childhood longing easily morphs into possession, wherein the sense that a toy is theirs alone marks it as all the more cherished. The phrase “It was mine” recurs surprisingly regularly in the odes, a claim not just to ownership but also to the significance of toys for children in constructing familial boundaries and generational distinctiveness:

I was the only person who could decide what Becky did. No one, not even my parents, could control Becky. She was mine and only mine ... [doll, 23-year-old female]

This sense of possession is also remembered as helping children spell out and legitimate property rights within family age cohorts:

I dreamt up meals with the siblings looking. / “Look, but don’t touch”, I’d snap when they came near my meals, / I’d ‘cook’ and they’d ‘eat;’ those were the deals. [play kitchen, ≈19-year-old first-year female student]

... my G.I. Joe’s [Hasbo’s military-themed action toys] were only for me. I would let my brother play with them whenever he wanted, but I never played with him at the same time. [male, senior, ≈22 years old]

Thus, once powerful longing for a toy is fulfilled through actual possession, even routine toy play can yield something still more important – namely, the “lived experience”, as Daniel Miller (1998: 4) puts it, of creating family relationships by way of consumption.

Inter-generational gifting practices

Miller’s (1998: 8) ethnography of North London shopping reminds us that we don’t merely buy goods for others; we buy “hoping to influence these others into becoming the kind of people who would be the appropriate recipients for that which is being bought”. Clearly, that is often the case with adult purchases of toys for children,

where the hope of “generous” adults is for “appreciative” children. As Mergen (1992: 89) notes, “Toys are gifts meant to form bonds between adults and children, especially at family-centered rituals such as Christmas and birthdays.” Add birth itself as another opportunity for ritualized, family-centered toy gifting, and 40% (58) of the toys described in the 141 odes are acknowledged as originating in such rituals. Other related sorts of family-constructing rituals (e.g., family trips or visiting relatives) supply an additional 5% or six additional toys. Interestingly, not all such gifting rituals yield spectacular toys or consumption practices. One 22-year-old female, for example, remembers receiving a new slinky toy every Christmas in her stocking, cherishing this rather ordinary toy because it was always “brand new out of the box”. Another female (age 30) describes receiving a small radio from a visiting aunt. Admitting that such an item “would probably not have been very exciting for many”, the student nonetheless talks about the ways in which this seemingly simple gift helped redefine her identity, helping her feel she was no longer a “little girl, a stigma as the youngest sibling in the family that had plagued me since birth”.

But something more mutually constructing is also at stake here; children, it turns out, reflect back the practice of gifting in a number of ways. Admittedly, they are masterful ritual learners, capable of managing their age-limited social and emotional resources well enough to ensure gifts are not entirely a surprise. (One 26-year-old male describes the letter to Santa taking four drafts to complete.) However, they also actively recognize when adults work hard to pull off gift giving. One female (age 48) who received a hard-to-find doll remembers “saying thank you, thank you thank you over and over again”.

At other gifting moments, perhaps out of the shadow of ritual, more open contest over family relationships and decision-making erupts in acquiring a toy:

Mommy, Mommy look what I found
 She isn't happy with me
What were you doing in the basement? Put that back it's dirty
 But Mommy I want it! Please?
 She smiles and I know I have won
Okay, ———, you can have it but let me clean it up okay?
 Okay Mommy [stuffed bunny, sophomore female, ≈age 20]

What I really wanted, though, was the McDonald's play-set. Not only could I pretend I was a cashier, but I could cook food as well! My mother must have refused to buy it for me on ten different occasions before I was finally given it. On that tenth trip my grandmother had come to the store with us. I asked for the McDonald's play-set and was denied again. However, instead of moving on I threw a temper tantrum! And it worked. My grandmother bought the play-set that day. [19-year-old female]

As the last example illustrates, “doing” family through consumption, even when it relies heavily on the infamous “pester power”, frequently involves siblings, aunts

and uncles, grandparents, and even fictive kin in addition to children and their parents. In fact, parental values and commodity provisioning may be “trumped” by a different inter-generational interaction. In another ode written by a 35-year-old female, a grandmother teaches her granddaughter to be a “card shark”, helping her learn card tricks and how to make card towers, possibly not what parents anticipated.

Practices constructing the idealized family

When consumptive interaction and sharing slide easily into family practices, engineered that way by adults and/or children, the idealized families we live *by* frequently make an appearance. They may do so through surprisingly ordinary consumption, as when a first-year female student (≈ 19 years old) writes about her parents picking up boxes from a local furniture store for their children’s play. These free “toys” are expressly intended for regularized sharing: “The cardboard boxes allowed me and my sisters to play together. They were one thing that could easily be shared between the three of us.”

Elsewhere idealized family may take greater engineering. A 23-year-old female describes using her new wooden ducky to “strategize ways to gain attention” after not feeling noticed by her two hard-working parents. Another female [first-year, ≈ 19 years old] relates that her father “never knows the right way” for her Barbie and Ken to behave and must be constantly corrected on what they eat or how they dress. Still another respondent tells a different Barbie story:

My sister was the eldest in the family (13 years older) and I had very limited interaction time with her. I worshipped my sister; I wanted her attention in the worst way. With Barbie, I was able to gain that attention from her. My sister was an excellent sewer (so I thought) and I would ask her to sew Barbie clothes, blankets, sleeping bags, etc. She loved to do it. This was the avenue I took advantage of to form a bonding relationship with my sister.

... . [Later, when the sister began dating and was less available] I missed the attention of my sister, and through this style of fantasy play I imagined she was still with me. My “Blonde to Brunette” Barbie became my surrogate sister. I could switch her head and pretend that she was my sister speaking, then switch it to blonde and pretend it was me answering. [33-year-old female]

Consumption practices can do more than activate idealized family values, though. They may also counter the actual family being experienced. A 33-year-old female respondent, whose parents were divorcing at the time of her childhood memory and whose often-tired mother struggled to make ends meet, describes spending hours playing with her favorite doll to create what she calls “the perfect world”. In her solitary play, both parent and child are “perfect”.

Being the grown-up allowed me to spend all my time with my “daughter”. I cooked her most favorite meals. It did not matter if she wanted peanut butter and jelly for every meal. I was always patient and gentle when speaking with Carrie. We always had enough money so then we had everything we needed.

Carrie was the perfect daughter, too. She only cried when she was hungry and she went to sleep on time. She never made me, the mom, tired or cranky.

Looking back, she concludes:

I know that through Carrie I lived my fantasy life. In that perfect world, all Mommies and Daddies were married. They didn't yell at each other, they loved each other, and they most certainly never had to work. Carrie's family always had everything they needed. They lived happily ever after.

Similarly, another respondent says, “If my mother had told me that I couldn't do or have something, then in my play [with a Cabbage Patch doll] I would make sure that my child was able to do or have it. I used situations as those to challenge the authority of my parents and assert control over my life”. [female, 20 years old]

Constraints and resistance in family enactment practices

Consuming against one's actual family need not remain a solitary, fantasy undertaking. In fact, sometimes the ways we use consumer practices to construct (and reconstruct) family become fully apparent precisely when such practices confront expectations in the family head-on. In female toy memories, for instance, challenged expectations oftentimes are gendered ones. Accordingly, one 37-year-old female respondent details a relevant Christmas experience:

The common question adults pose to young children during the holiday season is “What do you want for Christmas?” When I was around nine, I remember my parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles asking me this question. My stomach would get all tied up inside just thinking about giving an answer. I knew what I was supposed to want, but that was different from what I really wanted. Most young girls during this era were expected to play with dolls, doll houses, cooking objects, and school material.

I was a young girl in a non-typical situation. I had three brothers and lived in a small town where there were no other girls on my side of town. In our two-room school, I was the only girl in our room up until fifth grade. The toys I wanted for Christmas were toys that boys liked.

.... During the Christmas season of 1974, my grandparents asked me what I wanted. I told them a truck. They laughed at me and made fun of me. I remember

my mother telling them this was what I truly wanted. They still thought it was really odd, but were willing to get their granddaughter what she really wanted.

When she finally receives a remote-controlled jeep, she deems it “the best gift my grandparents had ever given me”. Nevertheless, “all my relatives could see this made me happy but had a hard time understanding why”.

Another respondent, a 30-year-old female, describes extended play with Match-box cars:

I knew that Barbie didn't represent girls realistically; however, I believed cars did.... An example of this is when I would act out a car accident. I was as graphic as possible. My mother would react in such a way that suggested cars weren't to be played with in that manner.

Sometimes, though, the families we live *with* too forcibly set the parameters of consumption practices available for constructing family, especially when race, class or ethnicity figure powerfully:

The toy I remember as being special to me was my jump rope. My rope was not like the jump ropes you find in toy stores today. It did not have handles or grippers to hold on to and did not come in a neon or multi-colored version. My rope was purchased by my father as a work tool to be used around the house. We conspired together to cut off a length for me to use as a toy. [51-year-old female]

I even made Bear an official green card with his picture on it. We all had green cards, Immigration and Naturalization cards stating we were legal to be in this country. We would frequently take family trips to Canada and I was always very insistent the Border Patrol check out Bear's card to make sure he was accepted in Canada and then again on the return to the United States. [stuffed gorilla, 32-year-old female]

Interestingly, one final way of using toys to help construct family appears in these odes: children frequently and insistently attribute life, if not family membership, to their playthings. While this is clearly the case with toys marketed, sold, and purchased to be humanly singularized, such as Cabbage Patch or Barbie dolls (the most cherished childhood toy of eight and 12 respondents respectively),³ personification is also liable to become part of the cultural biography of almost any toy *thing* (Kopytoff 1986).

Despite having just listed all of the reasons as to why Snuffles is essentially numb to my world, I never believed this as a child. Snuffles was alive. Perhaps this is the miracle of childhood, discovering vitality in things that are so clearly lifeless. As children grow into adults they often lose the ability to view stuffed animals as companions. In addition, they often fail to grasp the deeply rooted love that a child has for such an inanimate object. [19-year-old female, speaking of a bean bag bear]

Personifying a toy and making it fictive kin stands as perhaps the most literal way children turn consumption practices to constructing family. And they may do so in ways that overtly resist other family members, as in the case of one female [age not known] and her “talking Teddy”:

Not only did she speak but also she spoke Bear language. This was a language that only I understood.... so I could make her say anything I wanted. I could tell my sister she was ugly, or my brother that he was a pain and then I would tell my mom that Kaitlin [the bear] said it and I just repeated it!

Conclusion: what toy memories tell us

“Toys”, says Mergen (1992: 86), “are the material culture of play”. As it turns out, they are that and a good deal more. Adults recollecting their childhoods remember toy play for what a child might gain: fun, power and control over something, a way to let out frustration or aggression, responsibility, the ability to become a collector, comfort, a sense of adult-ness, and social acceptance. They also remember what toys permitted them to do, or do better, toward accomplishing family. In truth, children and adults negotiating the acquisition, use, disposal, or even memory of toys (the latter illustrated when a couple of respondents reported difficulty agreeing with other family members over toy memories) is not something apart from family. Nor is it an isolated part of family practices. Today, when consumer goods, including children’s toys, hold important “cultural meaning and new opportunities for defining self and the world” (McCracken 1988: 24), consumption practices more and more are *the* family practices worth studying.

Others might argue that investigating children and their toys necessitates uncoupling them from the context of family, since family historically has made children, like women, subjugated beings. Fortunately, thoughtful analysts (Martens, Southerton and Scott 2004, for example) keep asking that we examine children’s engagements across different social settings, including family and home, in order to study social agency and structure more generally. Scholarship on family consumption therefore remains badly needed, even if few researchers fully appreciate how *family* and *consumption* might truly be of a piece (see a similar call by Commuri and Gentry 2000). Using observation and narrative analysis, such research can spotlight a wide range of consumption activities (grocery shopping, scrapbooking, vacationing, and even adoption come quickly to mind), helping us better understand how family gets “done”. Plus, in a world full of a “greater plurality of consumption and increased confusion or anxiety regarding what precisely is the appropriate way of consuming in different cultural contexts” (Martens, Southerton and Scott 2004: 167), study of family consumption may provide an important lens for understanding social change.

