

**Diverse Bodies: A Queer History of the Representation and Self-Representation of
Children in Popular Media**

by

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The concept childhood is socially, politically, and historically constructed and has evolved with changing identity markets. Further, groups of people are inconsistently afforded a childhood based on gendered, raced, classed, and queered moderators. Through a number of interdisciplinary feminist research practices, I outline historical and theoretical understandings of the experience of childhood, with a specific focus on girlhood, and the influences of its moderators. To study the phenomenon of the variability of the experience of childhood, I detail an instance of inconsistent childhoods by analyzing those of child celebrities. I track celebrity representation in popular girls' media outlets such as fan magazines and girls' magazines, and compare them to contemporary representations on *Instagram*. I do this to highlight the shifts in agency of the individuals being represented. In this tracking, I find that the evolution of forms of representation into self representation allow for more agency for individuals to document and express visual experiences of childhood, while embodying identities that are historically and systematically known for their reduced or erased childhood experiences. I argue that increased agency in self-representation in popular media subsequently positively impacts the identity formation of its consumers. Finally, I conclude by rooting my research in Foucauldian theory by tracing a genealogy of iterations of Foucault's foundational texts. My work exists in the intersections of queer theory, critical race theory, media psychology, and archival studies, and hopes to further interdisciplinary understandings of childhood.

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Preface

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1.0 Introduction

When the cast of Netflix's *Stranger Things* took the internet and popular culture by storm in the summer of 2016, it introduced audiences to a cast of children quickly shot into stardom.¹ The press coverage of the cast after the first season depicted them as young children navigating their stardom through youthful antics. Despite the core young cast consisting of three white boys, one black boy, and one white girl, there was not a large difference between the racial and gendered differences in representations of the cast. They were grouped together and presented as a unit in various talk shows and other media outlets, and shown in their fun, childlike antics. By the time of the release of the second season in the fall of 2017, most of the young actors were living their lives as widely recognized celebrities. With a pre-release rise in promotional activity and formal press events, the young stars were in the spotlight in a larger more prominent manner than before. However, the coverage and press about Millie Bobby Brown, who plays the main protagonist, Eleven, seemed to be drastically different the second time around; Brown's appearance, styling, and mannerisms steered the focus of the headlines in a direct and sexualized way. She was singled out and individualized in media coverage while the rest of the boys in the cast maintained the group dynamic. Often during red carpet events, she would walk alone as the boys would walk together. I was struck by the vast amount of coverage that was focused on Millie Bobby Brown's media reception and portrayal; Brown went from being the sweet and cutesy new thirteen-year-old actress, to a celebrity held to standards similar to adult women in the industry in terms of physical demeanor. This dramatic shift in Millie's representation raised a set of critical questions about child celebrities, intersectionality, and the social, political, and historical aspects of childhood. I began to think about how this particular celebrity childhood

allows us to think about childhood more generally. If Millie, a young cisgender white celebrity, was sexualized and stripped of her childlikeness once she became a well-known celebrity, then what is the role of celebrity in how we understand childhood, and more specifically girlhood? How has it been understood in the past and what has changed? What role do childhood celebrities play in how other children understand themselves and their development? What role does race, class, sexuality and gender play in this process? How do children's personal histories overlap with the social and the political representation of celebrities?

I list these questions here to highlight the inconsistencies on schemas of childhood and youth as moderated by race, class, and gender. This paper sets a foundation for thinking about these questions and I work to deconstruct these questions about childhood with various forms of analysis. As these are complex intersectional, conceptual and abstract questions, I require a more nuanced set of methodologies. I began to understand and unpack this issue by examining popular media representations of childhood celebrities from the late 19th century through magazines to the present through *Instagram*, from the very first magazines targeted at girls to the social media discussions of *Netflix* productions. To do this, I looked at issues of fan magazines such as *Photoplay*, *Pictureplay*, and *Modern Screen* from 1938 to 1960, reviewed magazines targeted at girls from their emergence in the 1940s to the 2000s (from the evolution of *Calling All Girls*' readership into *Teen Vogue*'s), and coded 1,132 *Instagram* postings of young celebrities. In looking at these materials, I asked how childhood is then further inconsistently attributed and afforded to others along different racial, classed, and gendered spectrums. I use analytic tools to understand how childhood is given to children differently because of their race, ethnicity, class, or gender; this essay contributes to a growing body of interdisciplinary

scholarship on childhood, intersectional identity formation, and representation of children in popular media.

Childhood is personal in experience; biological in development and yet deeply political in its affordance, the employment of an intersectional analysis is crucial in a fuller understanding. That is, intersectional approaches take into consideration the overlaps and nuances of various identities such as age, sex, race, class, ability, occupation, etc. Mass media and discourses on representation are primed to focus on cisgender white girls, reflecting and constructing the imbrication of whiteness and value through narratives of the preciousness of childhood.² This stems from a culture that is predicated on a hierarchy of privilege that showcases and emphasizes mostly with white/cisgender/heterosexual/patriarchal/nationalist experiences. Thus, through this reading of childhood as being granted inconsistently to individuals, I argue that childhood is socially, culturally, politically, and historically constructed, and further, that this construction is perpetuated by systems of incorrect and unequal representation. I share this critical history of childhood in order to frame the present. My focus is on the longer history of youth, specifically celebrity youth, their construction of self-identities, and how they are able to represent themselves in popular media while navigating societal variations on affordances of childhood.

This paper provides a long historical approach to the questions of intersectionality, the child, and celebrity culture in order to provide a critical frame for the forms of representation we see in the present. Following this introduction, I open section two with a description of the various methods I use to conduct this examination. I do this in order to establish an intersectional feminist lens through which I view existing historical, theoretical, and psychologically based understandings of childhood. Further, I provide an explanation of my investment in this topic as

being intersectional, personal, and political—rooted in my personal identities as well as the need for further intersectional interdisciplinary research on girlhoods.

In section three I detail the histories of the subgroups that challenge how we understand childhood as a universal natural experience. I will analyze and comment on their overlap and intersections; starting with the girl child, the classed child, the raced child, the queer child, and finally culminating in the celebrity child. I approach many of these subgroups through a social constructionist lens, that is, one that is predicated on the idea that social categories and delineations are created and propagated by society; they are not innate and latent separations as cultures where science and medicine have produced pseudo-scientific theories of race, gender, and sexuality are prone to think. I look at these set of intersections to show that universal and essentialist understandings of childhood promote the assumption that universal really just means white, cisgender, and heterosexual. I base my research off of this framework and understanding and argue that the protection and preciousness of childhood creates a body that demands exceptional care and it justifies the idea that some bodies deserve more care. These values are often predicated on whiteness. Thus, repeated representations of the child as being white, straight, and cisgender in the media work to reinscribe schemas of selective preciousness of white bodies in an industry where early maturity is expected, if not forced.

In section four, I turn to my own archival research to trace a long history of diverse representation of children and child celebrities in popular magazines. I specifically look at the publication *Calling All Girls* to trace this history due to its lineage and ties to contemporary magazine *Teen Vogue*. I then define key terms of self-representation, identity formation, and self-branding. This longitudinal but not linear history leads into section five where I discuss contemporary popular media outlets like *Instagram* as a tool of self-branding and self-

representation. By paralleling forms of representation in *Calling All Girls* from the start of its publication in the 1940s through its evolution into *Teen Vogue* and representation within it in the present day, I analyze the evolution of how child celebrities have shaped their media branding and narratives about themselves in the media. Finally, I conclude with an analysis using Foucauldian feminism and the concept of self-surveillance to ground and conceptualize my work in theory.

2.0 Methods

My research employs a feminist mixed methodology to address the need for flexibility and incorporation of ethical practices, as well as the growing interdisciplinary nature of research in gender and sexuality studies. By using both qualitative and quantitative analysis to study the commodification and self-branding of youth public figures, I hope to gain a deeper understanding of the various influential structural and systemic mechanisms at work. Feminist research methods are often inherently tied to queer theory in relation to their research, as these methods are not simply an additional layer through which research is analyzed, but rather a foundational aspect of the research question, data collection, analysis, and more.

My investment in this topic is interdisciplinary in approach and application; feminist research methods use the interdisciplinary and synergistic nature of gender and women's studies to draw from a variety of theoretical backgrounds to bolster and ground their arguments. I draw on theories from developmental psychology regarding gender development, psychological aspects of sexuality, and identity formation as well as critical feminist and race theory because they provide a rich, theoretical frame for thinking of the self in development and in a social/historical/political context. By using these tools and enacting them through an intersectional lens, I hope to offer a new lens to unpack the bio-politics of childhood.

One of the feminist methods I use and employ in my research process is self-reflexivity; self-reflexivity as a feminist method critiques the myth of the neutral researcher and challenges the politics of the assumption that one can be an unbiased observer. Scholars McIntosh and Cuklanz propose self-reflexivity in research as a way to acknowledge potential biases and benefits that may accompany their standpoint epistemology. It helps researchers recognize the

effects of power relationships, guards against the assumption that textual openness reflects a fluid world in which choice is equally distributed among various populations, and is present throughout the research process, and not just as a reflection afterthought.⁴ In other words, recognizing that my views are influenced by my lived experiences as a queer person of color, and my existence in this specific pop cultural, fashion, and social media era and moment, is crucial to my understanding of the research.

For my original research, I consulted various kinds of primary sources which focused on understanding celebrity representation over time in order to develop an understanding of their evolution in a larger historical context. I looked at issues of *Photoplay*, *Modern Screen*, and *PicturePlay* and tracked how many people of color were featured in these popular magazines from the 1930s-50s, and the contexts in which they were featured. In doing so, it is important to recognize the biases that come from my specific standpoints and epistemologies as the researcher. Firstly, my biases in reading these magazines are situated in historical relationship with them. A researcher's role in the work, status as an insider or outsider, and the biases of key subject matters, all determine what information and contexts the researcher has access to. Further, the researcher's position in the larger sociocultural context and in relation to the group they are studying will determine what information they have access to and influence the conclusions that they reach.⁵ Not only am I an outsider in terms of the time period, my tracking of people of color was informed by my notions of diversity in 2019, and thus my very categorization of people as being people of color may not even include individuals who were understood or presented as such during that time period.⁶

As I was tracking and coding large volumes of data, I relied on contemporary categories of racial and ethnic identification. I used the categories for Race from the 1930s Census as a

guide to popular understanding of the complicated relationship between race and ethnicity. My own method included visually surveying all the child celebrities and then researching their backgrounds. My own perceptions of race and ethnicity, and the stakes of understanding why one would acknowledge or “hide by passing for white” are framed by an understanding of these identities that is very different from the stakes at the beginning of my research. For instance, the 1930s Census was the first year to include Mexican as a census category, however it was categorized as a race and thus understood in the racial terms of that era, instead of contemporary terms of ethnicity.

