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Domesticating the Disney Tween Machine

Norwegian Tweens Enacting Age and
Everyday Life

Thesis for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor

Trondheim, October 2014

Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Faculty of Humanities
Department of Interdisciplinary Studies of Culture



NTNU – Trondheim
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Preface

As everyone who has been through a similar process knows, writing a dissertation is not for the faint hearted. The long and winding road that led me to writing these final words was filled with uphill battles, but it was also filled with fun and excitement. There were some theoretical, analytical and personal detours along the way. But I think that every PhD takes the road less travelled: Impossible to say how far along the way we are, impossible to see where it might take us, and impossible to know where our baby will end up after we let it go. For in many ways, I consider the work you hold in your hands as a baby I have produced. I have lived with this work, with Disney and their tween media texts for some time now, and I feel quite comfortable in its presence. Letting go will be...well impossible to know as I have not yet done so. But I will.

This project initially started at the Norwegian Centre for Child Research (NOSEB) and finished at the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies of Culture (KULT). Along the way several people have influenced my work and my life. There are many who deserve thanks, more so than I can fit into this preface, however, I want to acknowledge some of them here.

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Trondheim, May 2014

Ingvild Kvale Sørenssen

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Chapter 1: What and why are tweens?

In recent years the term *tweens* has surfaced in various media and in academic works when dealing with preadolescent children. The term appears as an age-demarcation to refer to pre-teenage children who are approximately between the ages of eight and 12. This age group is seen as being in-between childhood and adolescence. The term is said to have originated from marketing efforts to create a separate market segment for this age group, as tweens are considered a lucrative segment worth pursuing. In the Fortune article (Boorstin & Wheat, 2003) “Disney's Tween Machine How the Disney Channel became must-see TV—and the company's unlikely cash cow”—not accidentally a namesake of this thesis—tweens are defined as “those sought-after consumers poised somewhere between little-kid-hood and adolescence” (par 2).

According to the Oxford English Dictionary online a tween is:

A person who is nearly, or has only just become a teenager. While the age to which tween applies varies, it is nearly always within the range of eight to fourteen years old. The term is now often used in Marketing or Broadcasting to describe a target market or audience. (Dictionary, 2012: par 1)

Tweens as a concept however, is not only used within the marketing realm. Several scholars have recently employed the term in studies that focus on children who are positioned in the space between younger childhood and adolescence. The term has also started to appear in the mainstream media, especially in materials about preadolescence and popular and consumer culture.

As this term is used in different arenas, a question to explore is: What are the characteristics of this group perceived to be? Can we indeed talk of a discreet age category, one that differs from children and teenagers? As this category originates from marketing perspectives, does it correspond with how children in the age group thought of being tweens experience their age? Are children in this age group merely residing in

the space between childhood and adolescence? How is this age group or category constructed?

This thesis concerns itself with the category of tweens from the perspective of a selected group of Norwegian children inhabiting the tween ages. In addition this thesis explores how the media texts *High School Musical* and *Hannah Montana*, produced by Disney Channel, and associated merchandise, were domesticated by children. The reason to focus on Disney came from the field work. After spending time with so-called tweens, Disney Channel and its tween franchises were often referred to. As both *Hannah Montana* and *High School Musical* in my field work were considered to be more girl oriented, the main focus will be on girls. In addition, focus is also on the girls' parents and how they dealt with the Disney tween franchises. Since Disney Channel produces media texts and associated merchandise explicitly for tweens, a focus in this thesis is how Disney constructs this age segment. Thus, in addition to exploring tweens from those thought to inhabit the category, I explore how Disney Channel as producer and as media texts configures tweens as well.

Who talks about tweens?

The origin of the term tweens is unclear—who coined the term and where and when it appeared the first time is uncertain. Cook and Kaiser (2004) point to *Marketing and Media Decisions* from 1987. However, the term tween was used earlier, although sporadic. For example, in 1938, *The Daily Times* had an advertisement for patterns on coat frocks for “tiny tots and those gay ‘tween teens’” (Martin, 1938:15). In 1942 *The Spartanburg Herald* write that “Tween age and teen age girls love the wool pigtails on this crocheted cap” (Wheeler, 1942:5). *The Pittsburgh Press* in 1950 had an advertisement for *Ranger Joe Popped Wheat* with the title “Speaks for ‘tween agers’” and used a 10-year old girl as a spokesperson for tweens, urging them to eat Ranger Joe Popped Wheat (Wheat, 1950:24). And in 1964 we read in *The New York Times* that “Tweens is a term used to describe sizes in pre-teen categories” (Sloane, 1964:49). In all, but one example, the term tweens was used to promote clothing. The commercial for the cereal in 1950 however used tween as a general age based category.

Tweens as a term seems to appear in isolated cases referring to children who are younger than teens but approaching the teen years. Segmenting the market and thus constructing new markets is thought to be a way to create revenue (Cook, 2004; Turow, 1997). As the Oxford English Dictionary states, this term is often used within marketing, but also broadcasting (Dictionary, 2012). In recent years we can see that television producers also operate with this logic, distinguishing children, teen, and later, toddler and tween market segments through programming form, content, and style, addressing each as distinctive (Kenway & Bullen, 2008). And as Alexander puts it: “audience fragmentation is the key to the new media environment for children” (2001:497).

In the past decade the term tweens turns up more regularly, and it is today evident not only in the marketing realm but has found its way into other cultural spaces as well (Bickford, 2011; Preston & White, 2004).

The term “tweens”, for example, a marketing term used to distinguish an audience segment, is now standard fare in the lexicon used to describe adolescents. That the logic of a marketing segment has become a routine descriptor for children tells us much about the success of branding in a media-saturated consumer society. (White & Preston, 2005:126)

Recently the term tweens seems to have trickled into the vocabulary of the mainstream media. As the term stems from the United States, and as this research is based in Norway, I will give some examples from the United States before reviewing how the term is used in the Norwegian context.

The inauguration of President Obama in 2009 serves as an example of how tweens as a concept was used in mainstream media in the United States. As a father of two daughters in their tween years, Malia and Sasha (at the time 10 and seven years old), tweens came into the White House. And with the tweens, Disney moved in as well. Barack Obama and his wife Michelle were shown dancing to Beyonce’s version of Etta James’ “At last” after he had been sworn in as president January 20th. However, the day before the White House hosted the *Kids’ Inaugural Concert* a Disney-Tween party where Disney Channel stars Jonas Brothers, Demi Lovato, Miley Cyrus, and her father Billy Ray Cyrus entertained. The concert was hosted by the First Lady and the Vice

President's wife. The *Kids' Inaugural Concert* was also broadcasted live only on Disney Channel. A factor that I find interesting was the way in which the media reported on this event, especially the use of the word tweens:

“Tweens ruled at 'The Kids' Inaugural: We Are the Future' event.” (ExtraTV.com, 2009:par. 1)

“On Jan. 19, it's the tweens' turn: The Disney Channel serves up *Kids' Inaugural: We Are the Future* (8—9:30 p.m.), with performances by Miley Cyrus, the Jonas Brothers, and Demi Lovato.” (Stransky, 2009:par. 2)

“New heights of cuteness are likely Tuesday with Barack Obama's two daughters, Malia, 10, and Sasha, 7, in the inaugural spotlight. Will their outfits set trends for the tween set?” (Lawrence, 2009:par. 3)

“Malia and Sasha clapped to Miley Cyrus' hit 'See You Again' and were on the feet dancing for tween heartthrobs The Jonas Brothers.” (Fermino, 2009:par. 4)

When conducting a Google search for the word tweens in English, mostly parenting sites created for parents of tweens and sites concerned with tweens and marketing come up. Sites catered to tweens also come up, as well as sites for purchasing gifts for tweens. “Help parenting tweens”, “About the tween scene”, “How does my tween grow”, “Popular book series for tweens”, “Parenting; activities in the tween ages”, “Marvelous Me: Easter Gift Basket for Tween Girls Ages 10-14 years”, “Gift ideas for tweens” are amongst the titles that turn up. There are also books on this subject, such as *Tweens: What to expect from—and how to survive—your child's pre-teen years* (Clifford-Poston, 2005) and the Guggenheim Museum in New York offers art classes specifically for tweens (Museum, 2013). The term tweens hence seems to have gained status as a regular term.

In a Norwegian context the term has also started to surface in various media. Surprisingly enough, when searching online for tweens in Norwegian, most hits do not refer to popular culture or consumption. Rather, websites of organizations and churches who offer tween group activities come up. As the Norwegian YMCA writes on their webpages: “It's not always as fun to be the oldest ones at school and be with all the younger ones, that's why tweens have their own concept” (KFUK/KFUM, 2010). The

YMCA thus, like marketers, configures tweens as a separate age category that needs to be catered to specifically. Also, Acta, a children and youth organization within The Norwegian Church offers Christian education specifically for tweens called “Dig Deeper” (Acta). On Acta’s webpages we read: “Thea and Kristoffer are two pretty typical tweens who live in the same neighbourhood. They are concerned with the same issues as other tweens. Such as football, PlayStation, clothes and music” (Acta, 2009). Thus the church seems to see children between the ages of 8-12 as an age group that is distinct from those who are older and those who are younger, and that needs to be catered to specifically.

Tween-girls in Norway also have a special clothing chain: WOW, which now has 31 stores across Norway. On the store’s webpage we can read: “Wow's target market is tween girls between the age 7 and 14 years old” (WOW, 2013). And at Sandvika Storsenter, a shopping mall outside Oslo, there is a clothing store named simply *Tweens* (Ungdomsklær, 2013) catering to children and youth, both boys and girls aged 4-16 years.

In addition there are parenting books, such as *Understand your child 8-12 years* (Ulvund, 2010), where the blurb from a bookstore promises that the author will discuss “tweens—children on their way to youth and their characteristics” (ARK.no, 2010). Or the book *Tweens: Today’s 8-12 year olds* (Rydahl & Lauritsen, 2013). This is a Danish book translated into Norwegian. According to Rydahl and Lauritsen, adults cannot understand tweens today as they never were tweens.

In Norwegian newspapers there have also been articles focusing on tweens such as in Dagbladet (2012) where we can read that tweens are spoiled consumers and that parents need to put their foot down. Both national newspapers VG and Dagbladet make use of the term tweens when writing about movies for this age group. When Canadian pop sensation Justin Bieber visited Norway, various newspapers referred to his fan base as tweens. In addition, the term is often used when focusing on consumer goods, often when the topic is conspicuous consumption.

While not used as extensively as in the United States, the word tween seems to be gaining more ground in the Norwegian context—not translated, but used as it is in English.

Tweens in earlier research

As the term tweens stems from marketing, it is not surprising that consumer research has embraced the term. One of the main contributions to this field is Cook and Kaiser's article *Betwixt and be Tween. Age Ambiguity and the Sexualization of the Female Consuming Subject* (2004). Following Cook and Kaiser, there have been a number of research projects investigating consumption in childhood, specifically in tweens (see: Andersen, Tufte, Rasmussen, & Chan, 2007; Cook & Kaiser, 2004; Gjødesen, 2011; Johansson, 2007, 2010; Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2005; Pilcher, 2011; Rysst, 2010a,b; Tufte, 2011; Tufte & Rasmussen, 2005; Willett, 2005; Wærdahl, 2003; 2005). These studies are mostly qualitative and focus on the *meaning* of tweens' consumption in relation to identity. Children's voices are to an extent heard here, in accordance with the perspectives of the social studies of children and childhood. These studies offer great insights into the construction of the tween 'space' by tweens and their navigation through the structures around them. This is done for example by exploring how children define the kinds of clothing that are age appropriate (Johansson, 2007; Rysst, 2010a; Wærdahl, 2003) or how they achieve and perform identity through clothes (Clancy, 2011; Pilcher, 2011).

An example of academic research focusing specifically on tweens and consumption is the Danish book *Tweens — mellem medier og mærkevarer* (Andersen, 2011), which can be translated to "Tweens—between media and brands". This book is based on a research project bearing the name: "Tweens mellom medier og forbrug" or in English: "Tweens between media and consumption". The assumption here is that tweens are above all consumers. A main question in this book is "is there theoretical/empirical evidence for the market industry's construction of the tween?" (Rasmussen, 2011:19). This question resembles my own main research question, which focuses more specifically on Disney's construction of tweens in relation to children's own

construction of this age or stage. The Danish research project concluded that; “Yes, children are raised in a time of internet and cell phones and are embedded earlier in consumer society (...) although there are a lot of factors that go into tweens’ relationship with consumption and media” (Rasmussen, 2011:27). Consumption is thought to happen in interplay with other factors (such as social context and economic resources) and consumer identity is only a small part of tweens’ identity. However, tweens are perceived through the lens of consumption in this work.

Another example of defining tweens as consumers can be found in the work of Cody (2010, 2012), and Cody and Lawlor (2011). In this work, Turner’s theory of liminality is used as a framework when writing about tweens. A core thought in liminality theory is that the subject is at a threshold, between two stages, pre and post ritual. As Cody and Lawlor state: “the liminal phase of a transition represents an instance of incompleteness” (Cody & Lawlor, 2011:209). Although this is an interesting way of looking at children in the tween years, there also is a danger in reducing these years or this stage as liminal, as though they are in fact in between and have no belonging to any category. A question is whether, by using the liminal lens, one takes the child perspective seriously if they are predefined as being in a liminal state. Do children *feel* and experience this liminality?