Whether commodification is overrunning family as well as helping to construct it is another question, albeit one with some currency in the U.S. Marx (1967 [1867]) suggests that families are driven by manipulated desire, because commodities of all types are fetishized – that is, endowed with boundless powers which seem intrinsic to the commodity itself and which lead consumers to overlook the forms of exploitation (including of themselves as workers and citizens) that help create these goods and services in the first place. Admittedly, children and adults engaged in consumption as family enactment may do their fair share of fetishizing, including naming their commodities and making them imaginary kin (think cars as well as children's toys). Still, accomplishing family through consumption isn't just about the confines of social structure. Nor does the importance of consumption for family life necessarily mean, as some analysts after Marx have argued, that social relationships between people are increasingly being replaced by symbolic relationships between commodity consumers and/or commodities. After all, we continue to experience some of our most ordinary, intimate, caring, exasperating, and dangerous moments enacting family.

Ulrich Beck (1992) claims we have shifted from a wealth society to a "risk society" characterized by an increase in actual and perceived risks. As a result, says Beck, adults (children as well?) no longer face predictably "standard" biographies. Instead, we are left to fashion "do-it-yourself biographies". In such a world, material culture and "toys" for all ages may seem especially constitutive – both biographical accessory and necessity (note Robertson's 2004 analysis of adult doll collecting and personification). Or, as one toy ode respondent indicates, in a risk society our *memories* of toys may provide surprisingly inexhaustible biographical continuity:

Toys are unique belongings; they are played with for only a few years, but the memory of our love for them stays with us for the rest of our lives. I imagine myself as a real-life *Citizen Kane*, on my death bed muttering "Mickey" [her Mickey Mouse toy]. My Mickey is like *Rosebud*; he represents a time all adults wish to return to, no matter what they become in the future.

Notes

1. Although I teach at a state university campus in the U.S. that draws mostly female students (average age approximately 30), I also had the opportunity to teach for the 2001-02 academic year at a small, private liberal arts college attended by traditional-age 18- to 22-year-old students. Since the fall of 2001, I have collected 141 toy odes from students (age 18 to nearly 60) in courses at both institutions. Although I have made no attempt to collect a representative sample or gather accompanying data about family demographics, knowledge gained through interaction and other writing from the students permits me to say that in their remembered childhoods they reflect a diverse range of family types (single-parent and two-parent families, including blended families), class locations (poor and working class to at least upper-middle class), and types of child-parent relations (biological, adoptive, step-, and foster). Though the childhoods they remember may have occurred several decades apart, given their age range,

and though the university students generally tend toward less affluence than the small-college students, the two sets of students nonetheless seem representative of students at their respective institutions – with the important exception of gender. While just under 50% of the college student body in 2001-02 was male and almost 20% of the university students in the years 2001-06 have been male, only about 12% (16 out of 141) of the toy odes are from males. In the main, this reflects the gender loading in courses on childhood at both institutions.

2. Where known, ages of respondents are listed. When only the year in school is known, that and an estimate of age are listed.
3. Other toys mentioned in more than five odes include dolls more generally (16 odes) and stuffed animals (30 odes), suggesting that commonly personifiable toys are often given to children and, in turn, often cherished by them.

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Up the Walls!

Children's Talk about Visuality in Their Own Rooms

Anna Sparrman

Visuality is an important aspect of getting along in everyday life. Crossing the threshold into young children's rooms is like entering a bricolage of visual as well as material culture, a bricolage between commercial and home-made products. Sometimes this visual jumble begins on the outside of the bedroom door, which is decorated with name labels/stickers, explaining who inhabits the room, or home-made stop signs, telling people, or more specifically younger siblings or parents, to keep out. In children's (bed)rooms, culture produced *for* children *by* adults intersects with children's own cultural use of the very same products. The act of consumption is not completed with the purchase, but visual products and visuality are lived, given meaning and re-lived by children in their own rooms.

Theoretical background

The topic of young people's own rooms as a cultural arena has been discussed since the 1970s. The initial focus was on teenage girls' rooms as a cultural arena for consumption and creativity, which was studied in relation to notions of male subcultures as active and girls' cultures as passive (McRobbie & Garber, 1976). Today, studies of pre-teen girls' bedrooms are also being conducted (Baker, 2004). Teenage rooms have also come to be used in research as a starting point for discussing issues such as alcohol and sexuality (Brown, Dykers, Steel & Barton White, 1994). During their research on these issues, Brown et al. (1994) conceived of the interior design of teenage rooms as important sites for young people's identity construction. Their study was one of the first to conduct ethnographic research on teenage girls' and boys' bedrooms rather than merely studying, for example, representations of girls' bedrooms in magazines or other media (Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2002). Brown et al.'s study has been an important inspiration for the design of the present study.

Research focusing on wall decorations has mainly been carried out from an adult perspective (Londos, 1993; Reme, 1993) or, in Sweden, it has concerned the interior decoration of children's rooms from an adult perspective (Werkmäster, 1998) as well as the number of toys at hand in children's bedrooms (Nelson & Nilsson, 2002). The focus of the present paper is on children's (girls' and boys') own ideas and thoughts, constructed through interview interaction, about images present in their own rooms.

In consumer research, images have long been neglected, even though commercial strategies such as advertising are mainly based on images and consumption is founded on the practice of looking (Schroeder, 2002). To understand the importance of the visual in consumption, Schroeder (2002) argues that cultural contexts must be considered to a greater extent, for example including value as well as identity aspects. To see what a visual approach to consumption can bring to consumer research Schroeder has formed a multidisciplinary approach called visual consumption, combining a theoretical approach that consists of representations and semiotics, art and advertising and consumer theory. This is an important initiative as visuality and vision have a tendency to transgress academic disciplinary boundaries and are therefore complex in nature. A similar interdisciplinary approach to understanding visuality and consumption is expressed in the present text. However, the research issues differ, which is why both theories and methods diverge. The present point of departure is not consumption theories but rather a theoretical combination of Childhood Studies, Visual Culture and Critical Discourse Analysis. Instead of focusing on images (advertisements), as Schroeder does, the present focus is on children's own consumption of diverse images. The aim is to understand how visual consumption intersects with children's meaning construction, subjectivities and situatedness in the social world. The main connecting principle with Schroeder's reasoning is the idea that images function within cultural systems of meaning making.

Norman Fairclough's (1992) Critical Discourse Analytical theory/method (CDA) is used to comprehend how children can make change come about (agency) as well as how children are restricted or forced to conform to social structures and everyday visuality, *i.e.* considering how they are simultaneously both being and becoming (Prout, 2005). The use of CDA makes it possible to move beyond notions of children as either 'over'-competent or innocent (*cf.*, Buckingham, 1998; 2000). Moreover, the critical discourse analytical approach is combined with social theories of visuality, *i.e.* visual culture. The visual shapes the social at the same time as the social shapes the visual, *i.e.* visuality is approached as a constitutive force of knowledge about the world (Mitchell, 2002). The fundamental idea is that the world is constituted both through language and visuality and that it is important to study intersections and interfaces between different senses as well as between words and images to make visuality visible to processes of knowledge production (Mitchell, 1994; 2002). By using the interdisciplinary terminology of visual culture, instead of using concepts like media, commercial culture, high and low culture, when discussing children's rooms, it becomes possible to move beyond

dichotomizations between, for example, high and low culture or speaking solely or specifically about commercial culture, because, as stated by Ellen Seiter (1993), all culture for children is commercial regardless of whether you purchase a Barbie doll or a Playmobile. The combination of CDA and the interdisciplinary theories of visual culture also contributes to an intermingling of the private and the public, the local and the societal.

The present paper concerns eight interviews conducted with children (6-8 years old) in their own bedrooms. The interviews focus on pictures on the walls as well as visual aspects of products such as trash bins, collector cards, photographs, diplomas and knick-knacks. The point of departure of the interviews is the wall decorations, but the interview interaction generates discussions about visuality in general, such as the meaning of fandom and visual memories.

Methodological approach and reflections

An auto-driven interview method has been used when interviewing the children (Heisley & Levy, 1991; cf., Brown et al., 1994). That is, the interviews were carried out using visual stimuli, in this case directly selected from children's own everyday life, their own rooms. Visual stimuli are generally used as an aid to initiate interviews about something that is not present in the interview situation (cf., Heisley & Levy, 1991). For example, pictures of food are used to generate discussions about eating habits. However, in the present research project, children's own bedroom pictures are used to acquire knowledge about how the children themselves give meaning to the wall decorations surrounding them and to the visual aspects of trading cards, prints on T-shirts as well as photographic habits and other things.

Four boys and four girls were interviewed after, but as part of, a five-month-long video ethnographic study at a Swedish after-school centre investigating children's use of visual culture in everyday life. The entire research material was collected in 1998-1999 for a doctoral dissertation (Sparrman, 2002). An interactionistic interview method was used without a set list of questions (Silverman, 1993). However, five main topics were prepared: (1) what images could be found in the room; (2) number of pictures on the walls; (3) decision procedures underlying how the pictures ended up on the walls; (4) possibilities for the child's own image production in the room (areas for painting/drawing, playing on computers, TV sets etc.); (5) pictures of idols. Each interview was carried out using a video-recorder and lasted about 45-60 minutes. The reason for using a video-recorder was twofold. First, the children were used to the video camera from the video observations I made at their after-school centre (Sparrman, 2005). Second, the video-recorder made the interviews run smoothly, as talking about visuality includes pointing and referring to visual aspects verbally by saying: "that", "this one", "look". Using a video-recorder facilitated the verbal interaction, be-

cause the camera could register every pointing without any further verbal specifications.

Counting the pictures in each room was accomplished together with the children, usually as a way to initiate the interview (see Table 1). Each and every porcelain figure on small wall shelves or tin soldiers on windowsills, however, were not counted. See Table 2 for information on the categories of pictures present in the rooms.

Table 1. Number of wall decorations in the rooms

Children	Age	Number of wall decorations	Own room
Vivi (f)	6	12*	No
Veronika (f)	6	19	Yes
Elise (f)	8	27	Yes
Stina (f)	8	47	Yes
Hampus (m)	8	51	Yes
Fabian (m)	7	67	Yes
Benny (m)	7	34	Yes
Lars (m)	8	16	Yes

* The number of wall decorations in Vivi’s room is the lowest compared to the other interviewed children. There were twice as many pictures in the room, but half of them belonged to Vivi’s younger sister, and they were not counted.

One of the interviews (Fabian) in this study was carried out with the child’s mother present in the room. She asked if she could sit in on the interview, but promised only to listen. This was, according to her, more a matter of curiosity than lack of trust. She wanted to hear Fabian’s thoughts about his room. This could of course have been a strategy on her part to keep control over the situation. She kept her promise and did not join in on the discussion until the end of the interview session. No other parents asked to join in on the interviews and I would not have allowed any other parents to participate, because no matter how quiet Fabian’s mother was, she intruded on my relationship with him.

Analytical procedure

In order to analyse the interviews, all video recordings were transcribed.¹ The critical discourse analytical analyses (CDA) carried out involve three dimensions: (1) the image, (2) the discursive practices and (3) the social practices that in reality overlap one another, but that are partly disentangled through the analysis. The analytical starting point is taken in the discursive practice that consists of actual people’s communicative meaning making. The analytical procedure moves between descriptions and analysis of the wall decorations, transcriptions and analysis of the discursive practices and analysis of the interconnection between

them and a reading of both aspects in the light of social practice (Fairclough, 1992). In the present article, the images are the wall decorations, the discursive practice involves the interview interactions, while the social practice is a conglomerate of discourses about childhood, generation, gender, children's visual culture and identities. In this way, the dialectical and relational procedure of understanding both action and structure is dealt with as well as the ambition to show the concordance between objects, subjects and social aspects from children's perspective. Fairclough's theoretical and methodological model allows emphasis on the power of the image and its potential as producer of knowledge about the world. It also helps to highlight the intersections between language, image, identities and the social that are taking place in the discursive practice. Accordingly, the analysis of the talk is not about how talk is done but about how talk is made use of (*cf.*, Bamberg, 2004), allowing an understanding of children's visual consumption of wall decorations from the perspective of the child.