In addition to a different understanding of race and ethnicity, sexuality must also be understood in different terms. Feminist archival analysis suggests that texts are made queer by nature of their temporality. According to Scholar Kate Eichorn, through temporal drag and queer temporality, we can make meaningful use of the scrapheap of feminist archives, which might otherwise be discarded as old, failed, or outdated.⁷ Studying the historical underpinnings of a text helps uncover the larger structures that were in place that influenced it, as well as to show how its evolution is tied to its historical context. It is important to recognize the history, evolution, and queerness of a text as a function of its temporality. Eichorn talks about the queerness of archival collections through their relationship to time and history as well as “their remarkable ability to be in time differently—to recognize the past as a way to reinvigorate a beleaguered present and to recognize the future as always implicated by the pull of the past”.⁸ By being able to employ various current theoretical lenses to study materials from the past, I can transform the meaning of the texts by potentially reading them a new way, as well using them to add context to the present.

For my historical primary source analysis, I conducted archival analysis of the Special Collections at the University of Pittsburgh's Nesbitt Collection and analyzed popular girl's print media. I used the evolution of archival documentation to track the longitudinal history of the forms of representation in popular media that I am analyzing by looking at digital archives and online spaces such as social media platforms. I surveyed every one of the magazines available in any online or archival collection from *Calling All Girls* and tracked the format of the magazine, instances of celebrity self-representation, person of color representation, and girls' role model representation.

My contemporary digital media analysis consisted of tracking and coding child celebrity self representation on *Instagram* by analyzing the accounts of ten celebrities. Here, I used an online ethnographical method, "netnography" as coined by scholar Robert Kozinets. He states that data analyses for online ethnography codes the data in specific ways and writes, "Categories for coding usually emerge inductively through a close reading of the data rather than being prescribed categories."⁹ Based on this, I chose to use an open coding model in which the categories for classification are built upon the content as content is analyzed. This helps prevent the issue of boxing and labeling nuanced and intersectional posts with various layers of messaging into one pre-set label, and affords a fuller understanding of the data. Open coding allowed me to make connections in the data and find patterns thematically rather than trying to fit content into preset codes. Additionally, while conducting this coded analysis, understanding authenticity, and labeling *Instagram* posts, it was important to keep in mind that posts online are, what Kozinets describes as, "a social face that we are constantly constructing and reconstructing ourselves through collective acts that display different aspects of ourselves in different social contexts."¹⁰ Although content on *Instagram* is strategically posted, Kozinets acknowledges this

issue of the inauthenticity of social media as an issue in the validity of netnography data but he ultimately deems it not problematic. He writes, “it fails to be a predicament because this alteration of identity is a natural consequence of our social life everywhere and not simply some idiosyncratic tendency manifesting itself online.”¹¹

Significant amounts of existing scholarship on diverse childhoods come from authors who are not part of those marginalized communities; while everyone has experienced a form of childhood and thus all come at the topic with a level of in-group bias, not everyone has experienced childhood the same way and not everyone belongs to the groups they are researching. This runs the risk of utilizing forms of out-group bias in their analysis if and when the communities they are studying are not ones that they are a part of. Inside/outside group bias may make research deeply personal, but also political as it allows the researcher to use their experiences to form analysis regarding materials based on personal empirical data.¹³ It is important to study marginalized groups as their existence is shaped by a number of specific experiences that are significant and different from dominant social groups. My research aims to help fill this space by drawing on an eclectic archive primarily because there is a small but growing body of material on the topics of intersectional feminist, cultural, and political studies on the experiences of marginalized children. By doing this, I hope to provide a model for studying intersectional childhood studies over time and the value of thinking about how the past influences our understanding of the present. I also hope to raise our collective consciousness about the importance of studying these experiences of diverse and intersectional childhoods, given that research indicates that children who are exposed to positive images of themselves in the media tend to construct a more positive self-identity.¹⁴ I employ a framework for thinking

about historical change that is situated in a netnographical analysis in terms of its historical precedents.

I return briefly back to the example of Millie Bobby Brown as just one example of the way the intersections of race, class, and gender are moderated by celebrity and media presence. Brown is an avid user of social media, and since the development of her celebrity status she has worked to create and curate a social media persona. Through social media, Brown is able to portray herself as a child and is able to construct narratives about herself while she is simultaneously being represented by outside voices in popular media.¹⁵ Using Brown's story, I seek to understand other forms and examples of celebrity media representation. In order to garner a fuller understanding of all the intersectional mechanisms at play, however, I use the following sections to breakdown and unpack subsections of identity.

3.0 Girlhoods

In this section, I explore theories of the child that are foundational to my research on intersectional childhood studies. To analyze girlhoods, I start with an understanding and deconstruction of notions of the child by tracing its history in the United States.¹⁶ For this project, I take a constructivist approach to base my analyses of girlhoods, queerness, and celebrity; I do this historically and theoretically, borrowing from scholars Steven Mintz and Alan Prout who show that the constructions of my sites of analysis are context specific and how they, as social markers, developed from systems of vulnerability.

In his book *Huck's Raft*, Mintz breaks down the history of childhood in terms of three overlapping phases: pre-modern, modern, and postmodern childhoods. Pre-modern childhood coincides with the colonial era where children were viewed as adults in training. Childhood was a time of deficiency and incompleteness, not a time reflected back with nostalgia, according to the religious and secular authorities of the time. It was a parent's job to hurry a child toward adult status, especially through early engagement in work responsibilities, both inside the parental home and outside it, as servants and apprentices.¹⁷

Defining features of modern childhood came from changes in attitudes in the middle of the eighteenth century. The regulation of education and truancy laws further perpetuated these ideas and established the delineation of ages that were categorically different from the rest of the adult population, and yet were also not babies. Parents began to view children as innocent, malleable, fragile creatures and childhood was viewed as a separate stage of life that required special care and institutions to protect and shelter it from contamination. This ideal was evident in the nineteenth century in the middle class as young people prolonged residence in the parental

home has longer periods of formal schooling, and an increasing consciousness on the inventions of stages of development.¹⁸

One such invented developmental stage was that of the teenager. It was not until around 1950 and later where modern childhood transitioned into the postmodern childhood phase; some features of this phase were “the breakdown of dominant norms about the family, gender roles, age, and even reproduction as they were subjected to radical change. Age norms that were considered “natural” were questioned, and the bedrock biological process of sexual maturation was accelerated.”¹⁹ This shift in ideologies around childhood and adolescence accompanied shifts in how these subgroups were treated in a social context.

In a similar way, the constructions of childhood and the construction of girlhoods go hand in hand as gender plays a large role in the socialization of children. Scholars working at the intersection of girlhood and childhood have explored the unique and specific moderating effects of the experiences of gender on how childhood is understood. Gender is frequently regarded as a foundational aspect of how childhood is framed, thus the study of girlhoods is essential to a fuller understanding—specifically, studying girlhoods as being distinct from childhood more broadly.²¹ Thus, girlhoods and the experiences of girl children are moderated by the construction of childhood intersecting with the construction of gender. While it is common to believe that childhood is a universal or natural state, scholarship on intersectional childhood studies shows that the affordance of childhood is moderated by a number of factors including gender. Among other intersections, I focus specifically on the girl child as my site of analysis in my paper.²²

Scholar Alan Prout’s work on children’s bodies and their societal standings is useful here to set a foundation for my approach that recognizes the experience of girlhood as being distinct and separate from understandings of childhood more broadly. He writes, “From the moment it is

born into a society of binaries, the child is embodied both as small in relation to adults and as a sexed and gendered being. Within these structures of dependency inherent in such relations in Western Society to be a 'child', 'childish', or 'childlike' always, therefore, implies actual or metaphoric powerlessness."²³ The vulnerability of childhood is used to generalize the experience of children's identities and their view in society. I quote Prout at length because his work shows the theoretical underpinnings of the delineations of children in society. In his book, he raises concerns and proposes the need to investigate the attribution of vulnerability to children as a sole feature of their identity. He writes,

While children, like many others, are vulnerable at times, there is a push towards using this vulnerability as a master identity. Ideologically, children are separated from adults, rendered as objects of concern, help, and interventions, and minimized in their capacity for dealing with their problems. At the same time their actual experiences, those that they feel are vulnerable are not much listened to by adults.²⁴

Prout further argues that children are constituted as essentially vulnerable beings who can only survive and develop successfully if nurtured and protected by adults. He structures his conceptualization in childhood in Western societies through two sets of ideas. One view is that the separation of children and adults occurs in the context of the nuclear family, in which the child is not yet a member of society and thus, receives care, protection, and training. The other is that a separation of children from adults happens in production processes, "that is in the place where the child has the status of a 'non-worker'—with the idea that children must not work but instead have the right to learn and play."²⁵ These ideals of childhood are predicated on various assumptions that lend themselves to whiteness and to a higher socioeconomic class. Childhood, specifically girlhood, is seen to be intrinsically tied to innocence and the conflation of childhood and innocence is heavily related to race and class. Since I am considering the history and context of the culture of childhood celebrity girlhoods, it is important to understand the way that

childhood is impacted by various intersections of identity. In the following subsections, I provide a breakdown of these two moderators of childhood innocence.

3.1 Class as a moderator in the affordance of childhood

In her piece, *Growing up Sideways in the Twentieth Century*, scholar Kathryn Bond Stockton discusses the effect of money on childhood, specifically the ability for children to have a traditional childhood based on whether or not they have money. In this, she brings up questions about the intersections of vulnerability and power. She says “if children were to have more economic power, would they be less vulnerable, even less sexually vulnerable to adults, in some contexts? Or would they be more vulnerable?”²⁶ Based on historians of childhood studies, these questions were addressed through the dramatic change in the economic role of Anglo-American children in the early 1900's. Through the successful campaign for labor laws by reformers in the 20th century, children who were once working bodies in the labor force, cease to work for wages. But even when child labor laws and truancy laws were put in place and children were not directly working and earning money, their experiences of childhood were still made unique and strange by money, or the lack thereof. Before child labor laws were created in the US, children in working-class families experienced childhood in vastly different ways. The lack of adult jobs meant kids were in high demand so families often became dependent on the children, which strips them of their ability to experience the freedoms and innocence of childhood.

All of this is key to understanding intersectional childhood studies, and thus is central to understanding today's social/political/historical landscape because the effects of class and socio-economic background still regulate experiences of innocence and carelessness. The ability for

children to be carefree is based on the ability of someone else to provide care for them. There is a transference of responsibility when the child must care for themselves and potentially others around them.