A different area of research employing the tweens concept has a focus on media and online safety. Davies and James (2013) for example look at tweens privacy concerns online, concluding that online privacy needs to be incorporated in tweens education (Davis & James, 2013). Another article focuses on the role of parental mediation in relation to tweens’ online privacy (Shin, Huh, & Faber, 2012), while Brito explores how tweens characterize the different digital technologies (Brito, 2012). In relation to tweens’ use of communication technologies there are also studies that focus on *how* tweens make use of ICT for communication (Kaare, Brandtzæg, Heim, & Endestad, 2007; Meyers, Fisher, & Marcoux, 2009). And there are also studies focusing on tweens and online gaming (Kafai, 2008; Kafai, Fields, & Cook, 2010). Some of these studies explore tweens’ use of online activities and their meaning making. However, these studies tend to have an explicit focus on potential problems related to Internet use. And as such, they tend to situate tweens as potential victims who may need to be protected.

Again, what seems to be missing in these studies is the perspectives of the tweens themselves.

There are also examples in academia where tweens are not only explored through consumption. Some studies employing the term tweens are focus on how to reduce obesity by getting tweens more active and eating healthier (e.g., Abedin, 2009; Alfonso et al., 2011; Kelly, 2012; Skatrud-Mickelson, Adachi-Mejia, & Sutherland, 2011). These studies problematize the lack of physical activity and unhealthy eating among tweens. Thus, these studies, as some of the ICT studies also do, tend to depart from the position that tweens may be or are at risk. Another area where tweens are seen as at risk, especially girls, is the presumed early and over sexualisation of girls (e.g., Graff, Murnen, & Smolak, 2012; Keller & Kalmus, 2009).

Within the field of media studies there are scholars such as Mitchell and Reid-Walsh (2005) and Talley (2005) who focus on film and popular media. In the book *Kids Rule!: Nickelodeon and Consumer Citizenship*, Banet-Weiser (2007) makes use of the term tweens as a separate television audience. This is also what Northup and Liebler (2010) and Giroux and Pollock (2010) do when writing about Disney and Nickelodeon. Mares, Braun, and Hernandez explored the effects of tween sitcoms in relation to tweens' expectations and feelings about peer relationships (2012). McGladrey studied tweens' feelings about image and beauty based on media perception (2013), and Bickford explored music use by tweens (2011). As tweens are a segment in broadcasting (Alexander, 2001; Dictionary, 2012; Kenway & Bullen, 2008) it is no wonder that within media studies tweens are talked about as label and audience segment as well.

How are tweens defined then? The leading article by Cook and Kaiser describes the tween-age as the ambiguous transition from child to teenage status (2004). They depict tweens as situated in an ambiguous space between childhood and adolescence. This ambiguity is identified in other studies as well. Generally, in all the cited studies above, being a tween is thought of as being in a place of limbo between adolescence and childhood. Socially tweens are depicted as being in limbo between family and peers. They are thought of as struggling between standing out and belonging. This is seen as

leading to a degree of ambiguity in identity although this does not necessarily mean that this is considered a problem (Johansson, 2010).

In current research on tweens this ambiguity is the trademark of tweens, moving between irresponsible and responsible, between dependent and autonomous. Tufte (2011), from the field of education, offers a conclusion on the research project *Tweens—between media and consumption*:

We can conclude that tweens stand with one foot in childhood and the other in the adult life. Sometimes they are children, where play is done online and chat with friends or play computer games. At other times they are competent media users, who go online to different web pages and get information for school work and entertainment. (Tufte, 2011:43)

Tufte (2011) is not the first to use the metaphor of straddling: social anthropologist Rysst (2005) suggests; “The age group is interesting because economic, socially, and biologically one leg is in the category of children and one leg in the category of youth” (6, translated by me). This conclusion is also echoed by Gjødesen, (2011) who works within marketing and consumption studies, in her work on Danish tweens and brands;

What is special for tweens is that they stand at a cross road between child- and teen-culture. In the research project; “Children’s use of Brands” it is obvious that some tweens have already left the child-culture, others are deeply rooted in the child-culture, and the last and largest group of tweens find themselves somewhere in between characterized by child- and teen-culture. (82)

These conclusions are in accordance with other researchers in the field and echo those of market researchers such as Siegel, Coffey, & Livingston (2004), who also emphasise the moving between childhood and teenagers as a trait of “the tween”. Tweens are hence in these studies defined, as the name suggests, in between.

Placing myself in the field

By discussing tweendom as something in between there is a danger of underestimating this space: one can argue that all stages in life are in between—something is always behind and something always lies ahead. However, defining tweens as liminal and in

between may not reflect the lived experience of tweens. As Walsh (2005), a researcher within education and film, puts it when reflecting around her own tween years; “I knew I was not just ‘between’ something—I was in the middle of it” (Walsh, 2005:191). I bring this sentiment to the field. Drawing on the childhood studies I explore tweens mainly from those thought to be tweens’ perspective (James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998; Prout, 2004; Qvortrup, 1994). My interest is how children perceived to be in their tweens experience this category. I am not concerned with potential dangers and risks for their future wellbeing. Rather the focus is on how tweens as a category is done and constructed.

In the research focusing on risks for tweens, be it obesity, sexualisation of tween girls, or potential danger lurking online, the childhood perspective is missing. I place myself within childhood studies, focusing on children not merely as becoming adults but rather as being persons who deserve to be researched in their own right. Thus, I seek to highlight children’s perspectives on social life, an approach central to the sociology of childhood, which emphasizes the value of studying children “in their own right” (Alanen, 1992; Kjørholt, 2004; Solberg, 1996).

Even though I am inspired by childhood studies, this fairly new tradition stemming from the early 1990s has had its share of critique. Prout (2005), one of the leading theorists within the field states that: “At the very time when social theory was coming to terms with late modernity by decentering the subject, the sociology of childhood was valorizing it through an intense focus on the subjectivity of children” (Prout, 2011:6). Childhood studies place emphasis on the child, focusing on children’s perspective and agency, however, it has also been critiqued for its dichotomies (Prout, 2005, 2011; Tisdall & Punch, 2012). Prout (2005; 2011) draws on Latour and actor-network theory as a means to move beyond the classical dichotomies (for example childhood as structure versus children’s agency, childhood as being versus childhood as becoming, and nature versus culture). By decentring the subject and instead paying attention to materials and practices we can focus on how children, childhood, and non-human items are mutually constitutive. Prout proposes to look towards actor-network theory (ANT) as he claims society can be seen as “produced in and through patterned networks of heterogeneous materials; it is made up through a wide variety of shifting associations

(and disassociations) between human and non-human entities” (Prout, 2005:109). Thus following Prout (2005; 2011) and inspired by ANT, the focus is on practice; what children *do* with the Disney tween franchises in relation to their everyday life and material; and what Disney *does* in relation to the children perceived to be in their tween years.

While I highly admire the work that has been done on tweens as consumers, tweens deserve to be researched in a broader sense, not merely in relation to their spending. However, the term tweens originated in the market realm, and as such, one cannot and should not ignore how marketing addresses this group. As Cook and Kaiser suggest: “The contemporary figure of the tween cannot be understood apart from its inception in, and articulation with the market exigencies of childhood” (Cook & Kaiser, 2004:204). This is not to suggest that the market has the ‘correct’ definition, or that there indeed exists such a ‘correct’ definition. It merely gives another point of departure for the investigation of the term. Although the term tweens is derived from marketing, today the term has found its way into other cultural spaces (Preston & White, 2005). What is missing in earlier research is the focus on how the children inhabiting the tween ages reflect on their age. Do they use the term tweens? And if they do not, should we as researchers define them as tweens? Consumption does play a pivotal part in western children’s lives today; however, consumption cannot be isolated and is only one of several factors that are a part of the social life of children today (Rasmussen, 2011).

In this thesis I look at children perceived to be in their tweens and their use and practices in relation to Disney media and merchandise. I questioned how to talk about the children and their relation to Disney: Would I define them as audience members? As consumers? There are some troubling issues and concerns with both these terms. Implicitly the term consumer communicates a person being at the end of a linear production process. Traditionally in this process we find the designer/producer who produces the commodity, which then in turn is consumed by the consumer. This also suggests that entities (such as children and consumer products) are predefined and already given as opposed to being mutually enacted and constituted. If I were to use the term audience when speaking about participants in this study, the same concerns appear—implicitly, the individual is constructed as a receiver, and again at the end of a

linear communication process. Secondly, when dealing with the Disney franchises aimed at the tween group, it makes no sense to talk about being an audience to the various merchandises such as pencils, clothes, and beddings. In this thesis when talking about merchandise or commodities I use the term paratexts. The concept will be elaborated on in Chapter 2. Put shortly, paratexts are every text/commodity that surrounds television series and films (Gray, 2010).

Both the terms audience and consumer presupposes readymade objects (media texts and paratexts) that come equipped with stable meanings and potential usages, which exist independently from the receivers' (the audience and consumers) use. It indicates an asymmetrical relation between human and non-human entities. Thus both the terms consumer and audience are inadequate in encompassing the level of activity as well as the grounding perspective of entities being ontologically enacted (Woolgar, 2012). As I will further explain in the following chapter, I use the term user in this thesis to avoid the potential deterministic and essentialist implications both audience and consumer bear with them.

Research question

In this thesis I examine how the age category of tweens is constructed through a case study of children in the ages 8-12 and their relationship with Disney Channel programs for tweens. There are several reasons for the focus on Disney. The topic arose from my field work, which will be extensively reported on in the method chapter. However, in addition to coming from the field itself, in the past decade, the television network Disney Channel has begun to cater specifically to the tween demographic through different tween franchises including media texts and a plethora of merchandise. Disney Channel has produced a number of popular live action television shows and films in the last decade catering to the tween audience, achieving high revenues and many viewers.

The tween movies and television series have received attention from various media. There can be found both acclamations and disapproval of how Disney relates to children. Loe writing for the Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten* online wrote in his review of *Hannah Montana the Movie*:

I had been looking forward to being arrogant and call the movie trash and posting about teenage clichés and product placement hell. But that turned out to be impossible. The movie is too solid for such criticism to be defended. Disney obviously takes their young friends seriously and the result is that the movie is amazingly successful. (Loe, 2009:par 5)

On the other hand, there are more concerned voices like Ringheim who in the newspaper *Dagbladet* online expressed her disapproval of Disney's delivery of "sickening cotton candy (...) frosting which is pink, sugary and puritan (...) save our girls, while the mothers are discussing equal pay, our daughters are being brainwashed" (Ringheim, 2008).

As Disney has defined and targeted this age-group as an audience, and Disney was highly visible in the field, questions this thesis sets out to explore are the following questions: How are tweens inscribed in the media texts? How does Disney as a company construct those perceived to be between children and teenagers to be? How did parents' relate to their daughter's infatuation with Disney products? And most importantly: How did children thought to inhabit the tween category relate to the Disney tween franchises and how did they construct their own age group?

I focus mainly on how the children who inhabit this age-group reflect on what it means to be not-yet-teenagers yet not-young children and their relation to the Disney tween franchises. As tweens as a term has figured recently both in the academic language as well as in mainstream media, a question is to what extent children within this target age group actually recognized themselves as "tweens"—as having an age-based identity distinct from younger children or from teenagers.

Jansson (2002) calls for cultural studies to pay more attention to both media culture and consumer culture: "What is missing then, is empirical work that explicitly fuses these areas together—analysis of consumption that pay sufficient attention to the significance of the media" (Jansson, 2002:6). This study, by focusing on the Disney tween franchises, does just that. It fuses meanings of the media text, and the consumption of both the text and commodities within the franchises.

Inspired by both actor-network theory and cultural studies' circuit of culture, I approach tweens by focusing on the relationships between four main actors in order to gain a comprehensive understanding. These actors are children—mainly girls—and the girls' parents, Disney as a producer, and Disney as media texts. Thus the overarching research question I set out to explore is how tweens are constructed by children seen to inhabit this age phase, parents, Disney producers, and Disney media texts.

There are six research questions, each will be addressed in a separate chapter. These are:

1. How are tweens configured as an audience and as consumers by representatives of the Disney Corporation?
2. How are tweens inscribed in the two Disney media texts of *Hannah Montana* and *High School Musical*?
3. How do children considered to be tweens incorporate Disney as part of their daily practices? How do children in this age group make meaning and use of the Disney tween content?
4. How are Disney media texts and merchandise domesticated by parents?
5. With all the merchandise that follows the Disney media texts, a question is; what part does the merchandise play in the children's lives? How are they appropriated and how are they used?
6. How do children inhabiting the age group perceived as tweens make meaning of this age phase? Do they consider themselves as being between?

Outline of the thesis

Before we get to the six empirical chapters responding to the six research questions above, there are two chapters that frame the thesis. The first chapter deals with the theoretical departure and framework of the thesis. I explain my use of childhood studies, domestication theory, and how I am inspired in my work by the actor-network-theory.

In Chapter 3 I explain my methodological route. In order to make this work as transparent as possible, I give an account of the long and winding road that led me to my data. How I took not one, but four roads when compiling information, viewpoints and reflections concerning tweens and Disney. Thus, Chapter 3 will give an overview of the data I collected and how it was collected. Inspired by the circuit of culture I focused on text, producers, parents, and, most importantly, the children.

After having accounted for methodology and theory, we get to the heart of the thesis, the empirical analysis. Chapter 4 begins with a contextualization of Disney in Norway before leaping into how two Disney representatives reflected on tweens through the sitcom *Hannah Montana* and the trilogy *High School Musical*. The focus is on how these two representatives configured tweens as a target group. Did they perceive children in the tween ages to be moving from childhood to youth? Did they configure them as flexible in their potential age performance?