Within CDA and positioning theory, identities are understood as accomplished and emerging through social interaction (Ainsworth & Hardy, 2004; Bamberg, 2004; Davies & Harré, 1990; Fairclough, 1992; Henriques et al., 1984/1998; Walkerdine, 1990). Still, within CDA, identities are seldom studied from a participant perspective, i.e. when discussing, for example, what wall decorations may mean for the participant's own identities or subjectivities. To complement this, micro-analysis of transcribed interview interaction (Edwards, 1997) has been used to comprehend how the visual is part of the subject positioning processes (Bamberg, 2004; Davies & Harré, 1990; Walkerdine, 1990) from the perspective of the child.²

Wall decorations in children's rooms

To get an overview of the content of the children's rooms, two organizing principles have been applied to the research material. The wall decorations have been categorized into types of pictures using categories from studies of adult wall decorations and earlier youth bedroom studies. Categories specific to the children's rooms have been added (see Table 2).

Another principle used to understand and investigate the pictures in the children's rooms has been to take as a starting point how the children themselves, during the interview interaction, construct meaning in relation to the wall decorations at hand. This aspect will be the main focus of the rest of this paper.

Decision procedures behind wall decorations in children's rooms

The eight children's understandings of parents' right to decide over wall decorations in their rooms range from the notion that parents "should decide" (Veronica), that parents should not be allowed "to put up just anything" (Hampus) or that

Table 2. Wall decorations in children’s rooms

Category of pictures	Examples of category contents	Theoretical background
Cultural decorative public property	Reproductions of classical children’s pictures (Winnie the Pooh, Beatrix Potter, stained-glace pictures of Mickey and Minnie Mouse), Carl Larsson reproductions, images of children from the 50s.	Londos (1990)*
Images with bookmark character	Porcelain figures, angels, cowboy hat, stop signs, stickers, glued puzzle, airplane, Barbie purse, witch, elf, planets, flags, tin soldiers, peepshow, diplomas, badges for activities (gym, swimming school etc.)	Londos (1990)
Travels	Postcards or souvenirs from one’s own, relatives’ or friends’ travels.	Londos (1990)
Relatives and friends	Photos, objects with related memories of relatives	Londos (1990)
Aesthetic expression	Own image production, fashion of organizing the walls or the room.	Brown et als (1994)
Handicraft by adults	Embroideries, aquarelle painting, oil painting, pen drawing, quilted pictures.	Child category
Posters	Animals (cats, horses), pop bands (Take 5, Spice Girls), cars (Volvo, Ferrari, Renault), ABC, the Phantom, police bus, hockey (team and individual players), Bamse (Swedish children’s cartoon), Flammy (mascot in the shape of a monkey for Swedish fire stations), motor cross bike, Lion King.	Child category
Interior design with images	Lamps, artificial flower made of fabric, name label, wall clock, gadget shelf, mirror, billboard	Child category

* Categories not overlapping with adult wall decorations are surroundings/memories from childhood, monarchy/politics (Londos, 1990).

one should adjust to parents’ wishes to keep specific pictures on the walls (Elise) to the notion that parents have no control over the decision procedure (Benny). Benny claims total autonomy in relation to his parents, still his father has decided on at least one picture in the room representing a motorbike. In contrast, Hampus’s father has decided on forty-seven out of fifty-one pictures. Veronica states that she has only decided upon one picture and Elise who has considerable influence over her wall decorations, still keeps a picture she drew when she was in

day-care, because her mother wants her to. No matter the amount of influence the children have on the decision procedures behind their wall decorations Veronica, Hampus, Elise and Benny all accept a certain amount of conciliation between themselves and their parents in the decision procedure.



Image 1. Fabian's diplomas



Image 2. Fabian's billboard

Example 1. Interview with Fabian age 7

- Anna: Lots of pictures. (Mother: Yea).
 Fabian: Ehm.
 Mother: What does mum think then, we shall take the pictures down (Fabian: Ehm) what do you say then?
 Fabian: No.
 Anna: Why don't you want to do that?
 Fabian: I'm used to them.
 Anna: What did you say?
 Fabian: I'm used to them. (Anna: Yeah).
 Mother: Mum wants you to throw (F: ehm) ehm.
 Anna: Is there anything special?
 Fabian: Eh, you'll have to ask her about that, I don't know.
 Anna: (Laugh)
 Mother: Mum thinks we should weed out your diplomas (see Image 1).
 Fabian: No. They should be there (Mother: Yes).
 Mother: That you should take that one down (points at poster).
 Fabian: Actually, I have one more diploma. Or two more.
 Anna: You have (F: Ehm) you haven't put them up.
 Fabian: There's no space (A: Well, no).
 Mother: I think it gets to be so much, you should take some down from the billboard (see Image 2).
 Fabian: Yes but, there I've done a little like you wanted.
 Mother: Yes, you have. Yes, the Christmas cards, right.
 Anna: (Laughs), aha, Christmas cards.
 Mother: Those he had to take down, yes.
 Anna: Finally (M: Yeah). Yes but there you've got, those pictures sitting there, those, yea.

This does not mean that wall decorations are an uncontested sphere for children. At the end of the interview with Fabian, his present mother expressed her opinion of Fabian's wall decorations.

This interaction between Fabian, his mother and the interviewer shows quite well how wall decorations can be an issue of negotiation between children and parents and also what can be at stake. The issue brought up by Fabian's mother seems to be triggered by my comment that Fabian has many pictures in his room, i.e. after finding two additional pictures behind his door, bringing the total up to 67 pictures. Fabian is very short when talking with his mother, which could be due to resistance to the topic. This interpretation is established further when he positions himself as ignorant of his mother's wishes and re-directs my questions to him to his mother. The mother's narrative suggests taking some diplomas down (see Image 1), taking down a poster and clearing away some items from the billboard (see Image 2). Fabian is not in the mood for negotiating; he wants to keep his wall decorations as they are, he is used to it this way. Moreover, the custom of having it the way it is seems to comfort him. It can be understood that Fabian and his mother have different understandings of comfort, one defining it as less (mother), the other as more (Fabian). Fabian points out that he has complied with his mother's wishes and cleared off the billboard. He did what was necessary and took down the Christmas cards. But Fabian also indicates that it could be worse, as he has more diplomas that he could put up, but by not doing so, he has met his mother halfway. This is one of his trumps in the negotiation, because he has anticipated his mother and obliged her in secret, without saying anything. Fabian and his mother try to strike a balance in the discussion about the wall decorations, but Fabian's irritated tone reveals how delicate the subject is and that his mother is doing a balancing act trying to challenge him without violating or offending him. This is probably due both to my presence and to the meaning Fabian attributes the objects. Others, except for Fabian, also give reasons for not taking old things down, behind which is a wish to relate to memories of a time gone by.

Another boy, Lars, talks about how he has negotiated with his parents. Their discussion seems to be more focused on content than on the number of pictures in his room.

Example 2. Interview with Lars age 8

- Lars: 'Cause it looks a little childish, I think. It's smaller than me.
 Anna: How do you mean?
 Lars: Well, like, that it's not, I'm like really too big to have this one (Anna: Aha) I think.
 Anna: But, mhm, you mean that you can see that you're (Lars: I think) that you're too big?
 Lars: Well my parents don't seem to do that, but I think so, and I see it, from many angles.
 Anna: But, but how do you mean you can see that?
 Lars: Yes, that it's more childlikeish I think that I see it like.
 Anna: Can you point at something there that you think is childlikeish?
 Lars: For example, the stripe there. (Points under the letters U and V). I think that's childish and that there are bears everywhere.



Image 3. Lars' Ferrari poster



Image 4. Lars' ABC-poster

Lars's favourite picture is of a bright red Ferrari (Image 3) exposed on a glossy black background, while the least favoured poster in his collection is the alphabet poster (Image 4). Lars explains to me that he has grown out of the alphabet poster, partly because he now knows the alphabet. However Lars' parents do not seem to agree with him:

One suspects that Lars has had a discussion with his parents about taking down the ABC poster, but he seems to have lost this negotiation. With regard to this issue, Lars rates and positions himself as more competent than his parents. He can argue and see the displacement of the poster from "many angles". He has agency and he tries to make change come about, but is hindered, perhaps owing to an ideological clash between a pedagogical childhood represented by the ABC poster and a more commercial childhood represented by the Ferrari, childhoods that are favoured differently by Lars and his parents. The image of the Ferrari could also be a gender issue. The car works as a representation of a discourse about adult men's dream of having a fast car. The picture of the car makes the dream of growing up and becoming a man present in Lars's everyday life. But still Lars has a long way to go; he is only eight years old, and his parents seem to control the speed of growing up and becoming a young man by letting a unisex childhood visually speak out through the ABC poster for some time to come. The parental power over decision-making in the family positions Lars as a child who knows less and has circumscribed agency.

Wall decorations as social cobwebs

Talking with children about their wall decorations not only highlights their relations to their parents, but also reveals how the room decorations compose a cobweb of social relations connecting each child with friends, relatives, family members and neighbours. These connections are constituted by gift giving at birthdays and parties, souvenirs from holiday trips or souvenirs from relatives' holiday trips or get-well presents. Some pictures are inherited from older siblings or parents, a gift from dad's boss, a lottery prize at a school event or given to children for free while visiting a car dealer together with parents.

Stina has a picture on the wall of her room depicting the Swedish pop band *Electric Banana Band*. Stina and her family went to see them live in concert. After the concert, it seems as if free posters depicting the band were distributed. Due to crowding and misunderstandings within the family, Stina missed out on the free posters. She explained that she was very sad and cried because of it. Later on, her grandmother found a picture of the band in a magazine, cut it out, laminated it and gave it to Stina as a consolation for the one she missed out on. Stina put the picture up on her wall.

The visual objects in the children's rooms also connect children with dead family members whom they have never met. Stina has a picture of her grandfather as a child at the foot of her bed (see Image 5).



Image 5. Stinas' picture of her grandfather



Image 6. Lars' model plane from his grandfather

The picture is decorated with long necklaces of beads and pearls. Stina has never met her grandfather, but every evening she says her prayers in front of the picture. She tells me she has not even told her parents about this arrangement. The picture is hidden behind the curtains in her bunk bed and not easily viewed.

Lars also has a memory of his dead grandfather on the wall in his room. It is a model plane sent to Lars from the US where his grandfather lived (see Image 6). Lars explains that the family could never afford to visit his grandfather before

he died. Thus, he looks at the plane and remembers his grandfather, longing for a man he never met. In this way the two last examples replace a social face-to-face relation and connect the children visually with their family history and wall decorations become social cobwebs of human relations.

Children's meaning making of idol posters

Elise has many Spice Girls posters on her walls (see Image 7a & 7b). I ask her about them, and she tells me how she picked them out. Most of the pictures are from magazines. After finishing the interview and saying good-bye to Elise and her parents, Elise's father asks her if she told me about the Spice Girls posters. It turned out that after it had been decided that I would come to conduct an interview, Elise put up all her old Spice Girls posters at once. She did it on a day when her parents were out of the house. Elise's father frames the poster story as something that resulted from my wish to come and interview about wall decorations, while Elise herself explains that she felt like it and did it because one of her friends had just put up her posters again, on the same day as a disco event would take place. Upon arriving, I asked whether Elise knew what my visit was about, and she said she was aware that I wanted to talk about her room; "Elise: Well, sort of... you ask about if I have my room sort of". Elise also told me it had been up to her whether or not I could come and interview her. Accordingly, as Elise put up the Spice Girls posters before my arrival, she obviously thought they contributed something. Either Elise wanted to tell me something about herself or the posters expressed her notions of what a room should look like. Media-wise the Spice Girls were at this point, spring 1999, at the bottom of their career after a minor media revival, in connection with the defection of the Spice member Geri Halliway (Ginger Spice) in the summer of 1998. Elise had been a big fan of the Spice Girls and she still owned trading cards, CDs and posters, and she and her friends still sometimes mimicked and imitated the music group. Her favourite character was Emma (Baby Spice).