3.2 Race as a moderator in the affordance of childhood

Previous sections have tied innocence to whiteness; here, I detail the impact of race on how people experience girlhood. The preciousness of childhood as an attribute, is disproportionately denied to Black youth. In addition to the shortening of childhood, the sexualization of girls influences perceptions and subconscious ideals on what and how girlhoods should be. Thus, an additional moderating factor in this learned sexual socialization is race. Not only are black girls historically “adultified”, they are sexualized in how they are viewed with no affordance of sexual agency.²⁷ In Gigi Durham’s *The Lolita Effect*, she looks into the various factors that influence this sexualization of girls, but also the disproportionate early maturing of girls of color, specifically the hypersexualization of black girls.²⁸ Yet, it is crucial to understand and think critically about this phenomenon and its wide-reaching effects on various populations. Durham argues that “adults must take the Lolita Effect seriously: not to police or condemn girls, but to work in collaboration with girls to help them gain a critical and informed perspective on sexuality and its representations, so they [are equipped to] make responsible choices about their sex lives.”²⁹ This is key because it regulates the agency and the effects of living in a society in which girls are sexualized. According to Scholar Barrie Gunter in *Media and the Sexualization of Childhood*, the effects of being brought up in a sexualized environment can be felt at a number of

levels that shape the way in which we think about ourselves, evaluate others, and behave in our interpersonal relationships.³⁰

The American Psychological Association issued a Task Force Analysis on the sexualization of girls, how this is being done, and what steps can be taken to be critical consumers and participants in a society where this sexualization and early maturation occurs.³¹ According to the Task Force, the sexualization of girls occurs within three interrelated spheres: the societal, the interpersonal, and the self-sexualizing. The societal contribution comprises of the cultural norms, expectations, and values that are communicated in myriad ways, including through the media. The interpersonal contribution is based on the notion that girls can be treated as, and are encouraged to be, sexual objects by family, peers, and others. The self-sexualizing contribution occurs when girls and women-identified individuals treat and experience themselves as sexual objects for societal reward.³² The third level of sexualization is a reification of the Foucauldian Panopticon model of self-surveillance; by internalizing the sexualized gaze and employing various forms of bodily policing, girls are often enacting sexualization as a way to assimilate to societal expectations.³³

Adults have been using girls' and more specifically black girls' bodies for their personal agendas historically, politically and culturally for decades and still do so contemporarily. One form of this is based on the early maturing and cutting short of their childhoods. For instance, Melba Beals, one of the Little Rock Nine, was used as a political pawn in the activism to end desegregation of schools and faced immensely difficult and traumatic circumstances that required her to mature and ended in her losing critical aspects of her childhood.³⁴ While mainstream and accepted definitions of childhoods are based in innocence, naiveté, and purity, childhoods, and experiences of it depend largely on the confounding and moderating factors of

class and race. Bond Stockton uses the language of queering as an experience that embodies children set apart by non-normative and peculiar experiences. Innocence is one factor that engenders queering—children queered by innocence share estrangement from what they approach: the adulthood against which they must be defined. She writes:

This is why "innocent" children are strange. They are constantly told to be normative, but at the same time, they are held as a distinct and strange other. The contours of this normative strangeness may explain why children, as an idea, are likely to be both white and middle-class. It is a privilege to need to be protected—and to be sheltered—and thus to have a childhood. Not in spite of privilege, then, but because of it, the all-important feature of weakness sticks to these markers (white and middle-class) and helps to signal innocence.³⁵

She uses “queer” here, as a way to analyze an experience and form of existence, as a concept that is separate from LGBTQIA+ understandings and associations with the term.

3.3 Queer Childhoods

All forms of childhood and childhood sexuality, in some sense, can be called "queer" as they are (despite societal pushes for hegemony) innately varied, non-normative, and curious. In the anthology, *Curioser: On the Queerness of Children*, Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley explain their collection’s use of queer in relation to childhood by detailing that the queer child is, generally, both defined by and outside of what is defined as normal. But the term queer derives also from its association with specific sexual alterity.³⁶

In experiences, such as those of LGBTQIA+ individuals, childhoods can be completely erased or invalidated. Although all adults aged through what would be societally considered “childhood”, not all of them experience in this traditional sense. One instance of this is the erasure of queer childhoods. By not medically documenting queer children and/or ignoring and

not believing them when they try to address their queerness, the childhoods of these individuals are illegitimated and invalidated. Throughout her piece, *Growing Up Sideways in the Twentieth Century*, Bond Stockton maintains the verbiage of “queering” to denote a peculiar form of experience in a theoretical move to open the concept of queerness up from LGBTQIA+ associations with the term to its use as a frame of analysis. She describes the queer child as children who go through childhood as innately non-normative; however, the argument is also rooted in the queerness of childhood as a whole.³⁷

The erasure of children’s queerness may also stem from the concept of policing children’s access to healthy conversations about sexuality under the guise of protecting them and their innocence. Again, the concept of innocence is strategically maneuvered through discourses of acceptability or the normal. Innocence, here, can be lost due to the rapidly shrinking childhood as children advance “too quickly” to adulthood. Sexual precocities, as one would imagine, aided by both the media and the internet, are high on scholars’ list of factors causing children to “grow up fast” and thus disappear.³⁸ However, this fear of sexuality in children seems to often extend to conversations of non-heterosexual sexualities. The fear of children’s sexuality does not free children from being inundated with "compulsory heterosexual" ideals from a young age. Compulsory heterosexuality, coined by Adrienne Rich, captures the ways in which lesbian and other queer identities are erased from the dominant narrative as the first assumption of a person’s sexuality is heterosexual. She writes, that the bias of compulsory heterosexuality is the lens through which lesbian experience is perceived on a scale ranging from deviant to abhorrent, or simply rendered invisible.³⁹ One outcome of compulsory heterosexuality, as it relates to queer youth, is the double standard perpetuated by projecting and romanticizing heterosexuality and its manifestations on young non-consenting children while

at the same time shutting down LGBTQIA+ self-images and discussions in children as they are "too young". Bond Stockton highlights a double-bind that is formed as she explains, "for this queer child, whatever its conscious grasp of itself, has not been able to present itself according to the category 'gay' or 'homosexual'—categories culturally deemed too adult, since they are sexual, though we do presume every child to be straight. The effect for the child who already feels queer (different, odd, out-of-sync, and attracted to same-sex peers) is an asynchronous self-relation."⁴⁰ This idea that LGBTQIA+ experiences are somehow more "adult" than the standard and ubiquitous heterosexual projections onto children, and this locates LGBTQIA+ experience as somehow more dangerous to the child's innocence.

The threat that children's minds are too malleable and impressionable to be able to withstand seeing queer representation without themselves becoming queer is common rhetoric used by individuals to police the existence of queer children. This moral panic stems not only from regulating when someone can identify as queer but sometimes if they are able to at all.⁴² In Robert Owen's, *Queer Kids: The Challenges and Promise for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Youth*, he discusses the attacks that come from the Christian Right to promote the erasure or queer visibility.⁴³ He writes, about Christian Right ideals, that:

Their campaign of hatred sees demons in every tiny advance in lesbian and gay human rights claiming that children are becoming subject to an increasing number of influences which encourages them to adopt a homosexual lifestyle, despite the fact that no individual has ever become lesbian or gay by seeing a gay positive character in a TV sitcom.⁴⁴

Childhoods are queered, according to Bond Stockton, in various ways that braid together and intersect to create the unique experience of "growing sideways" instead of growing up. The title of her piece includes the term "growing up sideways", as a means to disrupt traditional narratives of childhood. As queer children are often not or not allowed to be openly queer, Bond Stockton

offers a context to understand childhoods that develop against the grain of societally deemed normalcy. She explains this terminology by saying, "Children grow sideways as well as up in part because they cannot, according to our concepts, advance to adulthood until we say it's time."⁴⁵ She further goes on to detail the breakdown and specific move away from a linear concept of childhood—growing sideways, as opposed to growing up. She writes that “thinking nonlinearity over and against linearity is hard enough, but figuring out the criteria by which different nonlinear temporalities might be meaningfully brought together—figuring out how to make heterogeneity analytically powerful— is exponentially harder [...] call it the queerness of time's refusal to submit to a temporal logic.”⁴⁶ This form of thinking about growing up as non-linear ties into the disruption of timelines of queer childhood through queer temporality. Kate Eichorn helps to understand this nonlinearity, “in a queer time and place one might be present in the past, or already be past in the present or anticipate a more hopeful future by retreating to the past.”⁴⁷ In terms of this project Bond Stockton provides a frame for thinking about questions regarding the experience of child celebrities due to the similarities in shortened and/or sexualized childhoods.

3.4 Celebrity Childhoods

I turn now to an interesting case study and example of both the early maturation as well as erasure of the experiences of childhood due to their non-normative experiences; I argue that children who work in media experience childhood in a non-traditional sense. In my analyses, I used the term celebrity when referencing children who work or have some notable presence in the media, specifically for the various connotations that the term encompasses: that celebrity

status requires a certain level of following, media notoriety, and social influence. Celebrity childhoods here are queered (as Bond Stockton uses the term) as well as are paralleled to queer childhoods in their lack of documentation or notable existence.

In the beginning stages of my research, I maintained the language of the term "public figure" as opposed to "celebrities" to widen to the scope of children in the media to analyze, ranging from actors, athletes, or influencers. However, as I continued to write and analyze their experiences of childhood, I found that they all had forgone "traditional" childhood experiences due to the public spectatorship and consumption of their bodies. This experience, while differing on the levels and forms of scrutiny, is shared among celebrities.

In *A Short History of Celebrity Culture*, Fred Inglis claims that the concept of celebrity grew out of the eighteenth century. He details the celebrity's potent paradox: the coupling of intense familiarity with distance. Through television or social media feeds, celebrities are invited into personal spaces of the fans because of the ideals of closeness that are created due to the accessibility of the media. This is the "compound" that makes the celebrity sacred in modern society: mass media brings the star into the home, yet simultaneously invests her/him with the "remoteness of the supernatural."⁴⁸ Inglis stresses his views on the positive role of celebrities in modern life; the best celebrities are "one of the adhesives which, at a time when the realms of public politics, civil society, and private domestic life are increasingly fractured and enclosed into separate enclaves, serves to pull those separate entities together and to do its bit toward maintaining social cohesion and common values."⁴⁹ I use these concepts of pretenses of intimacy that celebrities have in terms of my research by examining how forms of representation of these celebrities in personal audience spaces work to normalize forms of non-normative experiences—that is, diverse celebrity childhoods. In other words, I want to understand how viewing diverse

childhood experiences in popular media provides audiences better tools for their own positive self-identity formation.

The beginning of the pop cultural concept of the child star in the United States dates back to the 1930s, as a product of the Great Depression. As adult anxieties around the Depression grew, media producers capitalized on the ability of the innocence of American youth to assuage these fears. The screen became an almost escapist tool to forget the harsh realities of the socioeconomic moment. Steven Mintz states that children brought “innocence, energy, optimism, and cartoon-cuteness to films”; he goes on to capture the effect that child stars had on audiences by detailing Shirley Temple’s impact, “she boosted the spirits of a nation in crisis, gladdening hearts with her cheering innocence and exuberance. She held out the promise that children held the solution to the nation’s problems, reinforcing society’s intensifying sentimentalization of childhood.”⁵⁰ With rising celebrity comes a fan culture that follows; fan magazines such as *Photoplay* and *Modern Screen* began publication as early as the 1920's. But the creation of children’s oriented magazines, and specifically girl’s magazines, coincided more with the rise of the Child Star in the 1930's and 1940’s. Advertisers around this time also began to understand the benefits of the marketability to and for children, and recognized youth as a separate and crucial consumer community. Having magazines aimed at children was an important tool in direct forms of advertising and controlling consumer culture.