After focusing on the Disney representatives I delve into a text analysis of *Hannah Montana* and *High School Musical* in Chapter 5. A synopsis of both the trilogy and the sitcom will be presented in this chapter for those readers not familiar with them. I explore how these media texts inscribe their target audience, the tweens, in relation to age, gender, and identity.

Chapter 6 is the first chapter where we meet the children in this thesis. Here, I explore how those who are considered to be tweens domesticated the inscriptions the Disney representatives and the Disney media texts provided for them. In this chapter I look at how the children talked about Disney in general, relating to their daily practices, their biographical narratives (Giddens, 1991), and specifically to *Hannah Montana* and *High School Musical*.

After having focused on how children in this study domesticated Disney as a resource for interpreting themselves in relation to age and gender, as a life trajectory companion, and as part of their everyday practices, I turn to the parents. Chapter 7 explores how Disney content and merchandise were domesticated in the context of their homes through their parents. This chapter focuses on how parents negotiate Disney and how they domesticated and made it a part of the moral economy of the household (Silverstone, Hirsch, & Morley, 1991; 1992).

Disney not only offers media texts. As a part of a synergetic approach, attached to the media texts is merchandise, or paratexts as will be used in this thesis. The focus in Chapter 8 will be on the different practices the girls in my study reported on involving the paratexts tied to *Hannah Montana* and *High School Musical*.

Chapter 9 widens the lens by focusing on how the children thought to inhabit the tween stage reflect around their age. I examine how the children reported on how age performances might differ from one context to another.

I conclude the thesis in Chapter 10 by providing a general summary of my research and discuss my contribution to the study of tweens. By combining different theoretical resources and a sociotechnical perspective we are able to examine the mutual enactment of both tweens and Disney.

Chapter 2: Combining domestication theory, childhood studies, and actor-network theory

This thesis explores how tweens were constructed by children perceived to be tweens, their parents, the media texts of *Hannah Montana* and *High School Musical* and by two representatives of the Walt Disney Corporation. This chapter describes the theoretical framework that informs the analysis as well as the underlying perspective employed in this work.

When engaging in this work I started out by drawing on notions from childhood studies and cultural studies. Childhood studies influenced my perception of children and childhood and guided my research questions and agenda. As the focus is on popular culture, cultural studies with the circuit of culture model help inform what entities to examine. The main framework however, has become domestication theory as this lets me focus more specifically on the users and their technologies. In addition, this thesis is inspired by Actor-Network Theory (ANT) which informs my perspective on the social and material world. ANT is also a tool for overcoming the somewhat awkward spilt between the material and social and allows us to view the material and the social as mutually enacted and constructed.

Although this thesis draws on different theories, these theories are not incompatible or redundant. Rather, they all help illuminate the research agenda from different and compatible perspectives. Combining the theoretical and methodological approaches—childhood studies, cultural studies, and domestication theory—has been done before. Haddon (2006) for example reports on borrowing from the sociology of childhood within a domestication framework when analysing the social construction of childhood. There are also researchers who have fused the domestication framework with the

sociology of childhood (Alasuutari & Alasuutari, 2012; Chambers, 2011; Clark, 2011; Drotner & Livingstone, 2008b). Within childhood studies and especially concerning children and media researchers the domestication framework has been used either as overarching (Ling & Haddon, 2008) or drawing on it as Livingstone (Livingstone, 2002, 2007b, 2011) does. Others also merge ANT, cultural studies, and the circuit of culture with domestication theory (Rantavuo, 2008; Theodoropoulou, 2011).

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, I regard the children in this study as users rather than consumers or audience. Before placing my work within the theoretical framework I will explain the reason to move away from talking about consumer and/or audience to employing the term user.

From consumer and audience to user

I use the term user as opposed to consumer and audience to avoid a priori assumptions about both human and non-human actors in my study. Informing this decision is the notion of the ontological enactment where people, things, and meanings are perceived as being mutually enacted, or come into being, in the meeting between them (Woolgar, 2012).

However active one portrays audience or consumer, underlying these terms is an understanding of the audience and consumers as receivers of goods or content. Thus, the terms audience and consumer suggest a linear process of communication from producer-product to consumer/audience. Such a view consequently renders the consumer and the audience passive receptors. The consumer/audience is merely responding to what they are given.

Silverstone (1991) argues that one should talk about consumers rather than audience. He states: “The television audience has become the consumer of mediated messages and media and information technologies” (Silverstone, 1991:143). The call from Silverstone to talk about audiences as consumers is based on Silverstone’s perspective that:

We consume objects. We consume texts. In making both our own, in incorporating them into our lives, in displaying and talking about them, we engage in a struggle over their meaning, and through that mostly unromantic

and often inconclusive struggle (...) we in turn construct our own individual and social identities. (Silverstone, 1991:142)

In this statement media texts and objects are seen to become a part of one's social identity through the negotiation of meanings. While I agree with this sentiment that we do not merely consume texts as is, and that we bring our own reading to the texts, I would argue that using, as opposed to consuming, portrays a more active form of negotiations of those meanings.

Another issue regarding the term consumer is that it entails an idea of conceptually separated aspects of production and consumption. Consumption scientists have argued that there is a problem with this divide because they cannot be separated. Consumption is always also production (Bakardjieva, 2006; Morley & Silverstone, 1990; Sørensen, 1994). As Douglas (1996), coming from consumption studies, stated: "The individual uses consumption to say something about himself, his family (...) Consumption is an active process in which all the social categories are being constantly refined" (Douglas, 1996:45). Through consumption one is producing one's self. Hence, by using a commodity or using media, one is always productive. Meanings and practices are produced through using. "All consumption involves the consumption of meaning; indeed all consumption actually involves the production of meanings by the consumer" (Morley & Silverstone, 1990:49). However, the notion of consumption and consumer is also problematic because it needs to be specified that one indeed produces while consuming. By employing the word user we avoid this a priori assumption of receiving first and then producing. User as a term connotes a more empowered activity as the term is fundamentally active. The user *does* something *to* or *with* something.

Although one might agree that one can, and one does, communicate symbolically through consumption, there is an underlying argument of this as a devalued way of performing and being. Producing or performing one's self through consumption does not portray the authentic individual but rather as Lie and Sørensen argue (1996) that consumption for this purpose implies a kind of false consciousness. This type of consumption, consumption as performance following Goffman (1959), is in opposition to the rational "means-to-an-end" consumption, or consumption as economically and

necessity based. As Lie and Sørensen claim, summing up the protestant spirit of capitalism: “Production is active and creative, consumption is passive and adaptive” (Lie & Sørensen, 1996:9). Thus, an issue with the concept of consumption is its underlying moral aspects. According to Lie and Sørensen (1996), the study of consumption “struggles with a cultural moralism that transforms the consumer into being only an object of producer strategies” (Lie & Sørensen, 1996:9). The consumer is thus rendered passive. As such, the term consumer bears with it problematic moral and qualities.

The term user however does not bear with it an inferred passive action or insinuates being at the end of a production line, rather a user implies both agency and activity. Sørensen (1994) and Lie and Sørensen (1996) point out that consumption and production although inseparable, are not identical. Sørensen states: “The point is that we have to examine consumption and production to compare them. We should not make a priori evaluation of differences” (Sørensen, 1994). Hence, in a broader sense perceiving people as users as well as exploring production brings a more symmetrical perspective when researching how users use media and commodities. In relation to perceiving the user as active and not merely a receiver Ask and Sørensen (forthcoming) state, “a main agenda of domestication theory was to go beyond the image of the passive consumer by providing users of technology with the autonomy and ability to find their own ways of managing their artefacts”. This notion is pivotal to my work.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the term tweens stems from marketing and as such is closely tied up to consumer goods. Employing the term user allows for a perspective on tweens not as the receivers of this market constructed segment, but rather enables us to perceive those thought to inhabit this age group with autonomy. In addition, we can perceive them as actively taking part in the co-construction of tweenhood. Tweens are constructed in relation to both human and non-human entities. Thus, we cannot understand the tween category without engaging in a sociotechnical perspective. What then is needed theoretically is a perspective that allows us to account for the materiality as well as the social.

Next, I will explain my theoretical positioning within childhood studies, cultural studies, and the domestication approach before discussing what I draw on from the actor-network theory.

Childhood studies

Childhood studies emerged as a reaction to what was perceived as a rigid field of developmental psychology, challenging the mainstream discourses on childhood. Instead of perceiving childhood as something natural and taken for granted, childhood began to be seen as something that is socially constructed (James et al., 1998; Lee, 2001). This field emerged and was established as an academic discipline during the 1980s and 1990s. At the core of childhood studies we find an interdisciplinary approach traditionally drawing on psychology, sociology, anthropology, geography, history, and law (James et al., 1998; Jenks, 1982; Qvortrup, 1994; Woodhead, 2008). Childhood studies emerged as a reaction to what was perceived as an essentialised description of children and childhood from the fields of developmental psychology and education pedagogics and a desire to understand the here and now of children and their everyday lives, as opposed to seeing them as adults in the making with a future oriented perspective.

Woodhead (2008) has identified three key features within the social studies of children and childhood. The first is the focus on childhood as a socially constructed category. This implies not looking for or at the essentialised or naturalized childhood, but rather viewing childhood as a social phenomenon: "The immaturity of children is a biological fact but the ways in which that immaturity is understood is a fact of culture (...) childhood is both constructed and reconstructed both for and by children" (James & Prout, 1990:7). A question is thus, *how* is childhood (or in my case more specifically tweenhood) being constructed? In addition to the *how*, there is also an issue of who constructs childhood and in what way, through what networks?

The second feature according to Woodhead (2008) is recognizing children's own experiences, activities and conditions, thus making children's voices the starting point for research. In other words, the second feature aims not to describe children from a

developmental perspective but rather to explore their lived cultures and daily practices. Hence, instead of seeing children at the end of a socialization process as receivers of culture, they are rather seen as both reproducers *and* producers of culture, knowledge and identity (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999). In order to understand children's conditions, activities, relationships, knowledge and experiences from their perspectives, children's everyday lives have been a main area of research. Within childhood studies a key research approach has been to give an account of children's 'voices'. Thus there is both a focus on children's voices and also a theoretical central perspective of children as active. The empirical work in this thesis started with the experienced everyday lives in an after school program setting, which guided me to focus on Disney. Thus, the choice I made to focus on Disney was informed by the everyday practices of children.

The third feature of childhood studies is concerned with childhood and adulthood: "acknowledging childhood in a variety of respects about intergenerational relationships" (Woodhead, 2008:19). Thus the third feature suggests that childhood must be seen in relation to adulthood. As mentioned in the introduction a premise of the field is: "to constitute the child as an ontology in its own right" (Jenks, 2005:10). And adults are part of children's ontology. The concepts of childhood and the child are produced in interaction, and through a complex set of social processes that are interdependent with the concepts of the adult and adulthood in a particular society (Alanen, 2001). Their interdependence means that they stand in relation to one another and are mutually constituted. Hence childhood and adulthood are perceived to be produced and reproduced in the interactions that take place between members of existing generational categories. In other words, this happens in intergenerational practices. According to Lee (2001) we (both adults and children) make sense of childhood through adulthood:

interpreting everything children do in terms of how this will affect their journey toward adulthood (...) Children's lives and activities in the present are still envisaged, in the main, as a preparation for the future (...) The ideas of 'socialization' and 'development', for example, carry that sense of childhood as a journey toward a destination. (Lee, 2001:8)

Children are not children if they are not seen in relation to something that is not children, namely adults. In addition, tweens are not tweens if they are not seen in

relation to something that is not tweens, thus both younger and older children can be seen to play a part in how to define and actively *do* tweens. Children and childhood are thus seen as relational phenomena:

This relationality, moreover, implies intergenerationality, in that children are constituted specifically as children primarily (although not exclusively) within intergenerational relations, that is, as a generational category of beings that is internally related to other existing generational categories, especially adults. (Alanen, 2014:133)

In this thesis the intergenerational relationships is accounted for by talking to both parents and children about the Disney tween franchises. I explore how parenthood is done in relation to me in an interview setting as well as how the girls discuss with me how they interpret their parents' feelings and meanings about their engagements with the Disney tween franchises. In addition I look at how the children said to be in their tweens define themselves in relation to other age groups in childhood.

From the childhood studies I bring with me the notion that childhood is a socially constructed category differing in time and place. Thus, what I seek to do is to examine tweens as a social category in which these children are placed by marketers and partly by mainstream media as well as lately more visibly in the general public as well as academic research. The second key feature—focusing on children's voices—is a main theme in my work. How do the children I interviewed experience their social category, their biological age, and how do they talk and incorporate Disney tween content and merchandise in their everyday practices? Childhood studies theoretically allows for a dynamic perspective where children are seen as actively shaping their childhood. The third feature, seeing childhood in relation to adulthood and in relation to those younger and older is done in this thesis by hearing both parents and children's voices contemplating around both children's liking of Disney content and merchandise as well as how parents and children define and categorize this age segment differing from other childhood subcategories.