Image 7a. Elise's wall-decorations



Image 7b: Close-up of one of Elise's Spice Girls poster

Elise also had a poster of the male music group *Take Five*. When we talked about the *Spice Girls* and *Take Five* posters, she explained the posters' meaning in the following way:

Example 3. Interview with Elise age 8

- Anna: Why do you have the Spice Girls on the walls then?
 Elise: I think they're good. (A: Yeah). But I don't think Take Five is that good.
 Anna: What did you say, what?
 Elise: Take Five that's them (points at poster) (A: Aha) I only think he's cute (A: Yeah) so I usually look at him sometimes when I'm sleeping.
 Anna: What do you think then?
 Elise: Well, different things.
 Anna: Can you tell something?
 Elise: Ehem, well I usually then dream about them, but sometimes, different dreams.
 Anna: What do you think then, do you think that you meet him or (E: Yeah).
 Elise: It usually turns out that way (A: Yeah) that I meet him, them, and actually it turns out, he's gonna do things for me (A: Ehem) that I want (A: Yeah).
 Anna: Like what for example, what could it be?
 Elise: Yea, go to the cinema or to go to the pool swimming (A: Eh) or something like that (A: Eh) I usually think (A: Eh).
 Anna: Do you usually meet, when you think, do you usually see each other for a whole day or do you usually end up being friends?
 Elise: We usually become friends and all (A: Ehem) so we usually see each other a lot (A: eh) like.
 Anna: Are you allowed to be in the band then too or?
 Elise: Nooo, not really that 'cause he just feels that if I come along and play, and a little like that. Think that I'm dreaming (A: Ehem).
 Anna: Is there any other picture you usually look a lot at and think about?
 Elise: Ehem not thinking about about. I'm just usually here and mostly look at that and that one (points at pictures) but I don't usually think that much.
 Anna: What do you look at?
 Elise: I usually walk around, when I don't have anything to do, I usually look at him then, then I come up with something to do (A: Yeah) that's what I do the most when I look at the pictures but sometimes I usually just like dream about that one (A: Yea) Take Five. But Spice Girls, I mostly look at them and then I come up with something I can do.
 Anna: Can you say something you usually come up with?
 Elise: Yes, you mimic to them (A: Yea) and make storybooks, this and that (A: Ehm) and a little more.

The two different posters represent two different narratives. Talking about the *Take Five* poster Elise narrates a heterosexual story consisting of close friendship between her and one of the male band members. There is a potential love story embedded in her narrative. The band itself is not that good, according to Elise. She only keeps the poster because one band member is cute. She dreams about how she gets together with the band and how the cute guy invites her to do things she likes, such as going swimming or to the cinema. Her wishes are ordinary and align with the wishes of a young girl's everyday life. When Elise and some other girls at the after-school centre make storybooks about the *Spice Girls* they let the characters do ordinary things such as being sick, making popcorn, practicing

on the violin and shopping together (Sparrman, 2002). Still, in relation to *Take Five*, Elise positions herself as lacking control and power. She should be served and taken around by the band member; she would not play in the band, but be there when the band played. The dream about a potential heterosexual love story positions her as a powerless dreamer, as others have to carry out her dreams. Daydreaming as such is not passive, but Elise's position in the dreams is passive. Heteronormativity is very strong in a young girl's life.

When she finally talks about the *Spice Girls* posters, the story is quite different. When looking at the Spice Girls posters, she is not carried away into a world of dreams, but they rather generate ideas about what she can do. It can be argued that these posters position Elise as an active doer, turning her room into a place of creativity. The *Spice Girls* posters could be said to empower Elise, perhaps through the rhetoric of girl power that has been associated with the music group all along (Sparrman, 2002).

If Elise put her Spice Girls posters up again, then Benny has plans for totally new changes in his room. Benny's room has pictures of his favourite ice hockey team, an ice hockey goalie and pictures he has drawn himself of goal keeper helmets, pads and gloves (see Image 8).

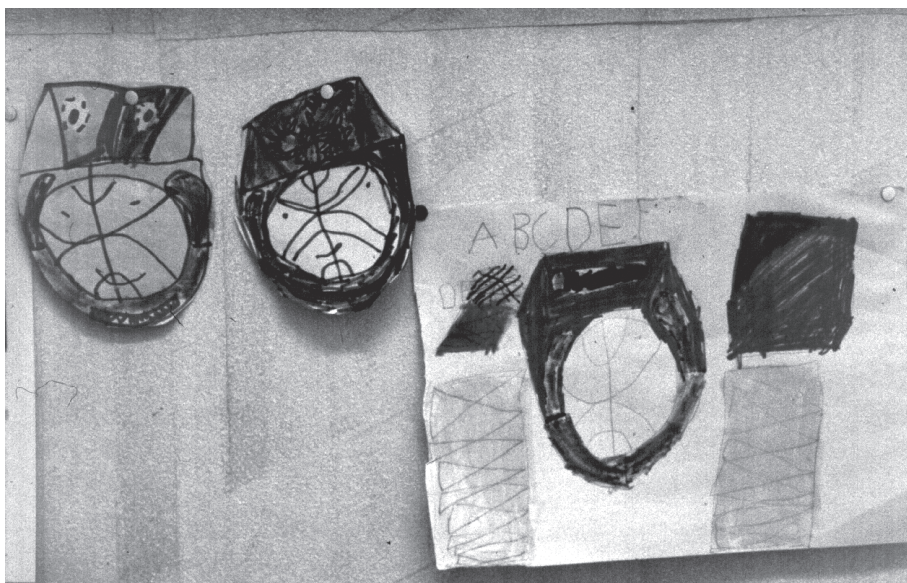


Image 8. Benny's drawings of goal keeper helmets, pads and glove

Benny collects ice hockey cards, he plays ice hockey himself and his favourite TV programme is a film about a NHL player. In the future, he wants to work as some kind of hockey player. Benny is interested in sports. He used to be a motor cross guy, but is now more of an ice hockey guy. Thus, he wants to replace his framed poster of a motorbike with the Swedish hockey player Peter Forsberg.

He is prepared to buy the poster himself and he knows it can be found in toy stores. Benny uses his room to express his engagement in sports but it also shows how this visuality is part of his identity construction. At night when he goes to bed, he thinks about the poster of his favourite Swedish hockey team. In his dreams, he positions himself as his favourite goalie Mattias Elm. However, this is not a success story. When he guards the goal, he always ends up letting the puck slide into the goal.

In comparison with Elise, Benny's visual story of his bedroom is more of a life story. Her posters generate activities, but do not include any plans for the future. Elise sings in a choir and she would like to be like Emma (Baby Spice), still this does not seem to be her life's dream. Nothing says, however, that Benny will actually become an ice hockey player. Earlier he had dreams of being a motor cross driver and he abandoned that wish for his ice hockey dreams. He still rides a motor cross bike during summer holidays so he has not deserted his motor cross interest, merely down-sized it. Studying children's rooms shows that mixing idols and pictures from different life stages and times is more of a fact than a transitory phase in children's lives.

Children's wall decorations as bricolages

In this paper, only a few issues of children's meaning construction concerning wall decorations have been highlighted. Still children's rooms stand out as places and spaces of hybridity – a hybridity that blends genres, high and low, generations, life and death, memories and future, subjectivity as well as childhood's and children's being and becoming. Put another way, the children's rooms constitute bricolages of their lives up to the day of the interview. Claudia Mitchell and Jaqueline Reid-Walsh (2002) argue in their studies of children's rooms – from toddler's rooms to teenage rooms – that the rooms reflect transitions from childhood to adolescence. In the eight pre-teen rooms in the present study, I would argue that rather than transitions from one stage to another there is a contemporaneousness expressing continuity and change at the same time. Walt Disney images exist parallel with photographs of the children when they were babies, old soft cuddly toys in the bed are found next to *Spice Girls* posters and posters of ice hockey players are interlinked with dreams of becoming an ice hockey star in the future. Childhood is not a closed entity beginning and ending in any specific time and place; it is rather a simultaneous process of being and becoming (cf., Prout, 2005).

Not even the generational negotiation between parents and children can be understood as being made up of oppositional parts, but rather stands out as interdependent relations (Prout, 2005). This is also what the children express when they talk about how they negotiate with their parents about what to have and not have on their bedroom walls. They express their autonomy at the same time as they somehow comply with their parents' wishes. Autonomy is constantly being in-

termingled with other social and cultural patterns, for example with wall decoration traditions as well as gift-giving procedures. In this way, the social is always intertwined with the cultural and the commercial. And children's wall decorations become both private and public at the same time. As Sarah Louise Baker (2004) puts it, children do not own their bedrooms as a place, because the rooms are governed by, for example, parents' rules.

The identity positioning process in the rooms is complex: pictures position children, children position pictures, and parents position the pictures that position children, etc. Visuality is used by the children in the process of sharing, negotiating and colluding with and dividing power amongst themselves and parents. The examples discussed in this text give some insight into how the children express themselves visually in their rooms and in relation to visibility. It is clear that they do not differentiate between, for example, high and low culture and that idol posters do not preclude pictures of Jesus or grandmother's embroidery. The wall decorations in the rooms actually visualize how complexly constructed children's subjectivities (identities) can be, as such decorations work as extensions of the children and as tools for negotiation.

Alan Prout argues (2005) that future studies of childhood should include what is found between the dichotomies that have been made oppositional in childhood studies. The combined theoretical and methodological approach used here has made it possible to study points of intersection between children's language, images, identities and their social circumstances, thereby highlighting the complex junctions found between dichotomies. The childhood constructed by the children themselves through the interview interaction is one of simultaneous change and stability. Thus, the children are neither overly competent, innocent, nor self-reliant in their doings but show how power and dominance are distributed and negotiated between parents and children.

The only major differentiation that stands out as a dichotomy in the present study is that of gender. There are great differences between the motifs of the wall decorations as well as colour settings in boys' vs. girls' rooms. The children themselves say that girls and boys have different idols and the images found, commercial as well as home-made pictures, reflect this statement. Most of the pictures in the children's rooms have not been purchased by the children themselves, but have been received as gifts. This shows how the social cobwebs surrounding children contribute to the construction of gender differences and how images in practice become markers of difference (cf. Schroeder, 2002). The images in the rooms show how boys' and girls' gendered identities are constructed at the same time as the visualities of the rooms construct childhood as gender specific.

Finally, by focusing on the function of visual consumption within cultural systems of meaning making it becomes obvious that the act of purchase, gift giving, own image production and the everyday practice of decorating bedroom walls generate an endless succession of connections between people, objects, cultural values of childhood and gender. This also highlights the power the visual has in our contemporary society and how consuming visibility is not completed with

the purchase, but how visual products and visibility are lived, given meaning and re-lived by children in their own rooms.

Notes

1. Transcription notations: x inaudible word, xxx inaudible sentences, () comments of the transcriber, = no discernable pause between two speakers utterances', AMP relatively high amplitude
2. See note 1.

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Green Girls and Bored Boys?

Adolescents' Environmental Consumer Socialization

Alice Grønhøj

Environmental education researchers have studied how children and young people are taught environmental issues at school (Rickinson, 2001), but studies of the nature of 'green' socialization processes occurring outside a formal teaching environment have been limited. From a public policy perspective, knowledge of the processes by which young consumers become – or fail to become – environmentally responsible consumer-citizens seems important for a number of reasons. The present generation of young, Nordic consumers have been raised in affluence and abundance, and are actively engaged as consumers at a very early age. Thus, children and young people have increasing amounts of money available for their personal spending (Hansen et al., 2002). However, they have also been raised in a time when stories of a variety of environmental threats, such as global warming and the pollution of water, soil and air, were discussed in political, public and private spheres, and when consumers were ascribed with a significant part of the responsibility for solving such problems (Halkier, 1999). Whether young consumers are willing to accept this responsibility is not evidently clear. But those who do accept this relatively new interpretation of the consumer role may be able to influence their families' and friends' consumption decisions in a more sustainable direction. Thus, young consumers are sometimes proposed as catalysts for more sustainable consumer practices among their parents and social network (Ballantyne, Fien & Packer, 2000; Easterling, Miller & Weinberger, 1995).

A final reason for looking at how young people acquire an environmentally sound consumer orientation concerns the assumed stability of consumption patterns acquired during childhood and adolescence (Moschis, 1987). Thus a number of economic and consumption-related behaviours, such as conscientiousness, saving (Webley & Nyhus, 2006) and brand preferences (Moore, Wilkie & Lutz, 2002), are likely to be transmitted into later life stages. This may well also be the case for pro-environmental consumer behaviour. This article provides some insight into how young consumers perceive such green socialization processes. A

recent empirical study that examines this topic is presented, preceded by a brief literature review.