Fan magazines such as *Photoplay*, *Pictureplay*, and *Modern Screen* marketed themselves as an outlet that allowed communication to the fans directly from the celebrities. Stars could appear to speak directly to their fans, in “authored” pieces or in profiles and biographies. I tracked approximately 85 issues of these magazines from 1939 to 1960 and documented instances of child celebrity representation and representations of people of color. Over the years of

publications, these magazines saw a slight increase in diversity of celebrities represented, however it was still an exceedingly small amount of representation, if any actual representation at all. For instance, in the January-June 1938 publications of *Photoplay*, only the March volume had representations of people of color in a “Who are they” featured page; it read, “They’re as well known to you as your next door neighbor but do you recognize them here? Slant eyed Orientals—one famous for gangster roles and the other for beauty”⁵¹ If one were not familiar with the characters from the movie, they might not be able to recognize them, as this representation of Asian people are actually actors Loretta Young and Edward G. Robinson in yellow face. Two years later, Merle Oberon, an Anglo-Indian actress became the next person of color represented who was featured in the March 1940 publication, however during her career she did not identify herself as such and was instead presented as the dark beauty but not in racialized or ethnic terms. This was followed by the inclusion of Hattie McDaniel in the June 1940 publication. Black male musicians were the most widely represented Black men in *Modern Screen* in 1960 with Sammy Davis Jr., featured February of 1960 and had a few pictures featured in August and October, and Jonny Nash, featured in May 1960 in a piece called “America’s First Negro Teen Idol.”⁵²

Although there have been representations of celebrities of color in these magazines, it’s not until 1960 when the first young person of color is identified and represented as a young person. While Merle Oberon was only 19 in 1940, she is not represented specifically as a teenager or as particularly identifiable as a young person as Nash is. This is a historic instance of the sexualization and maturing of girl celebrities of color that is still paralleled in contemporary representations. In their other representation of child stars, (mostly white child stars) the magazines offer a range of representations ranging from more tabloid like pieces such as a

feature on Shirley Temple in the April 1938 issue of *Pictureplay*, titled “is Shirley a problem child?” and a segment on what fans think of Shirley in a “soft and sharp focus” section.

Conversely, in the March 1938 issue, a photo of Temple is featured with the caption that she was “At the ripe age of 9, and going strong.” Fan magazines such as *Photoplay* and *Modern Screen* were some of the only outlets for celebrities to represent themselves outside of their characters in the media in the mid 1900’s, and these representations were still highly policed by studios and editors. It is a fine line between positive and negative representation as the content of these magazines parallels tabloid culture, which aims to further skew and misrepresent celebrities for a better headline. In the November 1950 publication of *Modern Screen* featured an open letter from Judy Garland, a famous child star in the 1940s, in which she “expresses her gratitude to *Modern Screen’s* understanding readers” she writes:

Dear friends, this is a thank you note. At a time when I’ve been gossip’s victim and the target of a thousand lies, you people have stood by me. [...] it is impossible for me to reply individually to your more than 18,000 letters, I’m using this space in *Modern Screen* to answer those questions you’ve most frequently asked/ I have a responsibility to you friends. Rather than let you be misguided by the flood of nonsense printed about me by reporters, I intend to fulfill my responsibility by telling you movie-goers the truth.⁵³

Here, Garland uses the commonly known “Thank you note” format to address her fans in a more personal way. Acknowledging that the sheer number of letters to reply to would be one of her main barriers to personally writing to everyone, she captures that individualized personal note by using the magazine to publish a statement through a common and accessible form. Thus, despite the many channels of power to approve the piece, it seems like she is speaking directly to the fans.

Celebrities have to navigate the balance of their public and private personas, and how much of themselves to represent in a social system where their profession is predicated on the

various portrayals and representations of their body.⁵⁴ Thus, the manner in which celebrities present themselves as themselves, that is, as being distinct entities from the characters and roles they may take on, is crucial and strategic and must be analyzed as such.

I center my focus on celebrity here because of their functioning as a sort of control group with which to examine girlhoods and queer childhoods, and to use their specific experiences as children who are matured by virtue of profession as well as perhaps matured by other moderating factors previously mentioned in section 3. This creates a site for analysis of the interactions of moderating factors on an individual's experience of childhood. To have a fuller understanding of the evolution of child celebrity cultures, as they pertain to my site of research, I describe the influence of fan magazine culture on magazines aimed explicitly to children, and in this case, girl children.

The genre of girls' magazines represented childhood very specifically and strategically. Media and materials regarding children are regulated and altered to represent an idealized version of childhood, one that is informed by historically and systemically raced, classed, and gendered values. Children's media impacts the development of self-identities of the children seeing the content, as well as the process of their formation of self.; further, these magazines focused on representing an idealized version of childhood and girlhood which highlighted girls who met societal standards. As the child star became more of a popular concept, girl's magazines took on some of the functions of fan magazines in a specific way but geared them towards children.

Childhood stardom rushes young people into maturity at a pace that is unique to public figures. Working and having a professional career during a formative and developmental age plays a significant part in cutting short the childhood of young people in the public eye. The

public's mass consumption, as well as the media's portrayal of the child celebrities, adds to their early maturity by creating an environment in which they are sexualized and rendered hypervisible. Additionally, various identity factors such as race, socio-economic status, ability, and gender expression act as moderators that affect how the celebrities' age is perceived and understood. Thus, in addition to child celebrities being matured at an earlier age, the intersections of race and gender moderate the experience of celebrity, further working to sexualize and age them.

4.0 Magazine Representation

In the following section, I detail my archival research with girls' magazines. Magazines are an important historic site of the representation of children; they are a means of marketing the idealized childhood to kids as an example and standard to follow. Child celebrities are often the children represented in these magazines, and their representations are highly policed to fit standards of idealized childhoods formed on white, cisgender, heterosexual, and patriarchal values. With the rise and establishment of "girlhood" as a consumer category in the 1940s, girl's magazines grew in popularity. The beginning of publications of Girl's magazines began in the 1940s, with magazines such as *Calling All Girls* in 1941 published under the *Parents'* magazine label.

Calling All Girls was one of the first magazines aimed for an audience of girl children, together with *Seventeen Magazine*. The start and rise in magazines such as these coincide with the shifting cultures of categorizing children as a subgroup. Magazines were a strategic intersection of catering to this new youth-oriented consumer culture, as they sold an image and a type of girl, but did so through widespread accessibility so that their voice becomes the resounding national ideal. Selling culture and identity while also selling products on the same page allows the confluence of the two to take shape in the consumer's minds. Readers become conditioned to associate products that are being advertised on the page with the other content about being the ideal girl or having the best hair or most friends and internalize this through material culture. By marketing indirectly to young girls, producers are directly shaping the culture and identities of these girls. *Calling All Girls* does this same thing in a strategic branding manner; by naming their magazine calling *ALL* girls, they imply a broad intersectional

readership. However, looking at the products, people, and standardized images represented, *All* narrows to “all who fit the ideal mold”. This further works to reinscribe notions of who the magazine is meant for and who their target audience is; if you as a reader do not fit those standards, try the products advertised until you fit the mold of the ideal reader. Magazines curated their ideal demographic by showing girls in the 1940s how to interpret stories about other (well-known) girls; this process was informed by the clear model delineated by the rise in movie/celebrity culture taking place in the 1930s.

Early themes represented in girls’ magazines depict how to be the “ideal girl” by teaching etiquette, dressing for your body, and making friends. There are a number of comics depicting girls in historical contexts, such comic biographies on special heroic figures. Additionally, there are sections that highlight girls in the news and on film. Across this genre, however, some changes were noted over time in the types of sexual themes on which advice was given.

In my work with these magazines in the archives and special collections at the University of Pittsburgh, I was compelled to track the evolution of *Calling All Girls* due to its connections and ties to *Teen Vogue*, a contemporary youth magazine. Over the course of its publication, *Calling All Girls* underwent a number of iterations in terms of branding and name changes from *Polly Pigtales*, *Young Miss*, to *YM* before ceasing publication and then subsequently filtered readers into *Teen Vogue*. This was done by giving all the subscribers of *YM* a subscription to *Teen Vogue*, which was in its second year of publication in 2004. I do this to understand the contexts in which the magazine is addressing and influencing its readers. Following this thread of connection that ties a publication from the 1940s to one currently being printed and is widely accepted as a popular youth publication allows a longer historical understanding of the marketing strategies and sociocultural underpinnings of child celebrity representation in this form of

popular media. I analyzed the magazine's formatting changes to detail the shifts in how individuals were represented on the covers and within the magazine to understand how this alters the meaning and perceptions for its readers.

Calling All Girls' first issue was published in September 1941. This issue features a portrait headshot and a speech bubble from the mouth of the cover star or model that says "Calling All Girls". This format was maintained until the July/August issue of 1944. The speech bubble is poignant in representing that the person on the cover seemed to be literally calling to all the girls. However, from September 1944 through September 1945, the issues' covers change with a shift to full torso pictures of the cover models, often depicted in an action shot. The magazine title is removed from being a speech bubble and is a more traditional text box at the top of the covers. The October/November 1945 through July 1946 issues show minimal changes for how the covers are formatted including removal of the box for the title, however, the pages of the magazine were printed in black and white instead of their usual color.

August 1946-October 1946 marked the start of physical differences in the magazine; it was prominently marketed as "The New, Bigger" *Calling All Girls* and was about an inch taller and half an inch wider than the previous format of the magazine. The first 3 months of this change retained the branding of "New, Bigger" until November 1946 and December 1946 where that distinction was removed. During all this, the magazine continued to print in black and white. January 1947-August 1947 intermittently played with logo by having a ribbon strip with the magazine title running down the side of the January, February April, June, and July 1947 covers. In September 1947, the magazine rebranded once more, changing its title to *Calling All Girls: Tops with Teens*. These issues were a bigger size further, had a different cover style, and logo. This reference of the term "teenager" on the cover of the magazine and comes six years after the

very first use of the term in print.⁵⁵ The emergence of the teenager as a popular and public figure was the product of the growth of the high school and the emergence of a distinct teenage commercial market. The age at which teenagers attained full adult status in the 1930s-1950s was the early or mid-twenties as signified by entering the military, joining the workforce, or marrying and having children. "By 1936, more than half the nations seventeen-year-olds were high school students. By removing working-class youngsters from the labor force and making high school a largely universal experience, the Depression had inadvertently created teenagers as a common ubiquitous presence".⁵⁶ This gave "teen-years great significance both as a brief interlude before adulthood and as a crucial time of decision".⁵⁷ Viewing these age groups as being separate and distinct categories with a specific set of characteristics made marketing towards them a whole new industry. Soon, the child as a consumer was a large priority of those in the market.

Dominant groups create conventional social identity markers and marginalized identities develop in their negative space.⁵⁸ For instance, the concept of the "teenager" created an identity in the space between innocent childhood and the commitment of marriage and career.

The December 1947 cover was slightly different to this format as it was a four-paneled cover with illustrations of feminine figures. This cover is especially important to note in its similarities to more contemporary girls and fan magazines and their multi-skilled cover format, especially those from the 1990's and 2000's. The January 1948 shifts back to September to November 1947 cover style. This cover format continues until September 1949 issue.