As the main focus in this thesis is on children seen to inhabit the tween years, a theoretical position in the field of childhood studies makes sense. While childhood studies guide me in how to perceive children relationally, the focus within this field is a

mere social one. Children are not seen in relation to technologies or other artefacts. What is missing in childhood studies is a sociotechnical perspective. As Prout (2011) argues, childhood studies has traditionally left out the material aspects and rather focused too narrowly on the subject and the social. In order to make the move from what we can call the social studies of the social we need to be able to theoretically view this through a sociotechnical perspective. Since I perceive tweens to be mutually constructed through their relations not only with human entities but also through their engagements with non-human entities such as Disney merchandising and Disney media texts there is a need for a theoretical stance that incorporates sociotechnical aspects. Drawing on elements from the circuit of culture enables us to exceed the social studies of the social and allows the focus to be broadened by implementing non-human entities as well.

From the circuit of culture to the coproduction

In this thesis I look at different actors in search for how tweens are enacted and constructed through use of Disney tween franchises. As Sammond argues

Walt Disney and the child are mutually constitutive objects, and the narrative produced here is neither one in which Disney's use of the child determines its ultimate meaning, nor one in which the meaning of the child at the moment when Disney appears determines the nature of the company. (Sammond, 2005:10)

The concept of the circuit of culture comes from the cultural studies tradition. The notion of "circuit of culture" was originally developed by Richard Johnson in the mid-1980s (Buckingham, 2008; du Gay, 1997; Osgerby, 2004). A circuit of culture approach encompasses the production, the text, and the users all as actors in a continuously dialectical meaning making process. In other words, meanings are continuously reworked through a cultural circuit. The circuit of culture consists of four main stages; production, textuality, reception, and lived cultures. Thus, not only is the aim to study the media texts and its users and producers, but attention is also given to the circuit in which the actors move and reside, and to the interrelationships and meeting between actors.

In my work however, I do not focus on the circular movement, but explore the stakeholders separately (Chapter 4 revolves around the producers, Chapter 5 concerns itself with the text, and the remaining chapters deal with the children and parents and how they construct meaning and action). By using elements from the circuit of culture I avoid that the analysis becomes reductionist, as it would if the focus was solely the production side that perceives media texts and their meanings as reflections of economic relations (Osgerby, 2004:16). I also avoid reducing the media texts to the users' readings of them, and I avoid reducing the media texts to my own reading, which would be the case if I were to only look at the texts. Although I do not follow a circuit, I do use the circuit of culture as a guide to who and what to study. My approach highlights tweens from several stakeholders (text, producer, parents and user). Thus, it is the coproduction of tweens and knowledge about them that I explore.

A notion that I do adopt from the circuit of culture is the idea that no single stakeholder or cultural process is in possession of hegemony concerning the definition of a cultural artefact or phenomenon's meaning. Users interpret and produce meanings in the meeting with media texts and objects. This is not to say that media texts and objects arrive at the users' doorsteps with a tabula rasa. As du Gay (1997) states: "Meanings are produced at several different sites and circulate through several different processes and practices" (du Gay, 1997:10). Rather than privileging one particular viewpoint in explaining how an object comes to possess meaning, Paul du Gay argues, "it is in a combination of processes (...) that the beginnings of an explanation can be found" (du Gay, 1997:3). Meanings are hence perceived as fluid and changeable depending on the stakeholders and the cultural processes. Cultural meanings of text are; "constructed through a dialogue—albeit rarely an equal one in terms of power relations—between production and consumption" (du Gay, 1997:103).

Therefore, by looking at a phenomenon through the circuit of culture perspective does not democratize the relation between the stakeholders but it does highlight the fact that cultural meanings do not come pre-packaged from the producers; neither is it neutral so that all meanings are produced solely by the users. This avoids the a priori assumptions on texts, user, and producer and makes it possible to explore what is happening in this interrelationship.

Implicitly, within the perspective of meaning being mutually enacted, we avoid the classic structure versus agency dichotomy. Focus is on the interplay between stakeholders. The goal is to illuminate cultural practices in the particular contexts where they exist while at the same time analysing the texts, the producers and the context that surrounds the specific informants. Thus, the circuit of culture demands a: “multidimensional and multilevel analysis that respects people’s agency to which institutions, culture and political economy shape the contests within which people (including children) act” (Drotner & Livingstone, 2008a:214). As such, the cultural circuit avoids the abstract claims of agency versus structure.

While I draw on the circuit of culture, the framework of domestication further helps guide the theoretical perspective to include the non-human entities and thus enabling a more sociotechnical theoretical perspective.

Domestication theory

Domestication as a concept is said to have originated from consumer studies, anthropology, and media studies (Haddon, 2007, 2011) The beginnings of what would become domestication theory can be found in Morley and Silverstone (1990) where they set out to “recontextualize the study of television in a broader framework” (1990:31). Originally developed by Silverstone et al. (1991, 1992) and revised later by Silverstone and Haddon (1996), domestication theory has proven fruitful for scholars coming from an array of different fields. It is worth noting that also within the studies of technology domestication has become a prominent framework. For example Lie and Sørensen (1996) developed the concept further to be applied to technology studies (Lie & Sørensen, 1996:13). Today one may claim that there are two different versions of domestication—the media studies version and a version emerging from science and technology studies (Sørensen, 2006). In this thesis I make use of both versions.

The core of the domestication framework is the notion that people “tame” and bring artefacts into their homes and how the members of the household then deal with these artefacts. These artefacts are usually technical artefacts such as information and communication technologies.

Research on domestication emphasizes that making a new element part of an existing field of activities is an active process that both transforms the home field in question and ‘tames’ the newcomer. (Alasuutari & Alasuutari, 2012:132)

This taming of technologies is not one-sided however. As Lie and Sørensen put it: “This process of taming is characterized by reciprocal change” (1996:8). Thus, in the meeting with artefacts the artefacts change but the users also change. In my research this means that tweens both shape and are shaped by their domestication of Disney texts and merchandise. Likewise, the Disney texts and merchandise both shape and are shaped by its users. There is thus focus on the enactment of technology, but also how people and their sociotechnical relations may change. As Sørensen (2006) puts it: “Domestication therefore has wider implications than a socialization of technology: it is a co-production of the social and the technical” (46). There is thus a notion of mutual enactment residing in this theory. According to Sørensen (2006) the main advantage of the domestication perspective is that

it is a conceptual device that sensitizes the analyst to the complexity of integrating artefacts into dynamic socio-technical settings, like the household, the workplace, or society. It is a reminder to be concerned with the practical, symbolic and cognitive aspects of the work needed to do this integration, at multiple sites. (Sørensen, 2006:56)

Domestication theory thus enables a more sociotechnical theoretical perspective.

The circuit of culture argues for examining producers, products and users in an attempt to grasp social practices around products as wide cultural phenomenon. The domestication approach on the other hand focuses more specifically on the enactment, meaning making, and daily practices of users and media objects and content. Thus, the domestication framework is focused on the user. While the circuit of culture mainly revolves around the product and how it becomes part of culture, the domestication approach shifts the perspective from a particular product to particular persons using it in their everyday lives. As such, it becomes necessary to study the context of use, which can be labelled the everyday practices. By focusing on everyday practices as opposed to having a starting point focusing on a specific product through use, production and content, as the circuit of culture does, the domestication approach can be said to be

more focused on the actual experiences people have. In this thesis I look at the domestication of the content of Disney Channel's *High School Musical* and *Hannah Montana* as well as the domestication of the paratexts (i.e., the merchandise).

Media studies domestication theory emerged at a time where media researchers questioned the dominant semiotic approach to media studies. One of the critiques of the semiotic approach was that the researcher "reading" the media text could not be a model reader. How could a single researcher be representative of the whole audience? Critics were questioning the lack of empirical work on actual media users (Hagen, 1998; McQuail, 1994). According to Haddon (2007) within the field of media studies there had been a longstanding interest in audiences, however, "the dominance of semiotic approaches meant that there was a limited amount of empirical research on actual viewers or listeners" (Haddon, 2007:25).

Domestication theory arrived within a larger context within media studies when there was a call to contextualize media use. This has been labelled the ethnographic turn. Pertti Alasuutari (1999) argues that there have been three generations within reception studies, and audience ethnography within cultural studies. The first generation he accredits to Stuart Hall and his encoding-decoding model. The second generation Alasuutari claims is the 'ethnographic' turn: in this phase instead of focusing on the text and its readings, the focus shifted to the media audience's social and functional uses of media (Alasuutari, 1999:5). The third generation broadens its horizon by not only focusing on media texts, their producers and the audience's reception, but also taking into account people's daily lives (Alasuutari, 1999:6), which can be said to be the lived cultures or daily practices. As such there is a stronger focus on the "media culture" or cultural consumption (Turner, 2003:138).

As Morley and Silverstone stated in 1990: "television's meanings, that is the meanings of both texts and technologies, have to be understood as emergent properties of contextualized audience practices" (32). There was therefore a strong focus on the context of media use within the ethnographic turn. A point to be made in relation to this is thus what actual users do with media, not merely what they read out of it, in relation to meaning making, but rather the practices which the users engage in.

Another aspect was the view of audiences as not *only* audiences as Silverstone (1991) states: “Audiences are not simply or only watchers of television or listeners to radio” (Silverstone, 1991:136). Couldry (2010) also argues, in his call for a new media studies paradigm based on practice that by opening up media practices and not specify what an audience does as a distinctive set of practices but rather as part of a larger set of everyday practices, we can avoid both functionalism and classical media effects notions. Couldry argues that this approach will decentre media research from its preoccupation with texts and production, and redirect it towards ‘the study of the open-ended range of practices directly or indirectly focused on media’ (Couldry, 2010:37). By focusing on design, context, and most prominently the user and the use domestication theory allows us to go beyond the binaries of active versus passive user (which is especially prominent in media studies dealing with children).

Domestication theory brings a focus on the user perspective and the users’ daily practices to the table. Within domestication theory there is a strong focus on user agency, which is what Bakardjieva (2006) perceives to be the most valuable tenet of domestication. According to Haddon (2007) domestication theory with its concepts allows for a focus on

how the entry of ICTs into the home is managed, how these technologies are physically (and symbolically) located within the home, how they are fitted into our routines and hence time structures and how we display them to others, and by so doing give out messages about ourselves. (Haddon, 2007:26)

The framework of domestication focuses not only on the use but also on the context, the daily practices, and where whatever is in question is used. A distinctive feature of the domestication concept and theory is that, in order to look for uses and for what media technologies mean to people, it contextualizes media experience.

Within the media studies version the daily practices are often tied into the household. How families domesticate ICTs and other objects coming into the home. Bakardjieva (2006) suggests to substitute the word household with home: “Home in this definition is not necessarily a real-estate unit, but a feeling of safety, trust, freedom and control over one’s own affairs” (68). These notions coincide with Goffman’s (1959) term back stage.

In this thesis I use the concept household, however, I agree with Bakardjieva that the *house* needs to be opened up to also encompass uses and practices outside of the physical walls of the house. However, I find that the concept of household can include the outsides of the house and that household as a concept can include a feeling of safety, trust, and freedom. A point to be made is that we use media in an array of social and geographical spaces.

We now find ourselves in a world where we are all audiences to one or another medium, almost all of the time, and where, after its long process of domestication, TV and other media have now escaped the home—to (re)colonize the public sphere. While the domestic home itself might now be said to have become a fully technological artefact, it also seems that domesticity itself has now been dislocated. (Morley, 2003:453)

Even though domestication theory emerged within a media studies tradition, research and literature on consumption were also inspirational sources for the development of the domestication framework (Haddon, 2007; Silverstone et al., 1992; Morley & Silverstone 1990). More specifically this literature influenced what is known as the four phases within the media studies version of the domestication theory, which I will shortly discuss. The notion of consumption thus does play a part in the domestication framework. Concerning consumption Bakardjieva (2006) suggests substituting the concept of ‘consumption’ with ‘everyday life’ within the domestication model:

The notion of consumption keeps the analyst captive to the economic understanding of production, with respect to which consumption appears as the subordinate twin. Domestication is consumption when seen from the standpoint of designers, producers and marketers. From the standpoint of users, it is part of everyday life. Everyday life as an analytical category, on the other hand, is a more comprehensive notion than consumption. (Bakardjieva, 2006:70)

As argued earlier in this chapter, the notion of consumption bears with it a linear model from production to consumption. Using the notion of everyday practices or life enables one to move away from this linear model.

A central concept in media domestication theory is the moral economy of the household. The way in which a household domesticates media texts and related

merchandise can be articulated through the notion of the moral economy of the household. This notion encompasses the values of a household. A household can be said to be an economic system that produces, consumes, and exchanges (Hartmann, 2006). The household and its members represent an economic, social, and cultural unit. The moral economy of the household defines what commodities and what media texts are within the moral economy and which ones are not. Children are part of the household and with varying degree of agency take part and are also brought up and educated in the moral economy of the household. In this thesis, in addition to exploring how children domesticate the media texts and paratexts, I examine how parents deal with and talk about these items, as well as how children make sense of their parent's meanings about the items and content. As such the moral economy of the household is a fruitful notion.

The household is a moral economy because the economic activities of its members within the household and in the wider world of work, leisure and shopping are defined and informed by a set of cognitions, evaluations and aesthetics, which are themselves defined and informed by the histories, biographies and politics of the household and its members. These are expressed in the specific and various cosmologies and rituals that define, or fail to define, the household's integrity as a social and cultural unit. (Silverstone et al., 1991:18)

According to Silverstone et al. (1992) there are two issues at stake for the household when domesticating commodities and media texts. Firstly, there is a potential issue of what Giddens (1991) refers to as ontological security, which is a sense of confidence that the world is as it appears to be; a sense of order according to one's previous experiences. Ontological security can be accomplished through how the household domesticates media texts and paratexts. Within the notion of the moral economy of the household, daily practices become a main site of investigation as value is created through these daily practices (Silverstone, 1991).