Background

In marketing and consumer research, consumer socialization theories are often used as a theoretical point of departure when studying how consumers – notably children and adolescents – acquire consumer-related values, attitudes, behaviour and skills (John, 1999; Ward, 1974). The consumer socialization concept covers a broad field, it encompasses both content (or outcome) and process elements, as well as an expectation that the child complies with and adapts to rational ‘socialization agents’ (Ekström, 2006; Faber & O’Guinn, 1988).

When studying consumer socialization outcomes, consumer researchers have, usually implicitly, emphasised *desirable* consumer socialization results, or the prerequisites for these outcomes, which are shopping competences (Mallalieu & Palan, 2006) or, more generally, consumer competences (Grønhøj, 2007; Lachance & Choquette-Bernier, 2004). Examples of such competences are media and advertising literacy (e.g., Martensen & Tufte, 2002; Young, 2002), knowledge of shopping scripts (John, 1999) and price knowledge (Moschis, 1985). *Undesirable* consumer socialization outcomes refer to, e.g., impulsive buying (Shim, 1996), debt (Lachance, Beaudoin & Robitaille, 2006), compulsive consumption and materialistic buying orientations, the latter being referred to as the ‘the dark side of consumer behaviour’ by Rindfleisch, Burroughs & Denton (1997). However, drawing a clear-cut line between desirable and undesirable socialization outcomes is not without its problems. What constitutes desirable consumer socialization outcomes is likely to depend on, e.g., the age of the ‘socialized person,’ historic point of time, and the social and cultural context (Cross, 2002; Grønhøj, 2007). Moreover, specific consumer socialization outcomes may sometimes conflict. This may be the case, e.g., when a consumer strives to be a prudent, value-for-money, comparison shopper while at the same time preferring to buy organic products that are quite expensive (Kroll, 1991). Also, different public and private institutions, such as public policy makers, schools, marketers, parents and, not least, children themselves, may have quite different opinions as to the desirability of specific socialization outcomes.

Nevertheless, in these years, one desirable consumer socialization outcome seems to involve considering the environmental impacts of everyday consumer choices. In fact, this skill has been added to the list of suggested consumer proficiencies recommended by consumer educators, indicating that when young people leave school they should “be able to assess the effects of consumers’ own consumption on the environment and for production/consumption in a global perspective (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2000: 12). Thus it is suggested here that ‘green consumer competences’ involve (knowledge of) relevant actions associ-

ated with reducing the environmental impact of consumption activities connected to the purchase, use and disposal of goods and services. Importantly, such skills seem also to be acknowledged as relevant by young people. A recent study showed that when asked to conceptualise what constitutes consumer competences some young people would, among other outcomes, refer to the ability to consider the environmental impact of consumption. Moreover, 'to buy only what you need' was considered a basic consumer competence (Grønhøj, 2007).

However, as noted at the beginning, there is a dearth of research to inform us of how young people become more or less environmentally conscious consumers. How may such skills be conveyed to them, and who are responsible for transmitting them? Consumer socialization theories point towards the existence of several different drivers of consumer socialization, including family, media, peers, school, and more generally, the cultural context (John, 1999). When it comes to conveying consumer skills to children, i.e. desirable consumer socialization, consumer researchers have attributed a pivotal role to family members, while media consumption and peer group influence have often been associated with undesirable consumer socialization, such as materialism (John, 1999; Moore & Wilkie, 2005). However, this is probably too crude a generalization since a number of undesirable consumer behaviours, such as unhealthy eating and drinking are influenced by parents (e.g., Vereecken et al., 2005).

It may be assumed that the family is also of central importance in terms of teaching environmentally relevant values, attitudes and everyday consumption habits and behaviours related to the environmental domain. At the same time it must be noted that the significance of other socialization influences relative to the family has increased during the last decades. For one thing, the increased market participation of women has reduced the time which younger children spend at home (Christoffersen, 2004). Moreover, media proliferation and availability have, to a large extent, equated time at home with time spent with media, through the provision of a media culture shared by the family, as well as an individual 'bedroom-culture' (Livingstone, 2002). However, it may be argued that parents still mediate the access to various media cultures (Carlson & Grossbart, 1988), for instance by limiting the TV and computer ownership in children's bedrooms (Livingstone, 2002), and by discussing the content of television programmes with their children.

When deep-rooted childhood socialization becomes internalized it implies that (a range of) behaviours acquired in childhood are transmitted into adulthood (Grolnick, Deci & Ryan, 1997). In consumer research, indications of the internalization of childhood socialization within the family, i.e., intergenerational influences, have been found with respect to the transmission of general consumption-related values, such as materialism (Moore-Shay & Berchmans, 1996) and specific brand preferences (Moore et al., 2002). The significance of intergenerational influences within the environmental field is uncertain, but a number of environmentally relevant values and behaviours may be transmitted through childhood participation in and observation of everyday family life. For example, research into pro-environmental consumer behaviour has frequently observed gender differences in re-

lation to environmental concern and action (Autio & Heinonen, 2004; Fauth, 2002; Zelezny, Chua & Aldrich, 2000). Such studies generally indicate that females are more pro-environmental than males. Gender differences are found cross-nationally (Hunter, Hatch & Johnson, 2004), and have been shown to apply to old as well as young age groups (Brun, 2001; Zelezny et al., 2000). Most authors tend to ascribe gender differences in environmental concern and action to socialization processes, very often pointing at parental influence.

Much, if not most, consumer learning is thought to be implicit and not particularly goal-directed (Ward, 1974), which renders research into the field quite challenging. Although consumer socialization studies cover a broad field, most studies have been conducted as cross-sectional, quantitative surveys. Recently, more qualitative, interpretive methods have been called for in the field of consumer socialization (Bristol & Mangleburg, 2005; Ekström, 2006). Along these lines, the present study uses a qualitative, exploratory approach to yield insight into consumer socialization with respect to green consumer practices. Specifically, this study examines young consumers' perceptions of the notion of green consumerism and identifies important 'socialization agents' within this field.

The study

The study applies a novel methodology, essays written by adolescents, to investigate consumer socialization processes related to green consumerism within a family context. A total of 175 Danish young people wrote essays during school hours. The participants were students at eight upper secondary schools, including three grammar schools, three business colleges and two technical colleges. Metropolitan as well as rural areas across Denmark were represented in the study. The study included 96 male and 79 female participants with an average age of 17.9 years ranging from 16-22 years. The large majority (93%) was living with one or both parents while a few (7%) of the young people set up their own home.

Teachers at the upper secondary schools were approached, and they agreed to organize the handing out of the assignments and collection of the essays. The time the students spent writing the essays ranged from 15 to 45 minutes. Neither teachers nor students were remunerated for taking part, but the schools were offered feedback on the outcome of their participation. The preliminary results of the study were then presented to some of the participating schools, and the students were subsequently encouraged to comment on the findings and tentative conclusions.

The essay method was applied to elicit the young people's own perspectives on three broad issues. The *first* section aimed at eliciting the young people's own conceptualisations of environmental consumerism by asking them to state which forms environmental concern in everyday living can take. The *second* broad issue concerned the processes of consumer socialization. This part probed into the participants' perception of the methods used by their parents in teaching these

issues. In this section, the participants were asked to focus on their learning in relation to a number of themes: transportation, water and energy, waste, buying organic or green products or, more generally, reducing consumption. Even though the focus was on parents, there may be differences as to whether one parent is more involved than the other. Consequently, the adolescents were encouraged to elaborate on the role of each parent in connection with teaching specific environmental practices. And finally, the *third* part dealt with the young people's expectations for their 'future consumer life.'

In the first section, the students were requested to state their own understandings of environmental consumerism without reading through the questionnaire. This was done to avoid them being inspired by the pro-environmental practices suggested in the second part. Besides the three broad questions, for which the adolescents were asked to write essay-style responses, a small number of supplementary questions were posed, mainly to include background information about the participants. The handwritten data were transcribed verbatim, and a computer program for handling qualitative data, QSR NVivo 2.0, was used for the analyses. Analysis methods for the qualitative part were a combination of content and interpretive analyses (Harwood & Garry, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Analysing perceptions of green environmentalism readily lends itself to content analyses, e.g., by counting how often the participants mention 'organic foods' as a pro-environmental practice, as well as to interpretive analyses, e.g., by examining whether such practices are discussed in a positive, agentic or a negative, indifferent vein.

Results

The following section presents an extract of the results of the study. The notion of green consumerism as a specific consumer competence is discussed, and the specific socialization agents, who the young people perceive as important, are identified.

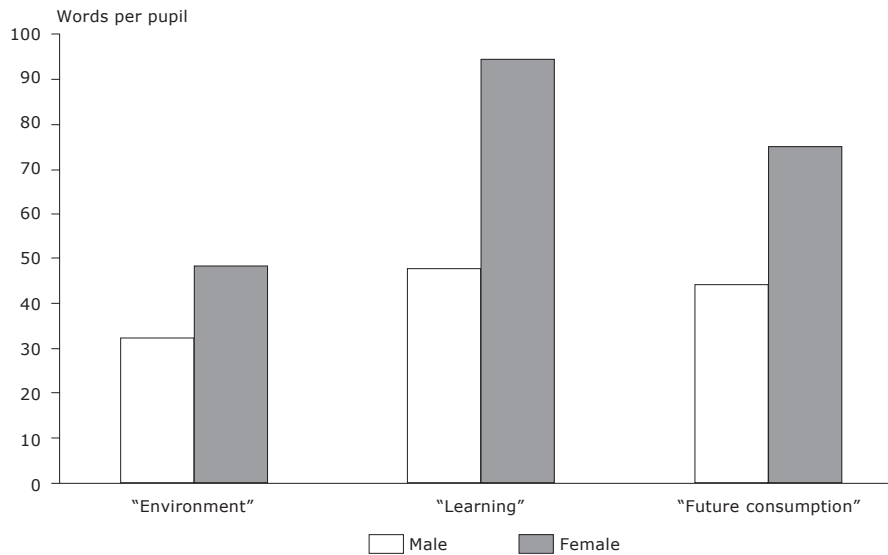
Consumer socialization outcomes regarding green consumerism

Personally, I don't think about the environment very much, I can't be bothered to talk about it. If there were no pollution our society wouldn't work since we so heavily depend on means of transportation and other things that tend to pollute. (Male, 18)

In a country like Denmark it's not difficult to protect the environment in your everyday life; environmental concern is not that difficult to put into practice. I think that basic environmental concern begins at home, because your home can be viewed as a society that needs to be taken care of to function properly. (Female, 17)

The essays revealed gender differences in willingness to accept the green consumer role, as exemplified by the quotations above. It was evident that girls, not least quantitatively, had much more to say about environmental issues than did boys. Thus, as shown in Figure 1, the average number of words written by the boys was much smaller than that written by the girls.

Figure 1. How much do young consumers say about environmental issues?



This result was primarily indicative of the quantitative aspect of girl/boy differences. Obviously, the fact that girls wrote more would not necessarily mean that they had more substantial or important things to say about these issues. Therefore, the nature of these differences was examined in the following steps of the analyses. Furthermore, as the preliminary readings of the data material pointed towards possible gender differences corresponding to what has been found in previous studies in this field (e.g., Autio & Heinonen, 2004), it was decided to focus more explicitly on this dimension in the remaining analyses.

According to these young people, relevant areas for reducing the environmental load of everyday life include:

- To handle waste in a responsible way (81%)
- To avoid using the family car or to choose environmentally benign modes of transportation (58%)
- To reduce water and energy consumption (39%)
- To buy 'green' products (29%)
- Other actors' responsibility (21%)

The listing reflects the frequency with which the topics were mentioned by the young people, e.g. 81% of the participants would mention waste as an area for which their private action would be of relevance, whereas 'only' 29% of them mentioned the option of choosing green products. While the top four issues refer to activities that are actionable on a personal, private level, 21% of the young people pointed to the significance of actors *other* than private consumers, even though they were specifically asked about their own, private possible means of action.