In October 1949 the magazine changed its marketing name to *Calling All Girls: Senior Prom*. This change also comes with a shift in content, from a picture heavy content spread to a higher resolution glossy page magazine format akin to contemporary magazines. From 1953-1955 the magazine changed to *Polly Pigtales*. This brand change was one that was more difficult

to track due to the existence of *Polly Pigtales* as a separate publication that ran during this time period. Additionally, the shift back to *Calling All Girls* branding is one with few archival documentations. Despite conflicting records on the exact date, this change took place between 1955 and 1956; the magazine underwent a complete rebranding by changing significant features such as format from magazine to digest size, content from features and photos to stories, and cover design from photos of young models and celebrities to illustrations by Freeman Elliott. In the shift from the magazine from features to text and prose there were fewer instances of representation of celebrities, so fewer changes for them to connect with fans through this medium as compared to earlier.

I find the cover design change to include artwork by Freeman Elliott incredibly salient, and in the following section, I analyze this in further detail. Elliott is most renowned for his cheesecake, also known as pin-up girl, art. For the covers he has illustrated, he is credited in bold letters in the first few pages. Regardless, his style is distinct and recognizable, especially when comparing the *Calling All Girls* covers to his various pin-up art, and not just in illustration technique, but also in the poses and positioning of the girls. In *Girls and Their Comics: Finding a Female Voice in Comic Book Narrative*, Jaqueline Russell quotes Max Allan Collins's description of Elliott's typical subject matter.⁶⁰ She writes, "Elliot's girls were gorgeous, impossibly long stemmed creatures, often involved in whimsically compromising situations [...]it is not hard to imagine that Elliot's talent was more attuned to drawing racy pin-up art than the covers for a pre-teen girls' magazine."⁶² The representation of girls' bodies in this manner plays a key role in identity formation. As children are often experimenting with various social identities, "this plasticity may make them especially susceptible to the messages society conveys, particularly when marketers link popularity and social acceptance to their products. Thus,

sexualized messages and products may be more easily accepted during this developmental stage.”⁶³

While many appear to be doing mundane tasks, a staggering number of the covers have the girls contorted or posed in a sexualized manner. Of the 31 issues housed in the University of Pittsburgh’s Nesbitt Collection in the Archives, 21 are covers with the girls in a pin-up adjacent position, or at least kneeling, bending, or crouching over positions that resemble a classic pin-up pose (Figs 1-5). In the May 1959 cover, the illustration depicts a girl kneeling inside a dog house, holding a phallic-looking vacuum cleaner handle (Fig 1). Her face is stylized to appear much older than one of a young girl. The October 1960 cover features a girl in a tiger Halloween costume, however the positioning of her body with her bottom and chest protruded, almost comically, mimic the traditional pin-up pose. She is also holding out the tail of her costume, and further brings attention to her bottom area. A number of covers including April 1959, May 1960, March 1963 show the girl dramatically bent over. Not only in their positioning, but over time Elliott ages the girls bodies and faces to a degree where it is hard to tell that they are children being represented; the September 1958 cover well illustrates this. Russell goes on to say about Elliott’s work, "It seems that though Elliot may have been a versatile artist who could be hired to create mainstream art as well as erotica, a little of the pin-up artist peeps thought in these covers for *Calling All Girls*. There is no doubt as to their sexualization of the young female, as low-key as it may seem at first glance.”⁶⁴

Overall, the publication’s digest form has fewer images and visual markers of idyllic girlhood (as decided by those in power at *Calling All Girls*, as well as *Parents’* magazine) through pictures, features, and advertisements. With Elliott’s illustrated covers, the reduced



Figure 1: *Calling All Girls*, May 1959⁶⁵



Figure 2: (Left) Freeman Elliott, undated,⁶⁶ (Right) *Calling All Girls*, October 1960⁶⁷



Figure 3: (Left) Freeman Elliott, undated⁶⁸ (Right) *Calling All Girls*, May 1960⁶⁹



Figure 4: (Left) Freeman Elliott, September 1949⁷⁰ (Right) *Calling All Girls*, October 1957



Figure 5: (Left) Freeman Elliot, undated⁷¹ (Right) *Calling All Girls*, September 1958⁷²

number of sexualized images within the digest are offset by the powerful statement that implies sexualized levels of worth for girls. Potentially positive developments in the change from a magazine to digest—specifically its reading heavy format to promote literacy and appreciation for story reading in its 12-14-year-old demographic—are undercut with the subconscious imagery depicting girls this age as stylized and directly comparable to pin-up models. The media’s portrayal of girls and women as sexual beings plays into shaping and perpetuating the normalization of forms of the sexualization of youth. These portrayals in the media are not only informed by societal trends, dominant power structures, and historical legacies, but they also work to reinforce and propagate existing ones by reflecting them.

Cultures and attitudes on the sexualization of children in the United States were reaching a turning point at the time of this change. In the 1950s there was a spike in marriage rates as well as a significant decrease in the age of individuals who got married.⁷³ As young people were getting married earlier, they were thus “acceptably” engaging in sexual activity earlier; the

images in *Calling All Girls* add to the sexualized narratives that girls receive from an early age and work to perpetuate cycles of early maturing. The digest form of the magazine, with Elliott mostly illustrating the covers, ran from 1955-1964. Additionally, Elliott's illustrations meant that there were no longer images of real girls on the covers, giving *Calling All Girls* the power to literally create their ideal version of a girl to put on their covers. Employing Freeman Elliot is poignant in his role in defining notions of the "ideal girl" and how expectations of her are structured in sexualized contexts. Keeping in mind the context of his pin-up art, Elliot's illustrations further inundate children with sexualized imagery—this time, in representations of themselves.

Other themes in common girls' magazines in the mid-1970s were broad issues such as sexual trends, infidelity, pregnancy and abortion, sexually transmitted diseases, and more. Detailed performance-related issues such as dating behavior, handling problematic relationships, ending a relationship and dealing with a break-up were also prominent. By the mid-1980s, the issues of a decade earlier were still covered, but there was more open advice about sexual performance and the nature of male and female sexuality. By the mid-1990s, themes such as being a virgin and whether this made a difference to a guy, taboo sexual relations, sexual orientation, sexual addiction, and sexual abuse, and methods for enhancing male and female sexual performance became more prominent.⁷⁴

Calling All Girls followed similar thematic formats. After Elliott's time as cover illustrator, the digest form of the magazine continued but with a range of illustrators and real photographs of girls on the covers until 1966. In November 1966, the magazine switched again and ran until 1986, titled *Young Miss*. In March of 1986, it changed to *YM Magazine* and ran as such until December 2004-January 2005 issue. This was the last issue as the company ceased

publication of *YM*. However, all the subscribers of this magazine were given a subscription to *Teen Vogue*, which began publication in 2003. Even today, when you try to go to the *YM* website, you are rerouted to the *Teen Vogue* Homepage. The fact that *Teen Vogue* was partly established from their foundation of evolution from etiquette magazines is salient as it—and other key texts that feature young women and girls through the framework of fashion, identity, and gender—is part of the contemporary focus of my study. Thus, there is a more or less direct line tying the current publication of *Teen Vogue* to the 1941 publication of *Calling All Girls*. I find the ability to track this lineage incredibly salient in the analysis of the evolution of popular media, and further, the evolution of identity formation as being influenced by media representations.

5.0 Representation, Self-Representation, and Self-Branding

In this section, I detail the impacts of media representation as they pertain to the formation of self-concepts and identities to further demonstrate the ways in which children's bodies in the media hold so much power, and why it is crucial to be critical of how representation is formed. Seeing diversity in the public sphere is incredibly important for the acceptance and development of healthy attitudes in society about living and interacting with a diverse population, as well as fostering healthy attitudes about oneself for those who are part of the underrepresented and marginalized groups. Author bell hooks discusses the importance and impact of representation of Black people in the media: “black female representation in the media determines how blackness and people are seen and how other groups will respond to us based on their relation to these constructed images.”⁷⁵ Furthering hooks' discussion of representation, scholar Shawna Hudson writes, “these stereotypes simultaneously reflect and distort both the ways in which black women view themselves (individually and collectively) and the ways in which they are viewed by others”.⁷⁶

Given this background, it can be understood that representation helps form and shape identities and self-identities, i.e how individuals themselves view their identities. For instance, after the creation of the “teenager”, the experiences of “teens” became a major identity category and marker of how people in this age range were perceived. Prout cites James's work in his book *Bodies, Childhood, and Society* of how children enact agency in forming self-identities. James' research shows how bodily differences have been employed to create ‘the child’ as an othered category in Western Cultures and how deviations from cultural stereotypes can create anxiety as experiences of the body (especially bodily differences) function as important signifiers

for social identity. These physical aspects act as a flexible and shifting resource for children's interactions and emergent identities and relationships.⁷⁷ However, while stereotypes have a role in how self-identities are formed, children do employ a level of agency in that, according to Prout, they:

do not passively absorb them. Rather, they actively apprehended and used them in experiencing their own body, but also its relationship to other bodies and the meaning that was forged from these encounters. They do this as they have to come to terms with their constantly changing bodies, but also as they negotiate the changing institutional contexts within which meaning is given to these changes.⁷⁸

Connecting back to my contemporary media research, this examines the strategic marketing that celebrities enact through self-branding in terms of selling products as well as selling their multi-faceted identities. Additionally, the normalization of the variance of bodies, cultures, and experiences is crucial, as experiencing diversity in all facets of existence, even their more mundane actions and social interactions with each other, is how children develop a consciousness of the self. And, for those whose bodies differ from the norm, there is the potential for an emerging acute self-consciousness.⁷⁹

Understanding the importance of representation in the media is key as a foundational concept to think about my specific research area of self-representation. Self-representation allows the individuals being represented to control and determine the narratives about them. This is different from representation due to the fact that the agencies and voices are those of the ones being shown. Self-representation is both a political and a cultural matter.⁸⁰

According to scholar Nancy Thumim, the term "self-representation" is regularly used to refer to activities of participating audiences in digital culture, alongside other, related, terms like "performance of self" and "presentation of self" and, most recently, "self-revelation". They suggest that the term "self-representation" should be considered as distinct from notions of either

“presentation or performance of self”. Self-representation and the concept of representation do not replace performance or presentation. Performances of self, presentations of self, and self-representations coexist; and, of course, all are subject to processes of mediation.

The concept of self-representation is a more explicitly political claim than representation. This is because the term itself contains a challenge to the idea that it is the job of one set of people to represent another set of people. This challenge is present in the implicit (and sometimes explicit) claim that in self-representation, people are “doing it for themselves.”⁸¹ In media cultures where representation may not fully or appropriately capture the groups, such as tokenized forms of representation, self-representation can be used as a reaction formation to the negative or inaccurate forms of representation.