The other issue at stake according to Silverstone et al. (1992) has to do with taste and communicating one's taste to one's surroundings. This is in other words a more performative aspect, which can be tied to Goffman and his notion of the presentations of the self (Goffman, 1959). As Haddon states: "There are parallels with the way in which Goffman's observations about everyday life led him to formulate a taxonomy of ways in

which we manage the impressions we present to others” (Haddon, 2011:313). The moral economy of the household allows us to perceive the household or family as an economic and cultural unit, which is “dynamically involved in a transactional system of the exchange of commodities and meanings” (Silverstone, 1991:139). A question thus becomes how is the moral economy performed, communicated, and negotiated by both parents and children in the meeting with me as a researcher?

Text or context? Double articulation

Another term that is central to the media studies version of domestication theory is ‘double articulation’. Television is said to consist of a double articulation. On one hand television is articulated as a technological item, and on the other hand there is the articulation of content being broadcasted through the technological item. Thus there are different outlets one can take when researching television. Is it from the first articulation, the thing in itself? Or is it the second articulation, the content that is of interest? As Hartmann states: “at the point of application the double articulation becomes a methodological question, which then again has implications for the wider theoretical framework of qualitative audience and user research” (Hartmann, 2006:81).

In this thesis I focus on the second articulation when dealing with the content of *High School Musical* and *Hannah Montana*. I do not focus on where the television is, how it came into the household, or whether the content is viewed on different technologies. Rather the focus is on the content in relation to their everyday lives and practices. “Television is a medium and its communications-its programs, narratives, rhetoric and genres provide the basis for its second articulation” (Silverstone, 1994:123). The cultural value of television according to Silverstone (1994) thus lies in its meaning as both as a physical object, the television set, and also through its content.

Through the focus on the lived cultures or daily practices (the ethnographic turn) (see for example: Ang, 1985; Fiske, 1987; Lull, 1990; Morley, 1980; Radway, 1988) there runs a danger in abandoning the text all together and merely focusing on the uses. As Drotner states: “The increased interaction between genre and media forms strengthens the necessity to media research to emphasize textual aspects of investigation (...) this interactions lends a strong argument in favour of textual analysis as a part of (...)

reception theory and media ethnography” (Drotner, 2000:161). Morley also argues for “a model of media consumption capable of dealing simultaneously with the transmission of programmes/contents/ideologies (the vertical dimension of power) and with their inscription in the everyday practices through which media content is incorporated into daily life (the horizontal dimension of ritual and participation)” (Morley, 1999:197). Hartmann (2006) suggests there has been a binary opposition between the text and the context within media studies:

For a long time the distinction between reception research’s responsibility for the texts (the messages) and audience research’s responsibility for the context was all too easily made. Eventually, however, efforts were initiated to overcome this division. The domestication concept can be clearly located within these efforts. Its theoretical answer to the challenge was the double articulation, wherewith it touches on core concerns within the epistemology of media and communication research. (Hartmann, 2006:82)

Thus, there is a call for including both context and text as part of an analysis (Buckingham, 1993; Drotner, 2000; Hartmann, 2006; Morley, 1999; Tobin, 2000). The double articulation, according to Hartmann (2006), enables us to do just that, include both text and context as it is thought to be a move from

semiology to the sociology of media use (...) Again, one can detect the threefold move from (a) a primary concern with ideology, to (b) positions that regarded audiences as active and content as polysemic, to (c) the actual context of media use. (Hartmann, 2006:86-87)

In an attempt to include text, context, and producer, there are issues one needs to reflect on, for example the issue of context. As Corner asks, “What do you include in context and where does it stop?” (Corner, 1991:23). And as Hartmann paraphrases, “What do you include in content and where does it stop?” (Silverstone, 2006:88). By employing Gray’s version of Genettes concept of paratext instead of merchandise or spin-off products we can see that content is in a way limitless:

A paratext is both “distinct from” and alike – or, I will argue, intrinsically part of the text. The book’s thesis is that paratexts are not simply add-ons, spinoffs, and also-rans: they create texts, they manage them, and they fill them with many of the meanings that we associate with them. (Gray, 2010:6)

Gray's (2010) notion of paratexts challenges the classic primary and secondary texts (Fiske, 1987) as Gray argues that paratexts are dynamic and influence the reading of the text (the movie or television series). Hence they are not secondary. Following the Disney tween content is the Disney tween merchandise. The Disney corporation is often credited for "inventing" synergy (Roost, 2005:263) and has been very successful in its merchandising and licensing ventures; "Disney's licenses are the longest-lived and the most successful in the toy industry" (Seiter, 1995:198). There seems to be no limits as to what kind of merchandise for either *Hannah Montana* or *High School Musical* one can buy. Paratexts frame films and television series (and books and other cultural products).

Paratexts surround texts, audiences, and industry, as organic and naturally occurring part of our mediated environment as are movies and television themselves. If we imagine the triumvirate of Text, Audience, and Industry as the Big Three of media practice, then paratexts fill the space between them. (Gray, 2010:23)

Paratexts are hence every text/commodity that surrounds television series and films. In addition to making the items more dynamic through this concept as opposed to Fiske's text levels the concept of paratexts include merchandising and licensing products that Fiske's textual levels do not deal with. Paratexts can thus be seen to be part of both text and context.

As previously stated, literature on consumption played a part in Silverstone et al.'s (1992) articulation of the domestication theory or approach (Haddon, 2007; Silverstone et al., 1992). What Silverstone et al. picked up from this strain of research was how we come to choose different goods, the symbolic meanings, how they are organized within the household and how they are used. This backdrop from literature on consumption came to be articulated as the four phases, which were developed as a framework for exploring how we experience and domesticate media technologies (Haddon, 2007).

According to Silverstone et al. (1992), the four phases within the domestication process are appropriation, objectification, incorporation, and conversion. These phases are derived from theories of consumption based mainly on Miller (1987) and Douglas and

Isherwood (1980). Consumption is concerned with “the internalization of culture in everyday life” (Miller, 1987:212). Therefore the consumption or domestication of artefacts and content are both material and symbolical.

These four phases alternate between operating within a household, and as part of the household’s relation to the world outside the household through the artefacts. As Silverstone states “Consumption is never a private matter, neither phenomenologically, nor materially” (Silverstone, 2006:234). Consumption is not merely functional, it is a cultural activity (Morley & Silverstone, 1990). What therefore is important are the meanings which are constructed through the attaining, usage and display of the artefacts or the content.

I am not concerned with how the objects of television, computer, or mobile phones (of which all three can be used when engaging with the Disney tween content) were domesticated. However, the four phases are applicable when I examine how the paratexts were domesticated. I focus on the appropriation, objectification, and conversion of specifically the paratexts that are a part of the Disney media texts aimed at the tween segment. I will now describe the different phases and touch briefly on how they will be implemented in the analysis before moving on the technologies studies version, and how this is drawn on in my work.

The first phase, appropriation, deals with how both content and commodities come into the household. “It is through their appropriation that artefacts become authentic (commodities become objects) and achieve significance” (Silverstone et al., 1992:21). In this phase there is perceived to be a relationship with the outside world of that of the household. Artefacts do not come “naked” into the household, they come inscribed with meaning from those who sell and produce both content and physical artefacts. Issues here are how artefacts are brought into the home; how decisions are made, who makes the decisions, why, and whether the artefacts are given as gifts. According to Silverstone et al. (1992) the acts of appropriation are “important in an individual’s and household’s efforts at self-creation” (Silverstone et al., 1991:20). In relation to my research I look at how paratexts find their way into the homes of the girls in this study.

The second phase—objectification—is placing the objects on display in the household (Silverstone et al., 1992). Objectification is according to Silverstone et al. (1992) expressed through usage, how are these objects being put to use, and where and when are they put to use. In addition, objectification is also expressed in the physical disposition in and outside the home. Objectification is closely tied to phase number three, incorporation. This phase is about “the injection of media technological practices into the temporal patterns of domestic life” (Silverstone, 2006:235). The attention here is thus on the ways in which objects (or content) is used, and how they are incorporated in the everyday practices. Objectification and incorporation are according to Silverstone (2006) the strategies of domestication. Phases two and three are seen as the “infrastructural components of the dynamics of everyday life” (Silverstone, 2006:235). In my research I look at how Disney content and paratext become embedded in everyday practices.

During the last phase, conversion, the user talks back to the outside world through objects. This is what Silverstone (2006) describes as a reconnection from the household back to society. Silverstone et al. (1991) give an example of how children and young people might use popular cultural items (or content) “literally as a ticket into peer group culture” (Silverstone, 1991:26). The conversion phase is thus part of the individuals and the household’s portrayal to the outside world of who they are and what their moral economy contains (or does not contain). Issues to explore here are how the girls I talked to reported on using paratexts as identity indicators, as “public statement about a private reality” (Silverstone et al., 1991:25). Livingstone states that for Silverstone; “Media can and should be analysed as objects of consumption, but such an analysis does not exhaust their significance, for they have a unique status among other objects, mediating between the private world of the household and the public sphere” (Livingstone, 2007a:18). The concept of ‘sign vehicles’ from Goffman (1959) will also be central as this concept encompasses how an individual, by the use of artefacts, can convey to their surroundings how and who they want to be perceived as.

In a revision of the phases Silverstone (2006) suggested to rename the appropriation phase together with the conversion phase; commodification. As Silverstone claimed, both appropriation and conversion “link what goes on inside to what goes on outside the

home” (Silverstone, 2006:33). In my experience in the field however, how Disney paratexts came into the home did not necessarily reflect the conversion as I shall demonstrate in Chapter 8.

Empirically it is quite problematic to distinguish between these phases, and seeing them as phases suggests a linear process. Yet what actually happens might be more of a dynamic circular motion of for example first the objectification of an object and after experience and consideration a re-objectification could take place. Ward suggest that there is a close relationship between the various domestication phases, which eventually results in overlapping, thereby “highlighting the fluid nature of the process” (Ward, 2006:146). However problematic it is to empirically distinguish the phases, analytically the phases afford a better grasp of the ramification of the domestication process.

I now turn to the technologies studies version of the domestication approach as this version is also implemented in my analysis.

STS and domestication

There is, as stated, a difference between the media studies version of domestication theory and the science and technology studies (STS) version. The two versions deal with different fields of interest. The media studies traditionally have dealt with media and its audiences. The STS version on the other hand focuses on how technologies are enacted in society. Thus the technologies version is preoccupied with larger aspects of technology, and not just ICT, but also the car, the phone, technologies in the home, in factories, and other work places (Sørensen, 2006; Vestby, 1996). Intrinsically there is thus a difference in interest in the two versions—they draw on different disciplines and come from different research backgrounds.

The STS version of domestication looks beyond the home and household when examining how technology is domesticated (Horst & Hjorth, 2013; Sørensen, 2006). This enables a broader use of the framework, liberating the daily practices from the physical house. “In this version, domestication was less about household consumption and more related to the construction of a wider everyday life” (Sørensen, 2006:46). Within science and technology studies, domestication has been employed in relation to

a wider everyday praxis than merely within the physical house or home (Lie & Sørensen, 1996). Lie and Sørensen widened the lens by moving out of house so to speak. “Domestication does not occur only in households” (Lie & Sørensen, 1996:13). The research on the domestication of the car serves as an example as well as research on technologies in different work places. The encompassing of the “outside” world (i.e., outside the house) is as stated also a focus within the media studies version. However, it was the science and technology studies version that first went beyond the walls. As Horst and Hjorth (2013) claim, the Norwegian version (to which I refer to as the STS version) located “media within broader cultural and technological practices” (Horst & Hjorth, 2013:91).

Another difference between the two versions of domestication is that the STS version does not employ the concept of the moral economy of the household. According to Sørensen (2006) moral economy as a concept is too strict and stable a notion in fluid modernity. Bakardjieva found that there were no stable moral economies, rather constant struggles to manage change (Bakardjieva, 2006:66). Households are subject to change through for example dissolving of families (divorce, death, children moving out, the whole family moving), which changes the members and possibly also the moral economy. Another reason for leaving out moral economy is that it is perceived as vaguely structuralistic as actions can be seen as being formed by the moral economy of the household. In addition, moral economy is in this version perceived as intrinsically conservative as technologies need to be tamed and fitted into the moral economy of the household. The STS version does deal with morality however “the moral aspects of technologies seem to remain dynamic” (Sørensen, 2006:57). Thus in this version the focus is action-oriented rather than structurally oriented, thus, differing slightly from, however, not incompatible with the media studies version.

Another key feature within the media studies version, which is notably absent in the science and technology studies version, is the concept of double articulation. As the science and technology studies version primarily deals with technologies and not content, such as media texts, the double articulation is not needed.

Where the media studies version discusses domestication as a process anchored in phases, the STS version of the domestication framework rather conceptualizes three features, dimensions or aspects (Sørensen, 2006). The three generic sets of features within this version are the construction of the practices related to an artefact, the construction of meaning of the artefact, and the cognitive processes related to learning of practices as well as meaning (Sørensen, 2006:47). There is thus symbolic work embedded in this, as people create symbolic meanings of artefacts. There is the practical work where users develop patterns of usage and integrate the artefacts into daily practices. And there is the cognitive work, where users learn about the artefacts. When exploring how the children I talked to domesticate the Disney tween content I drew on the three features derived from the STS version. In Chapter 6 I thus explore how Disney was part of the children's everyday practices, how they constructed meanings in their meeting with the media texts, and how the children used Disney as part of their biographical narratives and how they described learning from Disney.