The preliminary findings were put forward to the young people at school presentations. The immediate interpretation of the fact that girls exceeded boys in their elaboration of environmental issues was that 'girls just talk more.' However, in line with the quantitative result (Figure 1) on average the girls brought up more substantive, environmental issues in their accounts than did the boys. There were no gender differences in the relative frequencies by which the top four themes were brought up (i.e., boys as well as girls most frequently referred to *waste* as a relevant theme). Interestingly though, the boys were rather more inclined than the girls to hold *other* actors, such as the government and private companies, responsible for solving environmental problems. This particular gender aspect corresponds closely with the findings of a recent European study of youth and environment (Fauth, 2002).

Thus, the young people generally identified activities that are often singled out as having adverse impacts on the environment (e.g., OECD, 2002) as relevant for personal, individual action. The consumption sphere is sometimes emphasized as an area in which consumers can actively engage in political activism by 'voting' for or against specific issues, e.g., by buying organic products (Gundelach, 1994; Halkier, 1999). However, very few of the young consumers considered this aspect in their essays, and suggestions of more 'radical' actions, such as boycotting companies or products, were, on the whole, non-existent – only 1% of them suggested this. In fact, it may seem surprising that the consumer discourse of buying green products or avoiding certain products generally received relatively little attention as a way of exercising environmental concern.

There may be a number of explanations for these findings. For one thing, buying organic products may be associated with other matters than environmental protection. Thus, taste and health are attributes which often dominate when consumers are asked about their motivations for buying organic products (e.g., Torjusen et al., 2004). Another explanation specifically applies to young people who are still living at home. Since Danish children and adolescents generally do not shop for groceries in connection with family consumption (Hansen et al., 2002), i.e., generally lack everyday buying experience, they may not very easily perceive green consumer buying as an action that contributes to a sounder environment. Finally, and more speculatively, following the institutionalization of green consumerism in Denmark, i.e., by the introduction of state-controlled organic labelling schemes and the widespread availability of green products in conventional sales outlets (as opposed to health shops), young consumers may not

perceive the green consumer market as a political battlefield, as may have been the perception of many of their parents.

However, it must be noted that failing to *identify* green purchasing as a way of showing environmental concern does not necessarily imply a reluctance to *accept* this aspect of a green consumer competence. Thus when asked about their 'future consumer life,' many of the adolescents stated that they would hope to be in a position enabling them to buy organic products. Not surprisingly, the expectation of limited funds was a recurring theme in these accounts. The perceived, future financial barriers for action clearly impeded the visualisation of future consumer choices for the participants. Again there were significant gender differences in responses to the young participants' expectations for a future life:

- 61% of the girls and 30% of the boys would aim at saving water and energy
- 34% of the girls and 13% of the boys stated an intention to buy organic/green products
- 27% of the girls and 8% of the boys spoke about 'competent' action connected to the waste theme
- 15% of the girls and 9% of the boys intended to avoid using the family car for transportation

Predicting your future life may be difficult – especially when you are a teenager. Thus, not surprisingly, many of the participants also expressed uncertainty about visualising a future consumer life. The boys were especially reluctant to do so. Consequently, such results should obviously be interpreted with caution; they are probably more indicative of present attitudes than of future behaviours. Even so, these findings accentuate the notion that girls more than boys perceive green consumer competences as desirable. Moreover, they highlight the fact that environmental consumer socialization also involves learning for the future, i.e., anticipatory consumer socialization (Moschis & Moore, 1984), since for instance buying organic products is seen as something which has to be postponed to a future point in time. Even so, many of the adolescents expressed uncertainty as to whether their good intentions would be accomplished:

I'm afraid it is going to depend on the disposable amount of money I have available each month. I hope I am going to be buying organic products. At least the basics, such as milk, flour, etc. I expect I am going to buy environmentally friendly washing powder, but because I don't do any shopping now it's difficult to judge how much more money it costs to be environmentally responsible. But I hope this is something I will be prioritizing, because it has always been like this at home. I'm going to save on water and electricity, because that will be a benefit to myself as well as to the environment. It's expensive to buy organic and environmentally friendly stuff, but my sister has organic milk in her fridge, so my guess is that I'll too. (Female, 17)

Even if the adolescents may have learnt specific things from their parents, this does not necessarily mean that the knowledge will be put into practice. As indicated by the young male below, becoming an adult also implies a process of self-definition in which parents' views may be challenged:

My life as a consumer is definitely going to be coloured by the opinions and attitudes that my parents have expressed. But on the other hand, one does have attitudes and points of view when one is 18. So even though my parents have told me that buying organics is the best thing to do, I'm not necessarily going to do it, you see, many people are stingy and rather indifferent when they can't personally see the disadvantage and the consequences of their choice. But my parents' lectures are most definitely going to put their mark on me. (Male, 18)

Thus, even if green consumerism may be viewed as a desirable consumer competence, as well as an intended anticipatory outcome, there are a number of barriers for merging young consumers' knowledge and previous family habits into an imagined future life.

Agents of consumer socialization

As a point of departure, the present study built on the basic assumption that the family is an influential actor within the environmental domain. Interestingly, as also indicated in the above excerpts, many adolescents refer to their parents' influence when describing their future consumer life. Thus, 25% of the girls and 8% of the boys referred explicitly to parental influence, i.e., without having been asked to consider this.

Furthermore, the question of socialization influence was examined by a short follow-up questionnaire, using closed-format response options. As shown in Table 1, according to the young people, parents, mothers as well as fathers, do play important roles in this connection. Media such as TV and newspapers are, however, also considered particularly important sources of information/influence in the environmental area. More specifically, mothers and TV/newspapers were perceived as the most important sources of knowledge pertaining to environmental issues, closely followed by fathers and, in a slightly less prominent role, elementary schools.

Thus the conclusion may be drawn that the context for consumer socialization chosen for this study – the immediate family – was quite relevant. Further, this point was a recurring theme in the young consumers' verbal accounts: The adolescents were very cognizant of the importance of family influence on their own, personal environmental outlook. This was illustrated in a particularly nice way by a young female, whose parents were divorced. Recently, she had been exposed to the very different environment-related lifestyle of her mother's new family. This stood, as the excerpt below illustrates, in stark contrast to her previous experience:

Table 1. Environmental issues and youth: Agents of socialization

*	Elementary school	Friends	Present school	TV – News- papers	Mother	Father	Siblings	Leisure activities
N	126	124	126	125	127	127	123	126
Mean**	2.00	2.68	2.33	1.75	1.70	1.82	2.65	2.53
SD	0.58	0.50	0.69	0.59	0.63	0.70	0.56	0.62

* Q: Who taught you about environmental issues, and how much did they teach you? (1=much, 2=something, 3=nothing).
** Paired samples t-tests were performed. The tests show that the means are significantly different at 95% sig. level, when the difference between any two means exceeds 0.1.

When I was 17, I moved from my dad's place to my mom and step-dad's, and many things changed. My parents (mom and step-dad) were – and are – very concerned about saving energy and water. Spending half an hour in a hot shower was not allowed anymore. All used packaging had to be sorted: used glass jars and metal containers would go in the basement for disposal before they were taken to the recycling centre. Waste from uncooked fruit and vegetables would go in a green bucket, which was emptied in a compost bin: A rather expensive green thing in the garden which contains a number of very expensive worms. Just in order for them to produce quality soil for the garden! All plastic material and the leftovers from cooked foods would go into another bucket. All meat trays were washed and saved for storing things in, and likewise the mustard jars that were saved to be used as drinking cups. All paper and cardboard was stored so that it could be dumped at the recycling centre. Remembering to turn off your lights when you're not in the room was very difficult for a girl who had just moved from the din of the city to the silence of the countryside. (Female, 17)

While both parents regularly appeared in the young consumers' accounts, the influence of each parent varied by the substantive area of interest. Referring to the top four topics that the young people identified as environmental issues relevant for personal action, the following influential actors and directions of influence could be identified:

- Waste: Both parents teach sons *and* daughters. Mothers teach daughters.
- Transportation: Both parents teach sons *and* daughters.
- Water and energy: Both parents *or* the mother/father teach sons *and* daughters.
- Green products: Both parents *or* the mother teach daughters.

Relating to the discussion of gender differences in green consumer behaviour, two general observations can be derived: Firstly, mothers seem to be slightly more active than fathers in teaching their offspring a range of environmentally relevant

practices. Secondly, the 'target' of influence is more likely to be daughters than sons. Most notably, the topic of buying green products appeared to be a rather 'female' area of consumer socialization. None of the topics were clear 'male' topics, although a substantial number of male participation (in both 'sender' and 'receiver' roles) could be noted as regards the water/energy theme. In a smaller number of families, environmental learning seemed to be a reciprocal, continuous process (Ekström, 1995), in which parents and children would remind each other of certain desirable practices. These instances of reciprocal socialization were most notably found within the water-electricity theme. Altogether though, the present study provides only very limited support for the notion that children may act as environmental change agents (e.g., Easterling, Miller & Weinberger, 1995) at home.

The essay method – perspectives and limitations

Since the essay method has been used very little in consumer research, it may be useful to make a few evaluative comments about the use of this method before drawing the conclusions of the study.

The essay method provided the young people with an opportunity to express their personal, individual opinions about the subject of research interest. Thus, social pressure to conform was reduced. As another advantage, the method encourages participants to formulate their responses in a fairly structured way. Autio and Heinonen, who used a very similar approach, noted that "when composing an essay, people usually think before writing" (2004: 143). Providing this room for reflection may, of course, also be used to express support for socially desirable attitudes and actions. In addition, it may give more voice to students who are skilful writers, and this may particularly have favoured the female participants. Another drawback of the method may be that it catches the young person in a setting where the required exercise resembles the typical school task of supplying 'right' answers. Also, the school setting is somewhat detached from the domestic and market spheres to which the concept of green consumerism is usually related. To avoid a possible misconception that the students were to pass a test, the teacher was asked to inform the students in advance that there were no 'right' or 'wrong' answers, and that the teacher would collect and return the essays to the researcher without reading them. Thus, in practice, the anonymity of the method seemed to encourage the students to speak their mind – even if this was only in a few words. Most notably, those students who took very little interest in the topic at hand, would state their opinion in a few, but concise sentences.

While the method provided clear advantages for the construction of qualitative data, it may be even better suited to explore issues of more salience for young people. Thus the chance of getting rich, written descriptions is very likely to improve if participants are highly motivated to participate, for instance due to

intrinsic interest in a topic. Nevertheless, the method was very useful for shedding light on the fact that adolescents conceive of environmental issues in different – and to some extent – gendered ways, and that this is probably a mirror of a gendered consumer socialization process.

Finally, presenting the students with the main findings of the study provides the researcher with a rare opportunity to give and get feedback from the participants of a research project. While the approach is not pure action research, giving such feedback may help raise the participants' awareness about a particular issue, while simultaneously providing further data. Thus, the method may well be applied to other consumer issues of public interest, e.g., health-related consumer issues.

Conclusion

Regardless of gender, the adolescents generally hold a shared understanding of environmental consumerism as being *abstinence*, to refrain from doing something, e.g., to refrain from throwing garbage in undesirable places, and to use less water and electricity. Thus the young people's most frequent suggestions were to be found within the range of their present personal opportunities for action which include saving energy and environmentally friendly transport modes, such as using a bicycle for transportation. The consumer discourse of buying green products appears to be less of an option for adolescents. Furthermore, suggestions of more 'radical' behaviour in favour of the environment (such as consumer boycotts, a general reduction of consumption, changing lifestyles) were generally non-existent.

This suggests that green consumer competences are widely acknowledged by young consumers as rather commonplace, non-political activities which are within the range of ordinary consumer action. From a consumer policy perspective, it may be an advantage that environmental consumerism is not conceived of as an exotic activity, but that it enjoys a broad appeal among young consumers. On the other hand, it may be difficult to mobilise the present generation of young consumers for collective action in favour of radical environmental improvements. Furthermore, even if the findings of the study suggest that many young people do accept the green consumer role, they find it difficult to translate this acceptance into pro-environmental actions.