Thus, navigating this line between representing oneself and being represented, self-representation can be used as a tool to reclaim the narratives and portray experiences. This is salient in my research for those who have reduced or erased experiences of childhood. In these cases, self-representation offers a level of agency in portraying themselves through a strategic and specific manner. Thumim cites Eva Illouz’s research that suggests that individual emotional experience is fundamental to any kind of modern self-representation. She discusses the concept and discourse of self-representation as containing a valorization of experience, which has a therapeutic function and at the same time, invokes the possibility of material political outcomes. Thus, the very words ‘idea’ and ‘practice’ of self-representation hold together two (uncomfortably different) discourses—that is, to say therapy, with its emphasis on the individual, personal and even private development, and democracy, in which the aggregation of individuals as the collective public is privileged.⁸²

In relating this to experiences of child celebrities, especially child celebrities of marginalized backgrounds, self-representation is a key aspect in their overall branding as a celebrity. Controlling narratives and the branding of themselves in the media requires navigating various levels of power in the industry. Thus, self-branding, in a similar way and aided by self-representation in this sense, has evolved over time to allow celebrities significantly more agency in controlling narratives about themselves in the media. In the following sections, I make the claim that this evolution in methods of self-branding and self-representation allows diverse child celebrities to better represent themselves, and in turn, create a broader scope of representation of diverse bodies.

Self-branding also works to allow celebrities to make use of the platform and the audience they have. The elevated platform that celebrities have due to their fan base and a wide audience is extremely pervasive and effective in communicating messages and addressing numerous issues. Child celebrities have long been using their outlets as a means to showcase their voice and influence to discuss social and political issues. For instance, in girls' magazines, stars were given the ability to write pieces addressing their fans about necessary topics.⁸³ With the evolution of social media platforms as well as a push for society in this current social and political economy to be more socially and politically engaged, celebrities are expected to use their platforms to be outspoken on issues.⁸⁴ Although the modes of doing so have evolved, the phenomenon of using children to spread narratives, or them doing so on their own behalf, has been constant. Through the history of popular media, I compare girls' magazines and *Instagram* as sites of self-representation.

6.0 Contemporary Digital Representation

The historical and theoretical questions that I have explored thus far bring me to follow the lineage of mid-twentieth century girls' magazines. Tracking contemporary representation has led to studying social media as a key outlet. *Teen Vogue* has a large online and social media presence and the celebrities represented in the publication also have curated social media presences. For my analysis, I look at social media, specifically *Instagram*, as it plays a crucial role in the representation of celebrities as well as the everyday person. Nancy Thumim discusses the importance of studying social media for its effects on self-representation as well as the overall need to critically study applications that are accessible and may be taken for granted through the example of research with Facebook, she says:

When we look at self-representation in the social networking site Facebook, I suggest there are also tensions surrounding the purposes of the self-representation. In this case, the construction of a self-representation is a necessary, and unavoidable, aspect of taking part in social networking sites. Thus self-representation is inadvertent [...] Moreover, because it is an everyday aspect of participation, it is also banal.⁸⁵

As detailed in section three, social media blurs the lines of separation between celebrity and fan. With its founding in 2011, *Instagram* provides another, more refined, outlet through which celebrities have a free and direct platform to interact and post content directly to their fans.

These new media technologies and outlets allow a more personally curated mode of self-representation of youth celebrities. Recent social media platforms like *Instagram* have largely changed the way child celebrities are able to self-represent themselves, even within the confines of the industry or studio. While agencies may have increased over time with the advancements of social media, studio and production control of actor's bodies and lifestyles from the 1930's can be paralleled to the 2010's.

In the early 2000's networks and studios like Disney Channel maintained strict control of actors' looks, branding, and actions. Television was a main mode of celebrity representation through interviews, etc. However, like magazines, these forms of self-representation went through channels of authority and are subject to heavy scrutiny. Additionally, tabloid culture had a large role in controlling the narratives that came from TV interviews. An example of child celebrity working for accurate self-representation in this cultural moment is the case of Miley Cyrus. Cyrus attained child stardom in 2006, right at the end of celebrity culture without social media. Her forms of self-representation were limited to TV appearances and magazines, so she struggled to represent herself to her fans outside of the confines of Disney's studio. She faced much backlash in her multiple attempts to rebrand, one of the most notable was her first break away from the Disney studio manufactured teen idol image in 2010 with her album 'Can't Be Tamed'. This shift in self-branding was largely aided by social media, especially *Instagram*, which was founded in 2010, though which she was able to post and control her image with more agency.

In the 2010's, media outlets like social media platforms such as *Instagram* are well established social and cultural tools that allow celebrities to directly post in channels that are directly accessible to the consumers and fans. While they are still largely policed by the networks studios, and team-run socials, social media platforms allow child celebrities to have more direct control of their personal self-branding and narratives in a way that is unique to this pop cultural moment. An example of a child celebrity navigating this is Rowan Blanchard. She also began on the Disney channel, but branded herself as more intersectional in interest and career path through outreach and activism on social media.⁸⁶ She navigated a multifaceted celebrity identity, much like many other Disney stars of this time, as opposed to a boxed in studio figure like Garland or Cyrus. While Cyrus and Blanchard could be considered contemporaries, their youths are viewed

as existing in two different generational periods that are highly delineated by the presence of social media. Thus, the initial child star self-branding experiences of Miley Cyrus can be paralleled to the experiences of Judy Garland in the way that is different from the experiences of Rowan Blanchard. However, this increased agency does not shield celebrities from the impacts of living in the public eye and having content that is widely accessible. The instance of Millie Bobby Brown's meme-turned-scandal, is a good example of a negative of increased consumer accessibility due to the ability of audiences to spin stories about the celebrities and be victim of tabloid and false journalism.⁸⁷

Of course, while this is a shift from magazines, which go through many systems of power (such as studio reps for the celebrities, magazine content writers, and editors, etc.) before they get to print and publication, contemporary celebrities are still policed on numerous levels about what they can post. This can be done on various levels including studio or network contractual ties about branding and image, deals and stipulations with agents that dictate a level of media façade, internalized self-policing of bodies and presentation, especially if the celebrity is from a minoritized group. Further, *Instagram* itself has a number of regulations and community guidelines in terms of what individuals are able to post and as well as the ability for people to flag and report posts.⁸⁸ This general scrutiny in terms of content that is accessible adds to the channels of power and restrictions on completely self-representation on the terms of the individual.

The impact of *Instagram* as a medium of representation is also important to note. In *Understanding Media*, Marshal McLuhan discusses how the medium is the message; the impact of the medium, the way it reshapes our lives and our brains, is more impactful than the content of individual uses. Thus, the vehicle or medium for the content plays an important

role in the perceptions of the message.⁸⁹ The nature of *Instagram* content's presentation works to reinscribe ideals of intimacy and accessibility of celebrity lives. This normalizes what is posted; when diversity is posted, it is internalized and normalized as being part of every day life by virtue of seeing it on the platform. In this way, the medium becomes the message.

Contemporarily, perhaps from a push of modern social justice ideals, young people are getting involved in social movements in a more prominent manner. They are being held accountable by members of their fan base to use their platform for a purpose other than self-serving career orientations. Young people getting involved in politics and social movements saw the rise and marked shift in the content of *Teen Vogue*. Post the 2016 US election, *Teen Vogue* published a piece entitled "Donald Trump is Gaslighting America" talking about ways in which its readership can get involved and learn more about politics.⁹¹ This sparked massive commentary on the involvement of young people in such movements. However, the involvement of young people, especially young people from minoritized groups, is not a new phenomenon. History has seen children at the forefront of political movements, from Little Rock Nine, the Birmingham Children's March, child labor activists, to current gun control activists from Stoneman Douglas High School. Although activism has remained constant, the ability of the child activists (who often are or become celebrities) to represent themselves to wider audiences has changed with developments in technology. Social media, specifically *Instagram* as a tool for self-representation, is a large part of celebrity self-branding. It allows more direct interaction with audiences as well as affords more agency to the celebrity who is able to directly control the narrative of their profile.

To explore the imbrication of child celebrity self-representation and *Instagram's* role in affording agency, I studied the accounts of a variety of child celebrities. I analyzed *Instagram*, as

a particularly salient form of social media that serves as a powerful tool in self-branding, through which public figures are able to have a direct and personalized platform. The ideals of closeness and intimacy that fans seem to have with young celebrities through social media play into the marketability of products and the ways that these young public figures become consumerist vehicles, where brands will capitalize on the influence that these ideals of closeness garner. This “corrupts” the ideals of intimacy between fans and the celebrity as they are faced with the realization that this is the celebrity’s occupation and that they are not actually friends. This creation of the self into an object to be used to sell and to be sold is complicated in terms of agency. There are considerations of the celebrity wanting to curate a brand while still navigating the uphill slope to get to a level of celebrity status wherein they can solely cultivate that image on their own terms. In other words, creating a celebrity persona that is uniquely and purposefully themselves while still working in a system that valued their commodification. Thus, I argue that the evolution of media has afforded more agency to celebrities in controlling or having a direct say in the narratives of their representation, which in turn leads to a better process of self formation based on media representation for consumers as compared to child celebrities and their representation in the past. And further, this positively impacts the fans and consumers of their media as they are exposed to a more multifaceted and diverse representation of youth celebrities. In doing this, I understand that *Instagram* as a platform is not a representational utopia in which individuals with marginalized identities can self-represent themselves and self-brand themselves outside of the capital pressures of maintaining a consumer market off their content. Often, social media platforms tokenize representations of diversity in ways that reinscribe hierarchical systems of classism and racism, but this does not negate the value in seeing diverse bodies and experiences on mainstream platforms of popular media.

The child celebrities I chose to analyze range from artists, actors, models, and activists; many transcend one singular career label. I analyzed and coded their *Instagram* profiles, specifically focusing on the six months of posts from January 2018 to June 2018. In this reading of the profiles, I noticed the larger themes of fashion/photo shoots, socio-political messaging, personal content, and professional content.⁹² Once more posts within these larger themes began appearing in patterns, I further coded the categories; my categories of analysis included: professional photo shoots, advertising fashion by wearing and being photographed in it, social/political calls to action, social/political consciousness-raising, selfies⁹³, personal posts about family/friends/pets, professional posts to advertise or sell a product, professional posts to advertise or promote their career, posts about their cultural background, posts about their personal identities and/or sexualities, posts about milestones/honors/awards, and appreciatory posts about other professionals. I operationalized these categories as I began to fill them with coded posts; the operationalizations are as follows:

1. Professional photo shoots: posts with photos taken by professional or hired photographers for the purpose of being featured in a publication, photographers and/or publications are credited.
2. Advertised fashion: posts with photos of brands and fashions being worn by the celebrity but not for publication, brands, and designers are credited.
3. Social/political call to action: post with information on how to become involved in a social or political movement, and encouraging followers to do so.
4. Social/political consciousness-raising: posts for general information about social or political issues, to draw attention and raise awareness about them to their fan base.