A main pillar in the STS version is the focus on action. Enabling this view is Actor-Network-Theory (ANT). As Sørensen (2006) suggests we can draw on ANT as a theoretical resource:

First, the 'taming' of an artefact may be understood as a process where a script or a programme is translated or re-scripted through the way users read, interpret and act. Second, domestication may be seen as the process through which an artefact becomes associated with practices, meanings, people and other artefacts in the construction of intersecting large and small networks. (Sørensen, 2006:46)

Drawing on actor-network theory I am able to navigate away from a strictly social constructionist view as well as a strictly deterministic view. Users, media texts and paratext are perceived as actors. Closely tied to the STS version is thus ANT which with its co-constructivist perspective provides the tools for working with this dynamic moral, use and meaning of the technology in question.

In the remaining part of this chapter and before drawing the theoretical framework together, I explain how I adapt ANT as a way to clearly focus on how meaning and entities are ontologically enacted. I do this by first shortly describing the main features,

which I draw from ANT and how ANT sensibilities can help analyse the text and context, making use of concepts like script and configuring.

Actor-network theory

The fundamental perspective on which this thesis is based on is the notion that entities come into meaning and are enacted in the meeting between entities. Thus, ANT plays a part in my theoretical framework as a tool to avoid readymade categories and assumptions on things and people. There are four aspects, which I draw on from ANT namely acknowledging non-human entities as actors, focusing on action, the concept of script, and the concept of assemblage.

The first theoretical perspective I draw on from ANT is viewing both human and non-human entities as actors. Actors are seen in symmetry with each other. As Akrich puts it: “technical objects and people are brought into being in a process of reciprocal definition in which objects are defined by subjects and subjects by objects” (Akrich, 1992:222). In the ANT way of thinking, technology constructs the social just as much as the social constructs the technical. As such both the social and the technical should be examined as one field, focusing as much on the technical field as the social. In this work the technical is not technical items in the narrow sense (technical entities like computers, television sets, mobile phones) rather the media texts and the paratexts are the technical elements. This line of thinking also affords a more equal power distribution between what we would traditionally label subjects (the humans) and objects (non-humans). Thus, Latour calls for examining human and non-human actors as symmetrical actors however, not as equal contenders:

ANT is not, I repeat is not, the establishment of some absurd ‘symmetry between humans and non-humans’. To be symmetric, for us, simply means not to impose a priori some spurious asymmetry among human intentional action and a material world of causal relations. (Latour, 2005:76)

Actors together make up assemblages, or networks, which again become actors as well as flexible and changing. By acknowledging that both human (users and producers) and non-human (media texts and paratexts) entities take part in constructing how everyday

practices come into being, we can talk of a co-construction or coproduction of the social *and* the artefacts. This coproduction can be seen as part of the ANT. According to Latour (1992) the social is not the glue that holds society together—rather the artefacts and the material are the glue of what we call the social. Therefore theoretically there is a need for a framework that encompasses a sociotechnical perspective.

The second aspect drawn from ANT is to be action oriented. A strength of ANT is its focus on understanding the social world, as far as possible, without a priori notions of what that world is. Part of this means focusing on what is being done, in other words the actions. ANT is an action oriented theory where action and agency is understood as distributed among several actors and the actors and networks are seen as flexible and complex. Society needs to be seen as the result of actions, not that society informs or explains actions (Latour, 2005). Thus it is a focus on the doings, the enactment, and the meetings between actors, both human and non-human. As a researcher one should avoid placing actors in readymade categories and let actors “unfold their own differing cosmos, no matter how counter-intuitive they appear” (Latour, 2005:23). This line of thinking can be tied to childhood studies as one of the key features is to take children’s voice seriously, thus employing a bottom-up perspective in an attempt to leave the a priori assumptions behind. Action is a main interest within ANT, as Gad and Jensen (2010) put it: “ANT is about performativity: things are what they are because they are done that way by actors relating to other actors” (Gad & Jensen, 2010:58). According to Livingstone “Accounting for the power of audiences or users remains one of the most contested aspects of media (and consumption) studies” (Livingstone, 2007a:19). Thus by employing ANT we can look beyond the static notion of who has power and rather examine what actors and networks do.

In addition to the focus on actual users in this thesis, focus is also directed at the media texts, *Hannah Montana* and *High School Musical*, and representatives for Disney as the producers. Although the main emphasis is on the children’s voice in accordance with childhood studies, we also need to account for the other actors in this network. Following ANT, a goal is to both follow and balance the actors, not giving more power to either one.

Both [domestication and design] constrain and enable the capacity of consumers to define their own relationship to the technologies that are offered to, or confront, them. These constraints (...) are embodied in design and marketing and in the public definitions of 'what these technologies can and should be used for.' (Silverstone & Haddon, 1996:46)

In Hall's encoding-decoding model the notion is that a media text is encoded by its producers and the decoding, which can be said to be the 'reading' of a given media text, is done by its audience (or users) (Hall, 2001). This decoding does not necessarily correspond with what producers have coded it with. In other words Hall's model opens up for different readings of a media text. There can be a preferred reading, which is what the producers want the audience to read. An oppositional reading, implies that the reader, whose social situation places them in a directly oppositional relation to the dominant code, understands the preferred reading, but rejects this reading, bringing an alternative frame of reference. Or there can be a negotiated reading, where the reader partly shares the text's code, and broadly accepts the preferred reading, but can resist and modify it in a way that reflects her or his position, experiences, and interests.

Although Hall's encoding-decoding model is useful and has been influential within reception and media studies (Alasuutari, 1999), in my analysis I rather make use of the concept of script. Hall's model is focused on the textual aspects through the concept of code. In order to move away from the mere textual and towards a more contextual perspective the concept of script will be employed in the analysis. The third perspective I therefore draw on from ANT is the concept of script. Thus, when discussing what can be read into the media texts of *Hannah Montana* and *High School Musical* I make use of the concept script deriving from Akrich (1992). This concept entails that an object is scripted for specific use. There are thus constraints inscribed in the product: "although users add their own interpretations (...) it is likely that the script will become a major element for interpreting interaction between the object and its users" (Akrich, 1992:216). The concept of script enables a focus both on interpretation of media texts as well as being action oriented by including both space and temporal dimensions as the focus is on use rather than reading.

While script is employed in my analysis of the media texts, a slightly different, however parallel, tool is used when examining how two Disney representatives discuss their users, specifically Woolgar's (1997) term "configuring the user". With configuring Woolgar means "to define, enable and constrain" (Woolgar, 1997:74). Woolgar focused on the design process. According to Oudshoorn and Pinch (2008:548), Woolgar's approach draws attention to users as represented by the designers. Focus is thus on how Disney representatives construct or configure their users.

In addition networks or assemblages are also a main feature within ANT. The fourth aspect I adopt from ANT is the concept of assemblage. Traditionally within sociology action is seen either as agency driven or structurally informed. With Latour's (2005) sociology of associations, the focus is on the assemblages between social entities in order to investigate what they consist of and how they become actors. Agency within the sociology of associations or ANT is seen not as a possession of the individual, but rather as something that is exercised in specific situations and events and via assemblages of human and non-human actors. A network is an assemblage of both human and non-human actors who are linked together through processes of translation that perform a particular function (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010). The child as an entity changes not inherently, but rather through actions within the different assemblages. The assemblage of the household for example does something different for a child actor than when that child is in a school setting. This perspective thus has much in common with the circuit of culture. Both approaches attempt to move beyond the dichotomy of structure and agency as power is not perceived to lie with producers, the texts, or users but rather in the interrelationships between them. As Jansson, coming from the cultural studies tradition states: "Neither media culture nor consumer culture can be reduced to only products, practices or communities, but involve the very interrelationship between the three spheres" (Jansson, 2002:11).

In the past decade there have been some scholars attempting to make use of ANT in relation to children and consumer studies (Brembeck, Ekström, & Mörck, 2007; Johansson, 2007; Woolgar, 2012). The space between childhood and youth, which the term tweens suggests, can be experienced as an ambivalent space (Cody, 2012; Johansson, 2007; Tufte, 2011). Perceiving non-humans as actors does not entail that

they act with intentions, it merely helps elucidate that non-human's presence *does* something with the network or assemblage.

Bringing them all together

In this thesis I focus on children perceived to be tweens, their incorporation of the Disney tween franchises of *High School Musical* and *Hannah Montana*, and how these were part of the children's daily practices and as part of their age doings. Thus, the main assemblage I follow in this thesis is constituted by Disney, parents, and children.

Instead of thinking about tweens as a marketing term, as the term is being used in both research and in the general media, my agenda is rather to explore how this category is enacted. This is done by focusing mainly on how children perceived to be tweens meet Disney. How are tweens configured as an audience, how are they inscribed in the media texts? What type of identity making tools does Disney provide these tweens? Is there a concurrence between the scripts and configurations on one hand and the experienced daily practices of the children on the other hand?

My theoretical framework is, as stated, mainly grounded in domestication theory. This approach is fruitful given my research questions, as my aim in this thesis is to understand how tweens as an age category is enacted through the use of Disney media and paratexts. Aiding this research is also childhood studies as this field has the agenda to understand the social construction of childhood through experienced childhood. This implies taking children's view and voices seriously and not merely seeing them as a becoming adult. Domestication theory, like childhood studies, is preoccupied with the users' experiences. In addition, domestication theory makes sense in relation to my research questions as it widens the lens when looking at users of media to encompass not merely the use, but also the surrounding contexts.

The theoretical agenda in the work that follows is to understand the tween as a stage or space drawing on childhood studies and domestication theory. The domestication framework, the circuit-of-culture and ANT supports my theoretical perspective as they allow for a sociotechnical perspective solidifying the notion that the technical and

material, as well as the social, plays a part in the construction of tweens. As Horst and Hjorth (2013:91) argue, domestication theory brings together the focus upon the relationship between objects and the focus upon text and meaning in cultural studies. Technologies do not determine how they will be used, however “they create different possibilities for use” (Morley & Silverstone, 1990:46). Thus, there can be said to be a script attached to cultural products. This thesis sets out to explore what scripts Disney offers its tween users. In addition I explore how the children I talked to use and engage with the Disney tween franchises

Working with several theories there is a need to clarify where the different theories will be employed as the empirical chapters rely on different parts of the theoretical framework. Chapters 4 and 5 deal with the producer and the product employing the concept of script (Akrich, 1992) and configuring the user (Woolgar, 1997) when exploring how Disney representatives talked about tweens and how tweens are inscribed in the media texts of *Hannah Montana* and *High School Musical*. How tweens were configured and inscribed in relation to the topics of age, gender, and values were specifically of interest when engaging with this data.

In Chapter 6 the three aspects of domestication theory derived from the science and technology studies version will be implemented. Thus this empirical chapter will deal with the aspect of praxis, of meaning, and of learning. These three aspects are useful tools to implement in order to explore children’s talk of Disney as everyday practices, meaning making, and as part of their biographical narratives. How was Disney content domesticated by the children in the data?

Chapter 7 employs the concept of moral economy of the household from the media studies version of domestication theory. In this chapter, the focus is on the interviews with parents of girls who are preoccupied with the Disney tween franchises. By using the concept of moral economy I explore the complex negotiations parents dealt with in relation to the Disney tween franchises. This chapter also draws on the third feature from childhood studies, seeing the child in relation to adulthood.

In Chapter 8 where the topic is how the girls in this study domesticated the paratexts, the four phases from the media studies version of domestication theory will guide the

analysis. Specifically I examine how paratexts were appropriated, in other words how the paratexts came into their homes. Focus will also be on the objectification phase, examining how the paratexts became part of the girls' daily practices. What did the girls *do* with the paratexts? How were they incorporated in their daily practices? The conversion phase will also be dealt with, did the girls use these paratexts as what Goffman (1959) refers to as sign vehicles?

In Chapter 9 the ANT sensibilities of assemblages will serve as a tool for exploring how tweens are enacted in the meeting with family, peers and non-human entities. Thus, in this chapter I do not only want to focus on the assemblage of children and Disney, but also on how age is being done in a wider sense, through other assemblages. This chapter also draws on childhood studies and earlier research on tweens. Here I explore how tweens as a social category is done. How do the children I talked to engage in doing age?

Intrinsically in this study lies an understanding of the mutual enactment of both entities and assemblages. Things and people do not merely come into being on their own, but rather are mutually enacted within a network consisting of different human and non-human actors. In this sense 'tweens' is a sociotechnical construction, a hybrid of social and material elements.

In the chapter that follows I will describe the methodological route which was taken to obtain the data which is the foundation for this work.

Chapter 3: Methodological reflections

In order to explore the mutual enactment and the co-construction of the tween category it is important to examine the different stakeholders who play a part in this enactment. In this thesis I define children in the ages perceived to be tweens, their parents, and representatives for the Disney Company, as well as the media texts of *High School Musical* and *Hannah Montana* as stakeholders of interest. The previous chapter described my theoretical framework, and this chapter will describe how the data came into being. Thus, this chapter will describe how the research for this thesis was conducted, what methods were used, and how I have analysed them.

Before describing the road I have travelled, the television content I have seen, the people I have talked to, and the observations I made, I briefly outline the design of this study.