Girls were shown to have significantly more to report than boys as regards environmental issues, which, with due caution, could be interpreted as a sign of higher environmental involvement and concern. In addition, judging from the young consumers' accounts, mothers seem to play a particularly important role in the transmission of pro-environmental practices within families. Thus research findings asserting that women of all age groups tend to be more environmentally concerned than males (e.g., Zelezny et al., 2000) can be said to find some support in this study. The social reproduction processes that were evident in this study are likely to contribute to some of the gender differences that are found in

the environmental field. Clearly, this is an area which warrants further research attention, and future studies should look deeper into both outcomes and processes of environmental consumer socialization. With regard to the first point, i.e., *outcomes*, studying the environmental consumer competence of young people who have set up their own home could be worthwhile. For instance, do young consumers tend to reproduce their parents' more or less pro-environmental consumption patterns when they start a family of their own? As regards the second point, i.e., *processes*, by comparing multiple compositions of families, e.g., single-parent vs. two-parent families, we may be able to get a better understanding of the significance of gender roles in relation to parent-to-child transmission of pro-environmental consumption practices.

The present study gives some indications of a gendered consumer socialization process in relation to environmental issues. As a first step towards changing this imbalance, the current state of affairs should be brought to the attention of the most important socialization agents within this field – parents, media and schools. While parents may constitute the most powerful socialization agents, the task of redressing the imbalance between young girls' and boys' environmental orientation should not be left to the family alone. For instance, even though marketers may benefit from segmenting consumer markets in terms of sex to target green products at female consumers, this may serve to reinforce and reproduce the picture of “women as green cleaners of the planet” (Moisander, 2000). Thus, gender imbalances in green consumer behaviour may also be ameliorated through market communication. This could be done by using ‘non-traditional’ gender ideologies in the promotion of pro-environmental practices, for instance with the explicit aim of making these activities more attractive for the gender least likely to be engaged in a particular pro-environmental practice (Grønhøj & Ölander, in press). Finally, schools play an important role in redressing the gender imbalance in young people's environmental orientation, not least through the environmental education of children who may be exposed to such issues to a very limited extent at home.

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Participating in the Catwalk of Consumption

Karin M. Ekström

Children and parents living in consumer culture are continuously exposed to different products, services, brands, advertisements and media. The continuous flow of offers and opportunities to consume has contributed to a changed consumer role. At the same time there are many different alternatives to choose from, it is sometimes difficult to grasp the abundance of opportunities and to see how the alternatives differ from each other. Also, the fact that some products are technically complex makes it necessary to acquire knowledge in order to choose the “right” product. Due to the number of choices and decisions to be made, the consumer is now expected to be involved to a higher degree than before by acquiring information and comparing product attributes. Children as well as parents learn to be consumers, acquiring the skills and knowledge to function as consumers in a continuously changing consumer culture.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the roles of children and parents living in consumer culture. It is argued that young as well as old consumers are not only exposed to the “catwalk of consumption” (Hjort and Ekström, 2006), they also participate by negotiating identities, relations and lifestyles through consumption. By choosing to consume commercial as well as cultural products, children and parents show who they are or who they would like to be. Some decisions involve a higher degree of social comparison than others, particularly products visible in public. There is no way to avoid participating, because choices to resist also reveal preferences and identities. The degrees to which consumers take part differ, however, depending on their interest and opportunities or lack of such.

Children as well as parents need to develop skills to become critical consumers when choosing and interpreting products, services, advertisements, brands and media. Rather than seeing children or parents as either victimized or competent consumers, the focus should be put on the development of consumer literacy. All agents of social change, including consumers, educators, producers, marketers, media or advertising agencies, have a role in the development of consumer literacy.

A non-antagonistic discourse is advocated where participants are seen as parts in a network of linkages and assemblages, while also recognizing that their power varies. Overall, there is a need to listen to the voice of the consumer, the child or the parent, in order to understand what it means to be a consumer.

Children and parents in consumer culture

Consumption is part of our society, as emphasized by Douglas and Isherwood (1996, p.viii): "Consumption has to be recognized as an integral part of the same social system that accounts for the drive to work, itself part of the social need to relate to other people, and to have mediating materials for relating to them. Mediating materials are food, drink, and hospitality of home to offer, flowers and clothes to signal shared rejoicing, or mourning dress to share sorrow. Goods, work, and consumption have been artificially abstracted out of the whole social scheme. The way the excision has been made damages the possibility of understanding these aspects of our life". The development of consumer culture in modernity (e.g., Slater, 1997) and post modernity (e.g., Featherstone, 1991) has become central for understanding consumption and the consumer's role in society. The original definition of consumption – to use something up – originates from Latin "consumere". Today, researchers within the field of consumption define consumption as desiring and preparing a purchase, purchasing, using, maintaining, repairing, recycling, and disposal. Consumption is thus seen as a process involving different dispositions or activities, prior to, during and after a purchase.

Family life evolves to a large degree around consumption. Dialogues and negotiations occur around the dinner table, in front of the TV, the computer, in the car, when talking on the mobile phone and when sending messages with the computer or mobile phone. Children today become consumers at a very young age. Babies are exposed to purchases and consumption, brands, advertising and media and it is not uncommon for very young children to establish relationships to famous brands such as McDonald's. Companies are very well aware of this, knowing that children are important customers today, but also in the future. If children are loyal to brands today, it is likely that they will prefer them also later in life. Consumers sometimes have longer relations to brands than to people. Recent publications discuss children as current and prospective consumers (e.g., Lindstrom, 2003; Quart, 2003; Sutherland and Thompson, 2003).

Children influence not only their own purchases, but also the purchases of their parents and family (e.g., Ekström, 1995). Ward and Wackman (1972) called a child's influence in a family "child power". It is possible that some families living a hectic life allow their children influence because of a lack of time and feelings of guilt about not spending enough time with their children. Also, many families today have children relatively late in life and may therefore be in a better financial situation to allow their children to influence purchases. This development may lead to the

children becoming “dream” children or “trophy” children and getting to influence their family’s purchases (Tuftte, 1999). At the same time, it is also common for parents to shield their children from consumption opportunities, thinking that they are not mature enough to get involved and that they get too much responsibility at a too young an age. A negative attitude to children’s influence is reflected in the expression “pester power”. More recently, “curling parents” was invented by the Danish psychologist, Bent Hougaard (2005) to describe parents who do everything to make their children’s childhood as smooth as possible, as a result of their lack of time and bad conscience. He argues that it results in a lack of respect, which may affect the relations between children and adults negatively, both at home and in school. Opinions on whether it is good or bad for children to participate in purchasing decisions differ, and are affected by parent-child relations, and how children and childhood are viewed in consumer culture.

Relations between parents and children

The degree to which children participate in consumption is affected by parent-child relations. Children are more likely to have influence in a friendship family than in an authoritarian family (e.g., Ekström, 1995). In a friendship family, the parents and children treat each other more like friends. The parental roles do not appear as distinct and there seems to be a lack of parental authority. An authoritarian family exhibits more traditional parent-child roles. The parents ultimately make decisions even if they may be willing to listen to and be influenced by their children.

The two family types are likely to be related to communication structures. A popular communication typology is that of McLeod and Chaffee (1972), who defined the parent-child communication structure as either socio-oriented or concept-oriented. In a socio-oriented communication environment, the child avoids controversy and does not argue, since he or she does not want to risk offending others. In a concept-oriented communication environment, the child is encouraged to develop his/her own ideas. Moschis (1985) suggested that a concept-oriented family communication structure would foster greater participation in family decisions, while a socio-oriented structure would deter participation. This was confirmed by Moschis, Prahasto and Mitchell (1986) who found that youths in pluralistic families (exhibit high concept-orientation and low socio-orientation) have more opportunities to participate in family decisions. Another study (Grossbart, Carlsson and Walsh, 1991) showed that mothers who often co-shop with their children had a higher degree of concept orientation than mothers who co-shop less often. Ekström (1995) found that children had more influence in concept-oriented families. The friendship families studied had a concept-oriented communication structure while the majority of authoritarian families studied had a socio-oriented communication structure.

Previous studies have found adolescent consumer learning to be associated with family communication structures (e.g., Moore and Moschis, 1981; Moschis and Moore, 1978). For example, children of families with pluralistic communication styles, (with high concept-orientation and low socio-orientation), have been found to know more about consumer-related matters (e.g., Moore and Moschis, 1981; Moschis and Moore, 1978). The effect of TV advertising on adolescents has been found to be stronger in families in which discussions about consumption are less frequent (e.g., Churchill and Moschis, 1979; Moschis and Moore, 1982).

Different views on childhood

Opinions on whether it is good or bad for children to participate in decisions about consumption are also affected by how children are viewed in consumer culture. Children are sometimes considered more vulnerable than adults. Adult life and childhood are sometimes viewed as completely separate, implying that children have to wait till they become full-fledged adults to enjoy consumption (Johansson, 2003). Also, cognitive developmental theories such as Piaget's theory (1970) indicate that a person is developed through interaction between the biological/genetic endowment and the environment. A certain stage of maturity must be reached before learning can occur. A child has to reach a certain age to understand and evaluate consumption decisions. Cognitive developmental theories have dominated research on children as consumers. Lately, however, Tufte, Kampmann and Hassel (2003) have discussed the importance of the concept child culture and emphasizing that children in today's society are beginning to be seen as equals to adults. This is illustrated in the United Nation's convention of children's rights from 1989 and also reflected in that social sciences talk about children as actors, humanities talk about children as creators, and political sciences refer to children as citizens with democratic rights (Tufte et al., 2003).

Quortrup (1994) distinguishes between a child who is looked upon as a human being, given respect and considered competent, and a child who is considered a human becoming, a growing incomplete human being. Lee (2001) continues this discussion, but does not consider "becoming" as having less status than being. According to Lee (2001), we are all becomings, both children and adults. Living in consumer cultures, we are continuously confronted with new situations in which we face challenges and novelties. Olesen (2003) suggests that children should be viewed as citizens rather than consumers in a consumption society where together with grown-ups they participate in creating a good childhood. James and Prout (1997) point out that there is no such thing as a universal childhood. They argue that there are "childhoods" instead of "childhood" since each childhood is unique. In addition, there are also "parenthoods" instead of "parenthood" since each parenthood is unique.

Consumption and identity

Family members negotiate identities, relations, lifestyles through their consumption. Identity can be explained with a psychological perspective such as self-concept theory (e.g., Sirgy, 1982), which holds that our concept of self is based on how we perceive ourselves (actual self) and how we want to be seen (ideal self). Consumption is sometimes based on actual self, while in other instances it is more oriented towards the ideal self. Possessions have in many ways become an “extended self” suggesting that an object can become part of the self when an individual appropriates the object (Belk, 1988). Possessions are not only part of the self, but can also be seen as instrumental for development of the self (Belk, 1988). Identity can also be explained from a cultural perspective (e.g., Giddens, 1991). For example, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) discussed the ways things shape identities in our society. Also, Appadurai (1986) studied the social life of consumption objects.

The degree to which a consumer consciously use objects to express him/herself is related to how concerned he/she is about how others see him/her (e.g., Richins, 1999). It is well-known that young consumers are particularly sensitive to what their peer-groups think.

Social comparison in consumer culture

The fact that young as well as old consumers negotiate identities, relations and lifestyles through their consumption is not a new phenomenon. Social comparison has probably existed in all times and cultures, but the forms vary. Veblen (1994/1899) defined conspicuous consumption as rich people's desire to show that they can afford to buy luxuries. It is particularly noticeable among “nouveau riches” who want to show their social mobility and success with status products. Today, there are many different ways to display conspicuous consumption, some of which are subtle and require codes for interpretation, the meaning which is restricted to a few well informed consumers. For example, brand-name clothes lacking a visible brand name are something only informed consumers can interpret the “right” way. Consumers can also seek status by purposely avoiding symbols of status. An example is removing labels on clothes and thereby showing the freedom to construct a desired identity. Also, conspicuous consumption does not have to be related to specific products, but can consist of having the free time to consume in a time-pressured society. It has more to do with standing out, with being unique in a particular socio-cultural context.