5. Personal (selfie): posts of photos taken by the person featured in the picture; the person being photographed is also the photographer.
6. Personal (family, friends, pets): posts appreciating, celebrating, and tagging people in their lives.
7. Product promotion: posts advertising sponsored products or brands, tagging and in partnership with the brands.
8. Career promotion: posts advertising and promoting their career
9. Identity (culture/heritage): posts about their cultural identities, i.e. experiences, customs, traditions that are tied specifically to their cultural identity.
10. Identity (sexual/personal): posts about their sexual orientations, expressions, identities, etc., specifically addressing topics about them.
11. Milestones: posts about personal or career honors, awards, or distinctions.
12. Appreciation: posts appreciating or crediting peers, colleagues, or role models for their work.

Some of the trends I noticed in this examination were that celebrities with a more stable fan base and source of income, like Olivia Holt and Yara Shahidi, were more likely to post about social/political issues (Table 1). Celebrities whose fame is more dependent on social media fame are often more personal in their posts; for instance, model Chella Man posts heavily about his cultural, sexual, and gender identity as his modelling career gained traction due to his rising social media recognition. Individuals who have a longer personal history with being misrepresented or not being represented in the media have a higher percentage of selfies posted. That is, celebrities like Aaron Phillips and Chella Man, whose identities encompass marginalized race, gender, and ability post more pictures that they take of themselves. Additionally, I noticed

that white celebrities, as well as more widely-accepted celebrities, post fewer times on *Instagram* than those who use it as a professional tool as well as one of self-expression.

Thus, tracking the evolution of agency of child celebrities from representation to self-representation has shown that with increased agency and control of the narratives portrayed about them in popular media, they are able to more positively impact identity formation in their audiences through the portrayal of diverse and accessibly intersectional individuals—especially compared to historical instances of child celebrity representation.

Table 1:

Name	Age	Occupation	race/ethnicity	lgbtqioa++	total posts	Professional Photoshoots	Advertising products through "personal" use	Political Call to Action
Chella Man	19	Model/ Student	Chinese/Jewish	Trans	237	9.29	2.11	1.26
Olivia Holt	21	Actress	White	Het	69	5.78	11.59	1.45
Yara Shahidi	18	Actress	Black/ Iranian	Het	276	11.23	17.39	4.35
Aaron Phillip	18	Model	Black	Trans NB	102	17.65	6.86	0.98
Zendaya	22	Actress	Black	het	64	9.38	31.25	3.13
Skai Jackson	16	Actress	Black	het	95	5.26	18.95	5.26
Rowan Blanchard	17	Actress	Mixed	queer	130	12.3	16.15	4.62
Amandla Sternberg	20	Actress	Black	queer	70	85.71	7.14	4.29
Jazz Jennings	18	Author/Activist	White/Jewish	trans	71	0	4.22	1.41

Table 2

Name	Political General Awareness Spreading	Selfie	Friends/Family	Work: selling products	Advertising for work/promo	id politics culture race ethnicity	personal identity lgbtqia	Honors/Awards	Bio/personal info	Appreciation of art/crediting
Chella Man	5.06	10.13	10.55	2.95	14.77	5.06	12.66	0.84	1.27	2.53
Olivia Holt	4.35	10.14	24.64	2.9	40.58	1.45	0	0	0	2.9
Yara Shahidi	7.61	6.52	13.77	2.9	17.03	4.35	0.36	0	0	11.96
Aaron Phillip	2.94	43.14	4.9	0.98	15.69	0.98	11.76	4.9	0	7.84
Zendaya	9.38	15.63	23.44	6.25	12.5	4.69	0	0	0	4.69
Skai Jackson	13.68	11.58	13.68	0	11.58	10.53	1.05	5.26	0	10.52
Rowan Blanchard	13.85	13.08	13.85	0	8.46	0	6.15	0	0	25.38
Amandla Sternberg	8.58	14.29	1.42	2.86	8.57	10	8.57	1.42	0	5.71
Jazz Jennings	8.45	19.72	28.17	5.63	23.94	0	12.68	9.89	0	4.22

The posting breakdown of current child celebrities also serves as an example of how various moderators to childhoods function in terms of how they self-represent and self-brand themselves on *Instagram*. The ability to post more or fewer times about current projects, identity politics, sponsorships, and general friends and family reflect who is able to present as a child on this platform. This research points to trends in balancing the politics of marginalized individuals having to give up their creative autonomy to support themselves and their craft and holding them in positions of power in their ability to impact meaningful forms of visibility for their audiences. Additionally, it allows us to think more critically about who is being targeted by consumerist and sponsored content instead of diverse representational content. This model of contemporary documentation reminds us that there is power in agency and representation and while progress (especially in terms of this research) is non-linear, I look to a future with a greater level normalized intersectional diversity in popular media.

7.0 Coda

To conclude my paper, I turn to the foundational theoretical texts of Michel Foucault. I use his framework, as well as the growing body of research based off of his research, as a starting point from which I continue my analysis. In my research on agencies in self-representation of diverse and queered bodies in the media, I draw and weave in a foundational understanding of Foucauldian feminism in concepts such as policing oneself and one's body and internalizing the surveillance of hierarchical systems of power. In order to make these connections clear, I will detail the lineage of scholarship that has allowed me to arrive at them.

Foucault's introduction of the Panopticon in his foundational text, *Discipline and Punish*, has opened pathways of discussion of its theories in a number of disciplines and fields of study. Foucault's book specifically details the disciplining of docile bodies, and the concept of the body as an object and target of power.⁹⁴ Foucault draws his analysis from Jeremy Bentham's model of the Panopticon prison system in which inmates' cells are arranged around a central guard tower, such that the inmates do not know when they are being watched, creating an omnipresent guard.⁹⁶ Foucault uses this concept to theorize the dynamics between power, surveillance, and the control of bodies. He writes, "power has its principle not so much in a person as in an arrangement whose internal mechanisms produce the relation in which individuals are caught up."⁹⁷ That is, the effectiveness of the Panopticon does not lie solely with the individual with power, but the arrangements of relations of power. Societal pressures and institutionalized constructs of power are a large factor in the perpetuation of individuals who control them. Systems of institutionalized racism, sexism, classism, and ableism play a role in the policing of young celebrities' social media presence. The influences of the power dynamics between the

observers and the observed (surveillors and the surveyed), and the types of control that specific bodies are subjected to, span across disciplines. While Foucault was describing the male body as a subject of the penal system in the original text, he goes on to describe the transcendence of these theories and their ability to apply in a vast number of settings. He writes:

One can speak of the formation of a disciplinary society in this movement that stretches from the enclosed disciplines to an indefinitely generalizable mechanism of 'panopticism' [...] because it has infiltrated the others, and making it possible to bring the effects of power to the most minute and distant elements.⁹⁸

His argument shows that this framework of thinking was created to be able to transcend and apply to a number of field and ways of thinking.

One such area of study in which Foucauldian principles are drawn upon to serve as a basis for specific analysis is Foucauldian feminism. Davina Cooper explores the way power is reconceptualized within this branch of feminism as Foucault's definition of power as a relation between forces resonated for feminists concerned with the pluralistic and over determined nature of inequality. She highlights that she aims to study the ways in which the Foucauldian framework has been taken up within a particular feminist intellectual community.⁹⁹ For instance, she draws parallels to the way Foucault references power as something to be exercised and not possessed; she writes, "Within a Foucauldian feminist analysis, the exercise of power is largely self-perpetuating; the agents of power, to the extent that they exist, are much caught within the system as everyone else[...] within a framework which perceives the ontology of power as productive, escape from power is practically impossible."¹⁰⁰

The wide-scale generalizability of Foucault's theories of power balance in the control of bodies, as shown in their adaptation in feminist theory scholarship, is the reason why many theorists use Foucauldian texts as a base for further expansion application in their own writings in various different fields, such as gender studies, psychology, sociology, media studies, etc. In

this way, I used these concepts in my paper as they relate to the policing of children's bodies, and the various levels of surveillance of intersectionally marginalized people. Queer children are caught in a system of discipline and punishment so much so that their very existences are often rendered negligible. Self-representation is thus also founded upon concepts of self-policing under the dominant societal gaze as it influences what people feel free to post and share about themselves. Not only are people molded and read by their audiences by what direct authorities and chains of power allow, but their perceptions are also influenced by factors of self-policing and internalization of the rules of acceptability. Keeping this in mind allows us to understand the radical work that queer child celebrities of color do by posting about their lives, and doing this confidently, vulnerably, honestly, and unapologetically.

Thomas Mathisen is another scholar who used the panoptic model and its theories as a foundation for his research. His work further exemplifies the ripple effect of scholars building and adding from a base theory to tie them into more specific nuanced areas of interest. In his text, *The Viewer Society*, he sets a foundation for flipping systems of surveillance—a foundation that is crucial in relating child celebrity experience to this theory. He understood that the Panopticon was not only a new form of prison and writes that it also served as, "a new type of society was implied in the transformation, from the situation where many see the few to the situation where the few see the many."¹⁰¹ He coined the term 'Synopticon', as a play on the Panopticon, to describe situations in which the politics of surveillance are flipped from the few seeing the many, to the many seeing the few.¹⁰² Mathisen's synoptic model can be used to critique how celebrities face surveillance, especially in modern media. Mass media structures capitalize on the ideals of control through the self-policing gaze that the Panopticon imposes. Mathieson suggests that we live in a 'viewer society', which is not just a society where only

the few watch the many (like the Panoptic model); it is simultaneously a mass media society where the many watch the few (the flipped, Synoptic model). To ground this concept in celebrity culture and representation, individuals in the public eye exist within a mediated society by which they are constantly implicitly and explicitly policed and surveyed.

From Mathisen's work, researcher Tegan Steane wrote about celebrity culture and the Synopticon and Panopticon phenomenon. "The Panopticon and the media structure are parallel in that they are potential means of power. Power is represented in individuals and groups who are represented in the mass media."¹⁰³ My research grows from the history of the body of scholarship as well as the negative space created by its gaps within it. Childhood, marginalized bodies, celebrity culture, and media culture are all predicated on hierarchical power systems. Positive representation and identity formation come from control of narratives surrounding these facets and are thus based on having the power within these systems. In having increased agency and power in controlling self-representation through *Instagram*, child celebrities are better able to curate positive representations of diversity and in turn have an effect of the identity formation of their audiences.

To conclude, I circle back to the example of Millie Bobby Brown, who unfortunately fit the archetypical mold for someone who was played by, as well as someone who played into, the media structural system. In the promotional materials for season three of *Stranger Things* that were released March 20th, the tag line for the season states "We're not kids anymore"; and yet, while the characters in the show may have grown up in these three years, the very nature of being a child celebrity, especially a girl child celebrity like Millie, ensures that from the very start of their foray into celebrity and media representation, she was never really allowed to be a kid in the first place.

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Notes

¹ A fictional show created by the Duffy Brothers about a group of young friends meeting a girl with special powers and dark history of abuse.

² When an individual's sense of gender identity corresponds to the biological sex they were assigned at birth.

⁴ Sharlene Hesse-Biber, *Feminist Research Practices: a Primer*, (Thousand Oaks, SAGE Publications, 2014) 287-288.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 130-132.