The design of the study

This thesis concerns itself with how tweens as a category is constructed by different stakeholders. As discussed in the previous chapter, the circuit of culture is an approach within the cultural studies tradition, methodologically this framework suggests who and what to examine. In addition, according to Latour (2005) a slogan from ANT is that you have to ‘follow the actors themselves.’ Miller suggests that “the trick is to select the paths you wish to follow, and those which you wish to ignore, and do so according to the assemblage you wish to chart” (Miller, 1997:363). The assemblage I wish to chart in this study is the one of children, parents, Disney text, and Disney as a company.

In order to illuminate how tweens are constructed this thesis is based on a combination of different empirical methods accounting for the different stakeholders and in order to enrich the analysis of the study. Thus, my research design focuses on giving an account

of the assemblage of Disney (as text and as a company), parents and children. The design is as follows:

- Observation of children's daily lives in two after school programs
- Focus groups with girls from the after school programs
- Interviews with children
- Interviews with parents
- Interviews with Disney representatives
- Text analysis of *High School Musical* and *Hannah Montana*

In order to go in depth in the meaning making of children's relations to the concept of tweens and the Disney tween franchises a qualitative approach was chosen. As childhood studies, domestication theory, and ANT all focus on the user and their context, making use of qualitative methods aids in highlighting the voices of those in question corresponding with the theoretical framework.

Qualitative-interpretive research has proven to be particularly well suited to the task of "knowing children" on their own terms in that it seeks to bring forth and analyse the actors' views of the world (Cook, 2009:274). Qualitative methods can also give us more of an insight into the behaviour, choice, and the creating of meaning (Lull, 1990).

Actors know what they do and we have to learn from them not only what they do, but how and why they do it. It is us, the social scientists, who lack knowledge of what they do, and not they who are missing the explanation of why they are unwittingly manipulated by forces exterior to themselves and known to the social scientist's powerful gaze and methods. (Latour, 1999:19, italics in the original)

Employing qualitative methods allows coming close to the actors we study. We can go deeper as qualitative methods allow us to use follow-up questions focusing on the meaning making and reflection of the actors. Being together with the actors and being able to see the things in children's rooms for example are also benefits of qualitative methods.

The methods put to use in this work have been predominantly interviews. However, I have also engaged in ethnographically inspired field work before focusing on the topics. While the analysis chapters are mainly based on the interviews, the observation phase

allowed me a glimpse into the children's everyday practices following both Latour (1999, 2005) and Couldry (2010).

In addition to focusing on the use of the Disney tween franchises, there is added value by including general lived cultures, or the daily practices of the children in question. I have therefore included a separate analysis chapter (Chapter 9) on tween's construction of their age group in order to gain a broader view of the children in question and their interests. Hills states: "The focus on singular fan cultures also present the danger that fans' readings will be cut off from the wider consumption patterns that surround and might help to make sense of their fan activities" (Hills, 2002:2). As Hills suggests, scrutinizing one aspect of a person's life might give an uneven perspective. This of course is in agreement with Silverstone who states that an audience is not *only* an audience (Silverstone, 1991). Sørenssen and Mitchell (2011) also argue for broadening the scope rather than focusing on tweens merely as consumers and users: "To conclude, studying tween culture and its users calls for an explicit recognition of the status of the texts, the positioning of children in a commodified space, and the place of adults (marketers, producers, parents, and other caregiver adults)" (Sørenssen & Mitchell, 2011:169).

The six analysis chapters in this thesis are as following: Chapter 4 examines the producers through how two representatives for Disney configure tweens as market segment. Chapter 5 concentrates on the media texts dealing with how tweens are inscribed as an imagined audience in the media texts of *Hannah Montana* and *High School Musical*. Chapter 6 focuses on the users, which are the children I talked to and how they domesticate the Disney media texts. Chapter 7 concerns itself with the parents of the girls and can thus be seen as a broadening of the topic including the parents' voices and how they contemplate around the Disney media texts and paratexts. Chapter 8 turns back to the users focusing on the girls, as they were the primary users of the Disney paratexts. And lastly, Chapter 9 represents the lived cultures part where the children's voices are examined in relation to their age doings.

Before going into more detail of the field work executed for this thesis, discussing the four groups of participants of my research (the text, the producer, the users and their parents), I will give an outline of the road which has been taken. Although data in this

thesis contains producers, parents and media texts the main attention will be on the children considered to be tweens.

The road travelled

Disney was not a topic for research when first embarking on this study. The topic was rather wide: “tweens and consumption”. The basic question was “what do tweens consume, what is important for tweens, and what do these things mean in a social setting?” The goal was to find an item or a phenomenon to research as a case study. The reason for starting wide, without a case study or phenomenon at hand was an attempt to avoid constructing the children as (only) an audience/consumer group. As Angela McRobbie suggests: “What is now required is a methodology, a new paradigm for conceptualizing identity-in-culture, and ethnographic approach which takes as its starting point the relational interactive quality of everyday life” (McRobbie, 1994:58). Thus the goal was to begin with the lived cultures of the children’s lives, informed by Couldry (2010), Hills (2002), Alasuutari (1999), McRobbie (1994), Radway (1988) and Johnson (1986).

I started out by conducting four focus groups in the fall of 2006 with the topic being merely consumption as a pilot study in hopes of guiding me to a more refined focus. This was supplemented by a four month long ethnographic observation at two after school programs in the spring of 2007. I will refer to the two after school programs as Westside and Southside. The goal of this was to explore what children in the tween ages talk about and what place consumer goods had. I also conducted six focus groups with 18 girls from the two after school programs, with an interview guide relating mostly to money and different items.

After having spent some time in the field I found that a common denominator was various Disney Channel media texts. Hence, I decided to focus specifically on the two most popular media texts that were referenced to in my data, namely *Hannah Montana* and *High School Musical*. Since Disney’s tween content was available on television (in the form of the films and television series), and in online activities (such as games, dress-up and ‘chatting’ with the stars on Disney websites), as well as in the in the form

of commodities (such as clothes, CD's, school items, and other commodities) and in the form of social communications and doings by the children I encountered (such as references, games, role playing, and singing the songs from the content) Disney's tween content deserved a well-rounded approach. This is where the inspiration from the circuit of culture model comes into play. To understand the broader picture of what was going on with these children, and what these children did, drawing on the circuit of culture seemed as a beneficial underpinning.

After the decision had been made to focus on Disney, I spent some time gaining access to Disney as producers, and was eventually granted a meeting with Casper Bjorner, the Vice President General Manager of Disney Channel Scandinavia in Stockholm in 2008, which consequently opened the doors to Thomas Heegaard, the Director of the Toy Division at Disney Consumer Products Nordic whom I interviewed in Copenhagen in 2009. Simultaneously I recruited children for the Disney case study through the after school program and through friends of friends.

For the individual interviews I had seven girls and six boys. Five girls were recruited from the after school program and two girls were recruited through my own acquaintances. The boys were recruited through an online posting on the universities intranet seeking boys in the ages 8-12 who would want to talk to me about being in this age group and about the two Disney tween franchises. I also interviewed the parents of the girls in order to gain a broader understanding on their girls' daily practices. The reason to only interview the girls' parents was due to the fact that the Disney tween franchises, although made use of as references by both girls and boys, were more popular amongst the girls than the boys.

The text analysis was the last phase of the empirical work. However, before undergoing the actual text analysis, I had seen large parts of the *Hannah Montana* sitcom and also had seen all three movies in the *High School Musical* trilogy.

As the children are the main focus in this thesis I now turn to a short discussion and contemplation about my engagement with the children. After this I describe the different phases of my empirical work. I first discuss my presence in the after school program and the interviews with the children. I then move on to describe my interviews

with the parents, before focusing on the Disney representatives and finally describe how I engaged with the media texts. The last part of this chapter will deal with analysis, ethical considerations, and the quality of the data produced.

Researching with children- gaining access

I choose in this heading to use the phrase researching *with* and not researching *on*, emphasizing children as subjects rather than objects to be studied. What researchers can learn from the subjects are the subject's own perceptions of their place in society. The subjects are the experts in their field, and it is because of this expertise that researchers come to them to try to understand them (Latour, 2005; Woodhead & Faulkner, 2000).

Cathy: Have you researched me now?

Ingvild: That was a difficult question.

Cathy: Well, have you researched me now?

Ingvild: Well, I'm trying to learn more about you kids, and by talking to you now, I sort of learned some more, so in a way I would say that I've researched you a little bit now yes.

When it comes to the children, this thesis is based on data collected through individual interviews, focus groups, and ethnographic observation. A reason for using several methods was that the research question was derived from the observation and focus groups. Another reason is, as Qvortrup argues, that there are many ways of collecting information about children's lives and childhood, and that "No one method alone can produce all knowledge needed" (Qvortrup, 2008:67). Hence one should strive to gather information using several methods.

Another argument for choosing more than one method of data collection with children is that variety can in itself stimulate and maintain the interest of the participants and help to reduce the unequal power relationships between the adult researcher and the child participant (Punch, 2002). Group interviews can be useful for rapport building and as a warm-up discussion to an individual interview where participants can talk freely about more private things without interruptions and without taking into consideration the presence of their peers (Punch, 2002). This is the path that I chose in my field work,

first observation, then focus groups, and then finally individual interviews in the children's homes.

Gaining access to the field can be problematic (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:54). Not only gaining actual physical access, but social acceptance within the subjects of research is also not trouble free. There has been written quite an extensive body of literature on how to do research with children and adolescents (amongst others: Boyden & Ennew, 1997; Fine & Sandstrom, 1988; Gulløv & Højlund, 2003; Mandell, 1988). These all contemplate the problems of power and authority that is never completely equal between children and adults. While one can try to tone down the power relation between the researcher and those researched, it is an illusion that this can be potentially erased (Kvale, 2005).

This is not to suggest that the children are without power. Children are the ultimate gate-keepers to their culture, and thereby hold an inherent powerful position as they can decide to acknowledge or not, and contribute or not, to the research situation. What needs to be taken into consideration is thus not only the status/power relations between adults and children, but more specifically the status/power relations of culture. Power is not only embedded in the child/adult relations, but also in context:

In the process of research, power moves between different actors and different social positions, it is produced and negotiated in the social interactions of child to adult, child to child and adult to adult in the local settings of the research. (Christensen, 2004:175)

This is not to suggest that we should disregard the potential power issues that may occur between adults and children in a research context, but rather to broaden the perspective.

How does one convey to the children in question that one is genuinely interested in their culture, and that one is not there to evaluate it, when children might be used to having their popular culture being devalued by adults? Or as Mitchell and Reid Walsh put it: "What approach can minimize the inherent tension with adults (with all the power and the outsider status) studying children (with none of the power and all the insider status)?" (Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2002:26). A way of gaining access with the children, I found in my field work that keeping updated on television programs and channels

directed at children, paying attention to billboard lists and other popular culture items, helped me to build rapport with the children.

Southside:

Tone: Oh, now you look like Gabrielle! (to Cecilie)

Ingvild: Who's that?

Tone: She's a girl in this movie.

Ingvild: What movie?

Tone: High School musical.

Ingvild: Oh the one on Disney channel.

Tone: Yeah, wow, you know a lot.

By actively referring to popular cultural phenomena in the observation phase, as well as showing interest, I was able to build a relationship with the children, especially the girls, conveying to them that I was genuinely interested in their popular culture. However, I was not able to build rapport with the children based solely on my knowledge of their popular culture and icons. The build-up of rapport took time and patience. I was up to speed for the most part on the different cultural phenomena that came up in discussion, but the first few days I was there, before the children were familiar with me, it didn't help throwing popular cultural icons around:

Southside:

Ingvild: Oh, is that Bratz on your socks and shirt?

Dina (walks by not answering and not looking at me)

To think that I could just come in and throw popular cultural references around, and by doing that alone would gain access to their social sphere, might have been a little naïve from my side. However, after coming back several times, my popular cultural references gained more value and the children counted on me, asking me why I was not there if I had been gone for a couple of days, and greeting me with hugs and excitement when I showed up. Building up relationships in all arenas takes time, and sitting back and not jumping the gun (which I had a tendency to do in the beginning) proved to be quite fruitful.

Westside when I was watching the girls play with PlayStation2:

Sara: If you want to know about children, you have to do what children do you have to play too if you want be here and learn about kids. You have to play like kids to understand!

When researching with children one cannot anticipate participating in their lives as if one were one of them, rather the goal is to try to create a role for one's self as a researcher (Gulløv & Højlund, 2003:117). In the ethnographic observational phase, I placed myself as an observer participant (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:107). The overall idea with this position is that one lets the ones who are observed know that one is a researcher and that one can interact with them as a researcher. It enables a possibility to shift between participation and observation. Thus the field work includes an interaction between participation in people's daily lives combined with observation and reflections.

By labelling myself as an observer participant I placed myself as an outsider, a researcher with a marginal role who observes and who participates when the children invite me to. As a rule, I always either waited to be invited to join the children or asked permission from the children to be with them, to sit with them, or to play with them to not impose myself on them. This was done so that they could choose whether or not to have contact with me. However, one might argue that this position mirrors the adult/teacher- child relation, as children are said to be used to the tradition of being asked questions from teachers with predefined answers, and according to Dahlberg et al., this pattern is embodied in the children (Dahlberg et al., 1999:53).

When contemplating the role one as a researcher might have, this should not be a discussion of only the 'least adult role' (Mandell, 1988), the atypical adult (Corsaro, 1997), or the childlike role (Gulløv & Højlund, 2003), but rather a discussion on how to position one's self as a child researcher. One needs to establish a role as a researcher separate from other adult roles, but also separate from children's roles (Gulløv & Højlund, 2003:116). Corsaro (1997) uses the term atypical adult, in other words, being an adult yes, but being different to the adult roles they are used to. A term I frequently made use of in my field work when kids came up to me asking me to do something about other kids bothering them, usually girls asking me to get the boys to stop hassling them, was "I'm not that kind of adult." In this way I was able to distance myself from the typical responsible adult role the staff at the after school program inhabited.