Being unique and belonging at the same time

It appears as if the key to conspicuous consumption is to know the code to what makes it possible to “stand out”. By knowing the code, it is possible to be perceived as a unique individualistic consumer. However, adoption of a code can also illustrate conformity, in that someone else has defined the code. There are two ways conspicuous consumption develops in relation to self-reference and dialogue with the socio-cultural context. Consumers may want to prove to themselves or to their social environment that they can consume conspicuously. Elliott (1995) discusses how the symbolic meaning of products can operate inwardly and outwardly. By inwardly, he means through construction of self-identity, self symbolism and by outwardly he means through the construction of a social world and social symbolism. Bourdieu (1984) discusses how preference behaviors (e.g. food, clothing) are determined by class stratification. Gianneschi (2007) discusses the role of brands in identity construction among young Swedish consumers.

Keeping up with each other

Social comparison has been referred to as “the demonstration principle” by Duesenberry (1949) and is mirrored in the expression “keeping up with the Joneses”. Assael (1998) calls the phenomenon that ownership increases in multiples as a function of group influence and product visibility for the “social multiplier effect”. It shows that social pressure is a cause of conspicuous consumption. Lately, Schor (1999) argues that “keeping up with the Joneses” is no longer enough in today’s society. Instead, we seek to emulate lifestyles of people higher up in social hierarchy and characters on TV, not only celebrities, but “ordinary people” participating in talk shows and reality shows who are role models. Another difference is that today’s global media industry makes consumption codes easily accessible to a large number of consumers. For example, new technology has made it possible for young consumers to be more aware of global trends and to keep up with each. This differs from earlier times when goods spread from higher to lower social classes (Simmel, 1904), a process referred to as emulation (Douglas, 1996). There are also cases where goods have spread from lower to higher social classes, for example denim jeans.

At the same time that we are witnessing trends that spread globally across social classes, the fact remains that everyone does not have the same opportunity to take part in consumer culture consuming products and media. This concerns not only children, but also parents. Living in a consumer culture can reinforce certain behavioral patterns. For example, Ekström (2007) found that family behavior among children’s peer groups had an affect on families’ purchases and consumption. For example, parents interviewed mentioned that they had felt pressured to purchase a satellite dish so their children could keep up with peers in school.

This can be problematic if there are economic restrictions. Families with low income can get by in a Swedish society characterized by affluence, but with limited possibilities to participate (Hjort 2004; Hjort and Ekström, 2006). This pressure to take part in the catwalk of consumption was expressed by a mother with a scarce financial situation: "Sure, I feel the pressure to maintain a certain standard, mostly because I have children. That is very obvious regarding a computer and a mobile phone and these things. I really feel the pressure. I bought a mobile phone, I rarely use it. It is expensive to use, but such things are so incredibly important, to be like everybody else, I really feel that" (Hjort and Ekström, 2006, p. 151). Consumption is about inclusion, but also about exclusion. Not being able to take part involves social and psychological risk-taking (Hjort and Ekström, 2006).

Keeping up with children and grandchildren

Children and parents influence each other. Early research focused on how parents yield to their children's requests for products (e.g., Atkin, 1978; Berey and Pollay, 1968; Ward and Wackman, 1972). Lately, research has recognized that children also influence products for the parents' exclusive use (e.g., Foxman, Tansuhaj and Ekström, 1989; Ekström, 1995). Parents sometimes become aware of and learn about consumption from their children, for example regarding trends, new technology and environmental issues (Ekström, 1995; 2007). Children contribute information in relation to purchases and afterwards when helping parents to install or use the products purchased. In some families interviewed, children seemed to deal more easily with technology than their parents. For example, a 17 year-old daughter said: "Mom usually reads instruction books. Dad only does it sometimes. He loves to just switch it on and does not read any instructions thinking he knows it all. He presses some buttons and then everything goes wrong. Sometimes I can get him to read the instruction books or usually I just push him away and say: now I will do it, otherwise everything will go wrong" (Ekström, 2007, p. 210).

Children may play important roles in the diffusion of innovations to parents; a parent may become aware of a product because he/she sees the child use or own it. This can result in a "keeping up with the children's effect" similar to the "keeping up with the Joneses" (Ekström, 2007). There is a kind of social pressure to be a child-oriented or modern parent who is influenced by her/his children's purchases and consumption (Ekström, 2007). There is a lack of studies on intergenerational influence which take into account the ways grandparents and children learn about consumption from each other. Children can play an important role in the diffusion of technology to grandparents, for example mobile phones, Mp3 players and digital cameras. The concept of "keeping up with the grandchildren" could also be used.

Commercial culture

As mentioned earlier, children and parents are part of a consumer culture, not merely exposed to the 'catwalk of consumption' but participating by negotiating identities, relations and lifestyles through their consumption. There is no way to avoid participating, because choices to resist also reveal our preferences and identities. There are different opinions about whether children should or should not be protected from consumer culture. Those who advocate protection argue that children do not have the cognitive ability or experience to understand advertising, so they make non-rational product choice (e.g., Armstrong and Brucks, 1988). It has also been discussed that TV commercials teaches children materialism, impulsive choice and immediate gratification (e.g., Armstrong and Brucks 1988). There are also those who are against protection from TV commercials and argue instead that children learn to be consumers and that not all advertising is evil (e.g., Armstrong and Brucks, 1988). Instead, it can provide information of value and help children to make decisions – children can, for instance, learn values such as fairness from TV commercials (e.g., Armstrong and Brucks, 1988).

Discussion about the risks of living in a consumer culture has particularly focused on TV commercials. This is surprising since children are exposed to commercial stimuli in a number of different settings, in public as well as in private spheres. Living in a consumer culture involves exposure to product placement in TV shows and films and seeing advertising, products, services, and brands in public as well as private spheres. Children come into contact with brands at home, at school, at the shopping center, on TV and on the internet. The websites Facebook and My space are popular channels for communication at the time this chapter is being written. It is surprising that the home and schools are often seen as sites protecting children from pressures to consume while markets endanger them. These worlds are interpenetrated when, for example, companies market and sponsor materials at school. Brembeck (2001) discusses the tendency to view socialization in schools and in the family as good, while socialization which takes place in the market as evil. There is a need to consider the relation between children and advertising in different contexts (e.g., Seiter, 1993).

Children can learn things in school which they later teach their parents. Moschis (1976) found a positive relationship between the number of consumer-related courses taken at school and the adolescent's propensity to discuss consumption with their parents. Ekström (1995) found that children had learned new recipes at school which they later shared with their parents. Lately, sponsorship in schools has been discussed (e.g., Quart, 2003). It should also be recognized that this can influence not merely children, but parents.

Also, the debate regarding children and advertising has traditionally focused on products for the children's own use and has not sufficiently considered that children are exposed to advertising directed to adults. Children view advertising at other times than during children's programs (Armstrong and Brucks, 1988). The regulation of TV advertising refers to children's TV programs exclusively. Adver-

tisements directed towards parents sometimes include children, maybe as a strategy for creating attention both among adults and children. Even though TV commercials for children are forbidden in Sweden, children can still watch advertising on TV for adults. The latter sometimes include pictures of both children and adults. Finally, the effects of advertising are difficult to measure. Several researchers (e.g., O'Donohoe, 1994) have suggested that research should focus on what consumers do with advertising rather than what advertising does to them. Ritson and Elliott (1999) conducted an ethnographic study on adolescent's social use of advertising.

Consumer literacy

Opinions on whether it is bad or good to protect children from consumer society are based on whether children should be viewed as either competent or victimized. I suggest that rather than seeing children or parents as either victimized or competent, it is important to focus on the situations they are facing. A continuously changing society, with new products and new situations requires that children as well as adults learn new competencies. Living in a consumer culture requires not only media literacy, but also consumer literacy. The needed skills to act as well-informed members of society have been studied within the context of consumer socialization. Ward (1974, p.2) defines this as: "the process by which young people acquire skills, knowledge, and attitudes relevant to their functioning as consumers in the marketplace". Ward (1974) asserts in the same article that this is a life-long process. A majority of studies on consumer socialization have, however, focused on childhood and adolescence (e.g., Carlson and Grossbart, 1988; Churchill and Moschis, 1979; Moschis, 1985; Moschis and Churchill, 1978; Moschis and Moore, 1979; 1985; Moore and Stephens, 1975; and Stampfl, Moschis, and Lawton, 1978). One reason for this research orientation is that socialization is assumed to be strongest in childhood. We need to expand research on consumer socialization to encompass all ages (Ekström 2006). Children and parents are continuously exposed to new situations in life which require learning new competencies. Consumer socialization is important in order to understand how consumers relate to culturally determined societal norms and how they adapt to transformations in society (e.g., Ekström, 2006).

A majority of consumer socialization studies have focused on children learning consumption-related matters from their parents (e.g., Carlson and Grossbart, 1988; Moschis and Churchill, 1978; Moschis and Moore, 1978). This one-sided view can be criticized. White-Riley et al. (1971, p.961) state that "...As the parent socializes the child, he almost certainly as a consequence both teaches certain things to himself and also learns from the growing child." Also, studies on children's consumer socialization have often focused on the family as the socialization agent (e.g., Carlson and Grossbart, 1988; Foxman et al., 1989; Moschis and Moore, 1978) or a few socialization agents such as family, friends, or mass media (e.g., Moschis

and Churchill, 1978; Moschis and Moore, 1979). Only a few studies have considered TV as a socialization agent (O'Guinn and Shrum, 1997), the role played by department stores in consumer socialization (Hollander and Omura, 1989), and the impact of retailers on children's consumer socialization (Grossbart et al., 1991; McNeal, 1987). It is important to understand children as well as parents in the context in which they are consumers.

Agents of social change

All the agents of social change, consumers, educators, producers, marketers, media and advertising agencies have a role in development of consumer literacy. By viewing them from a non-antagonistic discourse and seeing them as parts in a network of linkages and assemblages rather than separate entities, we are more likely to encourage dialogue. At the same time, we need to recognize that different agents have different powers. Marketing practitioners and scholars should be sensitive to the effects marketing might have upon cultures (Moorman, 1987).

Consumption and production should not be considered as opposites, but rather as something which occur interchangeably (e.g., Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Wikström, 1995). It is therefore relevant to try to understand how consumption and production interact, considering the contexts where consumers, media, advertisements, brands, producers, retailers etc. interact. Jackson et al. (2000) has conceptualized commercial culture as a bridge of the conventional dualism between culture and commerce. They are seen as interdependent and sometimes coincident. Brembeck (2001) asserts that in order to investigate what it means for children to be consumers today, it is necessary to study both the positions of subjectivity offered by the market and the way children experience this. She implies that studying representations of children in advertising is not enough in order to understand how it is to be a child. Still, advertisements reveal gender roles at different time periods. Falkström (1999) discusses the ways toys and toy advertisements have developed into stronger gender polarization and gives examples from Lego advertisements between the 1960s and 1990s.

Finally, as indicated above, it is not sufficient to study only children, but we must include parents as well. They both take part in the catwalk of consumption and are not necessarily divided by the process of consumption, since they share experiences and form alliances.

Conclusion

Living in consumer culture involves participating in the catwalk of consumption. Consumption reflects who you are or who you want to be. Individuality and

conformity appears to exist in parallel. Knowing the social code can illustrate individuality, but it can also indicate conformity if a number of people have accessibility to the code. Not being able to take part can result in exclusion. If you do not use the “right” media, you are not part of a social group. Moral dilemmas and the ambivalence between good and bad consumption depend on how consumption is viewed and differs between individuals and among different cultures.

Parents and children participate in the catwalk – influencing each other and others. Rather than seeing them as either competent or victimized, there is a need to recognize that literacy differs in different situations. There are ‘childhoods’ instead of ‘childhood’. ‘Parenthoods’ instead of ‘parenthood’. Each childhood and parenthood is unique. There is a need to listen to the voice of the consumer, the child or the parent, in order to understand what it means to be a consumer.

Living in a continuously changing society requires that new competencies be learned by children as well as parents. All agents of social change; children, educators, producers, marketers, media and advertising agencies have a role in the development of consumer literacy. We need to build bridges between academic work, practitioners and policy makers when discussing consumer literacy.

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Books on children, young people and media

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Other publications

Ulla Carlsson (Ed.): *Regulation, Awareness, Empowerment. Young People and Harmful Media Content in the Digital Age.* International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media in co-operation with UNESCO, 2006.

Maria Jacobson: *Young People and Gendered Media Messages.* International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media, 2005.

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