⁶ Individuals of Jewish or Irish descent at this time period often were othered in a racialized or ethnic way that I did not factor into my analysis of diversity in Photoplay. See David Roediger's *Wages of Whiteness* and Karen Brodtkin's *How Jews Became White Folks*.

⁷ Kate Eichorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism: Outrage in Order*, (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 2014), 53

⁸ *Ibid.*,30.

⁹ Robert Kozinets, *Netnography*, (Thousand Oaks, SAGE Publications, 2010), 119.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 132

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 132

¹³ As an interdisciplinary scholar, navigating the use of bias in my paper has been a process of balance. Unlike other research methods in fields such as psychology, where researcher objectivity is critical to upholding standards of reliability and validity of research, feminist

research methods exhibit a more explicitly included discussion of various biases a researcher may be afforded due to their standpoint and identities.

¹⁴ bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and representation*, (Boston, South End Press, 1992).

¹⁵ Not only was Brown scrutinized and sexualized by the media, but she was also criticized for her posts and held to a much higher standard than children are typically held in terms of, for instance, political activism and comments on sexual coercion.

¹⁶ Girlhood is inconsistently afforded and for unequal amounts of time to different types and groups of people; race and class are among the numerous moderating factors in the allowance of girlhood. For this reason, I maintain the language of girlhoods in the plural form to denote that there is no singular mode of living, enacting, and experiences it.

¹⁷ Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft*, (Cambridge, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

²¹ See Anita Harris, *All About the Girl: Culture, Power, Identity*, (New York, Routledge, 2004)

²² However, I also acknowledge that not all children and people fit into the gender binary. This added intersection of identity lends itself to various other experiences of childhood. Additionally, people who may be categorized as girls may not themselves identify that way. These queer and trans forms of childhood will be discussed in following sections of my paper.

²³ Prout, 105.

²⁴ Ibid., 10.

²⁵ Ibid., 41.

²⁶ Katheryn Bond Stockton, *The Queer Child, or Growing Up Sideways in the Twentieth Century*, (Durham, Duke University Press, 2009), 63.

²⁷ See Rebecca Epstein, *Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls' Childhood*, (Washington DC, Georgetown Law, 2017). for more on the Adultification process for girls.

²⁸ Meenakshi Gigi Durham, *The Lolita Effect: the Media Sexualization of Young Girls and What We Can Do About It*, (New York, Overlook Press, 2008), 63

²⁹ Ibid., 203.

³⁰ Barrie Gunter, *Media and the Sexualization of Childhood*, (London, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014), 27.

³¹ In my analysis, I understand early maturation as a level delineated by a stray from the societally accepted norm for average experiences of a child. These standards are defined by those who occupy spaces within dominant hegemonic categories, i.e. white, middle-upper class, able-bodied, cisgender, heterosexual.

³² Eileen L. Zurbruggen, "APA task force report on the sexualization of girls: Empowering Girls," *PsycEXTRA Dataset* (2007):2 accessed February 20, 2019, doi:10.1037/e582772010-001.

³³ See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, (New York, Pantheon Books, 1977). In this, Foucault draws on Bentham's model of the Panopticon as a way to understand self-surveillance and the power dynamics in policing. I go back to this concept at the end of my paper to provide a theoretical basis for my analysis.

³⁴ See Melba Beals, *Warriors Don't Cry: A Searing Memoir of the Battle to Integrate Little Rock's Central High*, (New York, Pocket Books, 1994), and other examples of Black children's bodies being used by adults such as the Birmingham Children's March.

³⁵ Bond Stockton, *Growing Up Sideways*, 30.

³⁶ Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley, *Curiouser: on the Queerness of Children*, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 9.

³⁷ Thus far I have referenced her theories on childhood as being queered by money and by innocence. Using queerness as an umbrella concept for non-normativity is useful, but may contribute to the continued erasure of LGBTQIA experiences of childhood. While the broadening of the category of queerness to cover not only LGBTQIA+ identifying individuals is useful in the larger conceptualizing of the curiosity of childhood, there is something to be said about the importance of specific language to explain the experiences and erasures of individuals who experience a queerness of sexuality and identity. In the following section, I use the term queer to signify LGBTQIA+ sexualities and expressions as a reclamation of the identity without being subjected to forms of division and intracommunity identity politics

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 63.

³⁹ Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" *Signs* 5, no.4 (1980): 632

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴² Mintz, *Huck's Raft*.

⁴³ This, however, is not to minimize the importance of LGBTQ+ representation in the media. While visibility is a crucial and important part in forming self-identities of queer youth, representation alone cannot flip or convert sexual orientation.

⁴⁴Robert Owens, *Queer Kids: The Challenges and Promise for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Youth*, (New York, Hawthorn Press, 1998), 11

⁴⁵ Bond Stockton, 6.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 39.

⁴⁷ Eichorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism*, 53.

⁴⁸ Ibid.,10-11, 156.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 3-4.

⁵⁰ Mintz, 250-251.

⁵¹ *Modern Screen*, February, 1938. “Fan Magazines Collection”, Media History Project. www.mediahistoryproject.org/fanmagazines/ (accessed November 2018)

⁵² *Modern Screen*, January-December 1960.

⁵³ Garland, Judy. “An Open Letter from Judy Garland.” *Modern Screen*, November 1950.

⁵⁴ See Debra Merskin. “Reviving Lolita?: A Media Literacy Examination of Sexual Portrayals of Girls in Fashion Advertising.” *American Behavioral Scientist*. (2004) 48,1: 119–29.

⁵⁵Mintz, *Huck’s Raft*.

⁵⁶ However, while the word “universal” is used by Mintz here, it is key to note that these numbers are probably focused on white experiences.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 256, 253.

⁵⁸ Alan Prout, *The Body, Childhood, and Society*, (Basingstroke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 41.

⁶⁰ It is important to note the slight spelling differences in Elliott's name. The archival record on not only *Calling All Girl*, but Freeman Elliott is very sparse. Locating art and information has been a tedious process, in which no solid or complete record has been found thus far. The majority of art by Elliott that I have found has been his calendar work being auctioned at various vintage art sites. In the *Calling All Girls* credits, his name is spelled as Elliott. However, there have been other paintings and documentation of it being recorded as a number of alternative spellings.

⁶² Jacqueline Danziger-Russell, *Girls and Their Comics: Finding a Female Voice in Comic Book Narrative* (Maryland, Rowman & Littlefield, 2013) 27.

⁶³ APA Task Force, 20.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁶⁵ Freeman Elliott, *Calling All Girls*, May 1959.

⁶⁶ Freeman Elliott, *How Am I Doing*, <http://www.thepinupfiles.com/elliott.html> (Accessed April 15, 2019)

⁶⁷ Freeman Elliott, *Calling All Girls*, October 1960.

⁶⁸ Freeman Elliott, *Retro Pin-Up, Wearing Nothing But A Towel*, https://www.allposters.com/-sp/Retro-Pin-Up-Wearing-Nothing-but-a-Towel-Posters_i13439636_.htm?utm_medium=social (Accessed April 15, 2019)

⁶⁹ Freeman Elliott, *Calling All Girls*, May 1960.

⁷⁰ Freeman Elliott, *Anyone Can Do It.. It Says Here...*, <http://books0977.tumblr.com/image/37085898754> (accessed April 15, 2019)

⁷¹ Freeman Elliott, *Woman in Bikini On Blanket Held Down By Fruit*, <http://www.artnet.com/artists/freeman-elliott/woman-in-bikini-on-blanket-held-down-by-fruit-mpivet-Y1hldUW1t3oMWmw2>, (Accessed April 15, 2019).

⁷² Freeman Elliott, *Calling All Girls*, September 1958.

⁷³ Mintz, 253.

⁷⁴ Gunter, 90.

⁷⁵ hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation*.

⁷⁶ Shawna Hudson, Re-creational television: The paradox of change and continuity within stereotypical iconography, *Sociological Inquiry*, 68: 249, doi:[10.1111/j.1475-682X.1998.tb00464.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-682X.1998.tb00464.x)

⁷⁷ Prout, 8.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 27.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 27.

⁸⁰ I employ the distinction of Political vs. political that Chantalle Mouffe uses in their work as quoted by Nancy Thumim. political with a small 'p' refers to the political dimension that arguably shapes most, if not all, interactions in everyday life and Political with a capital 'P' are the institutions of democratic representation.

⁸¹ Ibid., 8.

⁸² Ibid.,9.

⁸³ Judy Garland, *Modern Screen*.

⁸⁴ There is an interesting dichotomy of what is expected of child celebrities: to not disrupt ideals of youthfulness by participating in activism and politics and to be matured at an early age as they are in a profession whose messages directly impact and reach large followings.

⁸⁵ Thumim, *Self-Representation*, 141.

⁸⁶ However, this line of analysis does not take into account celebrities with public relations teams dictating and having some say over their posted and curated content.

⁸⁷ See <https://www.vox.com/2018/6/14/17461458/millie-bobby-brown-homophobic-meme>

⁸⁸ Some of *Instagram's* post restrictions include “photos, videos, and some digitally-created content that show sexual intercourse, genitals, and close-ups of fully-nude buttocks. It also includes some photos of female nipples, but photos of post-mastectomy scarring and women actively breastfeeding are allowed. Nudity in photos of paintings and sculptures is OK, too.”

Instagram “Community Guidelines.” help.instagram.com.

<https://help.instagram.com/477434105621119> (accessed March 10, 2019)

⁸⁹ Marshal McLuhan, *Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man*, (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1964).

⁹¹ Duca, Lauren. “Donald Trump Is Gaslighting America.” *Teen Vogue*. <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/donald-trump-is-gaslighting-america> (accessed March 10, 2019).

⁹² It is crucial to note the effects of my biases as a researcher in my delineation of categories and coding data. Throughout the coding process, I continually revised and restructured my categories, in doing so, I tried to let the content shape the categories and not vice-versa. I also note that my reading of a specific post shifted as I saw other posts by a celebrity and that the context and overall identity of the celebrity also played a role in determined how posts were coded.

⁹³ See Jon Wargo, “Every selfie tells a story ...”: LGBTQ youth livestreams and new media narratives as connective identity texts, *SAGE Journals*, 19,4: 560-578, [/doi.org/10.1177/1461444815612447](https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444815612447)

⁹⁴ Foucault, 136.

⁹⁶ Jeremy Bentham, *The Works of Jeremy Bentham volume 4, published under the Superintendence of his Executor, John Bowring* (Edinburgh, William Tait, 1838-1843),

⁹⁷ Foucault, 202.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 216

⁹⁹ Davina Cooper, “Productive, Relational and Everywhere? Conceptualising Power and Resistance within Foucauldian Feminism.” *Sociology* 28, 2: 435–436. doi:[10.1177/0038038594028002005](https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038594028002005).

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 445.

¹⁰¹ Thomas Mathisen, “The Viewer Society” *Theoretical Criminology*, 28, 2: 217

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 219.

¹⁰³ Tegan Steane, “Is Surveillance Really That Bad” *Critical Reflections on Contemporary Society and Social Futures* (2016) 4: 15