By distancing myself I was able to partake and engage in play and conversations in a different way. “It is only through engaging with children through actions and seeking to learn their ways of constructing reality that one can capture their perspectives” (Gulløv & Højlund, 2003:101). This does not imply ‘being’ a child, but rather ‘doing’ what children do. Solberg (1996) stresses the shift of focus from being to doing. As an adult researcher one cannot ‘be’ a child, but one can take part in activities and ‘do’ what children do.

Being open paved the way for methodological discussions with the children on how to best get the information I was after, seeing that they are the experts in the field. I benefited greatly from discussions with the children on how to best learn about them. Two girls at Southside suggested this to me after having talked with them in a focus group interview. I asked them after the group interview what I should do to get more information, and their answer was plain:

Rebecca: Do what kids do.

Ingvild: But won’t that be weird? I’m not a kid.

Rebecca: No you’re not, but you can still do what we do.

This of course requires acceptance and inclusion that the researcher has to gain from the children in question. Being able to have something in common, actively engaging in a joint activity can help improve the researcher’s relationship with the children. “Shifting focus from the researcher’s possibilities to achieve equal status with the children to how a researcher can participate in the same activities as children can, prove to be a methodological advantage” (Gulløv & Højlund, 2003:64). This is an experience that I am familiar with. When sitting at the play dough table at Westside, playing and making figures like the girls at the table did, the conversation seemed to flow, and it facilitated further possibilities of asking questions without it sounding like a one way interview. In this way I was partaking in the social rituals that the children themselves did with or without me. I was here able to act as a novice, doing what they did and not being obstructed by my age.

Participant observation and focus groups

Four months in the spring of 2007 I spent my weeks ambulating between Southside and Westside conducting an ethnographic study that would be the ground work for choosing Disney's tween franchises as a case study. While interviews constitute the main method in this study, the participant observations and the focus groups are important as they complement the data, enabling me to experience daily practices that go beyond the context of the interview (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009).

I chose in my field work to be open about why I was present. Fine and Sandstrom (1988) uses the term shallow cover, being open, but vague. As I went in to the field without a specific question I could not elaborate on what it was I was 'looking for.' This is partly because the issue of consumption is complex, and partly because I did not have a fixed research question so early on in my research. Instead of an explicit research problem, I had research interests, which included children and merchandise. Hence, I simplified the complexity somewhat telling the children that I was interested in what children like and dislike. I was presented as a researcher by the staff in the two after school programs, and spent my days with the children observing and engaging in the activities they were doing.

The observation was very valuable; it was a golden opportunity to catch a glimpse of what these specific children were preoccupied with. It also gave me a possibility to interact with these children and have conversations with them where the topics came from what they were doing at the time, and not from me, the researcher. Most importantly, this is where the idea of focusing specifically on the Disney tween franchises first surfaced, however, it would not be till after having conducted the focus groups that the idea solidified and became the main focus on the research project.

In the months that I spent at Westside and Southside I also conducted six focus groups, three in each after school program. Put shortly, the focus group interview is an interview with targeted group members who discusses and share their experiences, feelings and meanings concerning a predefined theme. It is a research method where data is collected through group interaction (Wibeck, 2000). In a focus group interview, a researcher can make herself less visible by focusing on the relations between the

members of the group. The goal of such a method is to try to get the children to communicate more with each other than with the moderator; “focus groups are an excellent means for collecting information from young children and teens” (Berg, 2001:111). When the focus groups were conducted, Disney was not a theme, rather the interview was focused on questions of money, spending, toys and other articles the children liked and disliked—in other words the topic was general consumption.

Through the after school program observation and through the focus group interviews, Disney channel shows *Hannah Montana* and *High School Musical* seemed very present. After contemplating the data I decided to focus more specifically on the Disney Channel. The individual interviews were meant to cover the preoccupation with Disney, however also here there were questions concerning broader and general notion of these children’s cultural lives.

Talking with children

Interviews are more explicit than observations as the children are asked to reflect on or to explain issues in their lives. In the after school programs I was able to watch them and engage in a more 'natural' setting. This was a help in getting a broader picture of the state of things by being the children’s environment, while the interviews are more focus on topics that I selected.

What researchers can learn from the subjects are the subjects’ own perceptions of their place in society. The subjects are the experts in their field, and it is because of this expertise that researchers come to them to try to understand them (Latour, 2005, Tiller, 1989). It is therefore important that they are treated like the experts they are.

Qualitative interviews can be seen as social meetings between the researcher and others. Information drawn from interviews is created in dialogue (Järvinen, 2005). Thus, I regard knowledge produced in the interview setting to be the result of a relational interaction between interviewer and interviewee (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Tiller (1991) argues that ideally the relationship between the interviewee and the researcher should express a form of equality and mutuality, a symmetric relation between the two,

for that is the only gateway to the children's world (Tiller, 1991). This somewhat romanticized view of the interview has been critiqued by Kvale as it portrays: "an illusion of equality and common interests with their interview subjects, while they at the same time retain sovereign control of the interview situation and the later use of the interview produced knowledge" (Kvale, 2002:9). Kvale points out that in the writings of qualitative interviews there has been a neglecting of the power asymmetry and the conflicts involved in qualitative interviewing (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005).

It is important to be aware of the fact that this is not a democratic dialogue, but a conversation highly steered by the interviewer who holds the power over the topic and the questions. It is the interviewer who initiates the conversation and also closes it. If an interview were truly equal then the interviewees would have to be able to expect the same openness from the interviewer that is expected from the subjects. There would have to be a democratic election of themes and topics as well as the subjects' option to themselves interpret their own statements. This is rarely done in research interview situations, and therefore Tiller's (1991) conclusion that the ideal for research interviews is that of total symmetry between the two, is rather problematic. It can however be profitable to make an effort to downplay the automatic authority that adults have in relation to children. There is a difference between trying to erase the age gap in an interview situation and trying to give the subject the same amount of power in the situation as the researcher has.

The children I interviewed were chosen partly among the children at the after school programs and partly recruited through friends, and the universities intranet. I interviewed six boys and seven girls. Five girls I knew of beforehand through the after school programs and two of them were daughters of friends of mine which I also knew beforehand. In addition to the seven girls interviewed in the analysis chapters I also use an interview with two girls whom I interviewed after having seen the *High School Musical the Ice Tour* show in Oslo. These two girls I did not know beforehand and were recruited through a High School Musical fan-webpage.

The six boys were recruited through an online posting on the universities intranet and I did not know any of them beforehand. This raises some potential issues. If I had

interviewed the boys from the after school programs I might have acquired richer data. However, the individual interviews took place after the observation phase and I had no contact with any of the boys after this. Also, in the field work period, though attempting to engage with the boys, I found it easier to connect with the girls.

Another issue is that I only have one interviewee from Southside and four from Westside. Ideally I would have had equal amount from both schools, however, it was difficult to recruit from Southside. Although my data is skewed both in regards of gender and school, the data I do have from the interviewees, are rich sets of data concerning the girls. The girls interviewed were all girls who I felt were familiar with me. I had either observed them or knew them beforehand. Thus, all the girls in the individual interviews were used to communicating with me. I want to stress that although there is a danger in being too close to the actors followed which might lead to biased interpretations, these girls were not a part of my daily life and therefore there was a distance between me and the girls as well as them being used to talk with me. The Disney tween franchises are mainly a girl phenomenon, thus focusing on girls makes sense.

In the analysis chapter to follow the girls' voices are overrepresented. There are several reasons for this. As stated I had already built up rapport with these girls. Some of the girls also contacted me on MSM messenger and would chat with me online. This was initially not part of the data collection; however I have used an excerpt in Chapter 9. In addition, the topics of the interviews were typically something that girls both liked and talked about more than the boys in my experience. As a researcher it is a grateful job, being able to discuss and ask about topics that someone is enthusiastic about.

On a general note, the boys interviewed here did not enjoy the Disney tween franchises. However, they did have something to say about who the media texts were made for. Thus in Chapter 6—which concerns itself with the domestication of the media texts—the boys are represented. However, in Chapter 8, which focuses on the domestication of paratexts, of which the boys had none, their voices are absent. In Chapter 9 where the focus is on how those who are considered to be tweens describe and discuss their age as different from those older and younger we hear the boys again.

The interview after the ice show in Oslo took place in a hotel lobby. The focus on this interview was predominantly on the *High School Musical* franchise however we also spoke about their age in general. The rest of the interviews took place in the children's bedrooms. The first interview with the girls concerned itself with the Disney tween franchises. The interview guide (see Appendix 1) was focused on whether or not they liked *Hannah Montana* and *High School Musical*, who they thought it was made for, if they had any of the paratexts, if they engaged in activities (play, signing, reading books, enacting the media texts), and what their parents' views on the franchises were.

The second interview guide (see Appendix 2) focused more specifically on the age doings, concentrating on what they perceived as typical for children in their age group and how they differed from older and younger children. We talked about objects they had there, books, posters, or toys. The interview with the girls took between 1 and 1 ½ hours to conduct. As I have not made use of all the data collected, hereunder is an overview of the voices that will be heard in the analysis chapters of the girls:

The girls: Name	Disney tween affiliation	Age
Tone Southside, part of the focus group	<i>High School Musical</i> fan and enjoyed <i>Hannah Montana</i> .	Had contact from she was eight till 13
Ida , daughter of an acquaintance.	Liked <i>High School Musical</i>	Interviewed when she was 10 and 11
Katie , daughter of an acquaintance	Did not like <i>High School Musical</i> but enjoyed <i>Hannah Montana</i>	Interviewed when she was 9 and 10
Susan , Westside, part of the focus groups	Loved <i>Hannah Montana</i> . Did not like <i>High School Musical</i>	Observed when she was 9, interviewed when she was 10 and 11
Cathy , Westside, part of the focus groups	<i>High School Musical</i> fan	Observed when she was 9 and interviewed when she was 10
Mary , Westside part of the focus groups	<i>High School Musical</i> fan	Observed when she was 9 and interviewed when she was 10
Kristin , Westside, part of the focus groups	Liked both franchises equally	Observed when she was 9 and interviewed when she was 10
Nina and Kari	Big <i>High School Musical</i> fans. Interviewed after the Ice Tour	Nina was 9 and Kari was 10
Sandy and Elisabeth	Interviewed together before focusing on Disney	Both girls were 9 years

When interviewing the boys the two interview guides used for the girls had been compiled (Appendix 1 and 2) as I suspected that they would not have much to say about the Disney tween franchises. This assumption was correct. The interviews with boys were shorter, ranging from 20 to 45 minutes.

The boys: Name	Disney tween affiliation	Age
Eddie	Did not like the franchises	11 years
Mike	Did not like the franchises	9 years
George	Liked Disney Channel, but only cartoons	11 years
Sam	Did not like the franchises, but enjoyed watching <i>Hannah Montana</i>	10 years
Tim	Liked <i>High School Musical</i> earlier but had grown out of it	12 years
Jake	Did not like the franchises	10 years

Talking with parents

When I visited the girls the second time I also interviewed their parents. In the interviews I conducted, both with the children and with their parents, I perceive knowledge being not something which I *find* rather it is something produced in the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee (Kvale, 1996; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

For some interviews there was only one parent present and for some both were present. When I asked parents if they would be willing to talk with me I did not specify if I wanted both or just one. There were ambiguities in both types of interviews, with one parent and with two parents. One would think that having both parents present would give richer and multi-sided information as parents might disagree with each other. However, with the interviews with only one parent the ambiguity was striking as will be shown in Chapter 7.

Tone	Both parents interviewed
Ida	Mother interviewed
Katie	Both parents interviewed
Susan	Both parents interviewed
Cathy	Father interviewed
Mary	Father interviewed
Kristin	Mother interviewed

For the parents interviews (see Appendix 3) I made use of a semi-structured interview guide with both topics and open questions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The topics were the age category of tweens, inviting a discussion around what was typical for their daughter, and how they perceived her to be different from two years earlier. The second topic was media use in general, if there were rules for television and Internet/computer use. The third topic was consumption habits, if their daughter had money, where she got it from, if she was allowed to spend them as she pleased. The last topic was the Disney tween franchises, focusing on how the parents perceived this in relation to their daughters. The interviews took between 30 and 60 minutes to conduct.

In the interviews with the parents they were talking with me as a parent. Thus they were performing parenthood in relation to me. This is something that will be touched upon in the analysis chapter, how they positioned themselves as parents in the Disney, child, and parent assemblage. Originally the parent-interviews were meant to serve as a backdrop for my analysis of the girls, in order to have a broader understanding of their daily practices. However, in all seven parent interviews' there were tensions and paradoxes that the parents presented to me. As such I found the need to scrutinize these interviews more closely, which then ended in a separate analysis chapter (Chapter 7).

Talking with Disney

In addition to users and their parents, representatives of the producers have also been interviewed. For this research I interviewed Casper Bjorner, the Vice President General Manager of Disney Channels Scandinavia & Emerging Markets twice. Once in

Stockholm at his office, the other interview was on the phone and included the Programming Director. I also went to Copenhagen, to the Disney Consumer Products Nordic headquarters where I interviewed Thomas Heegaard, the Director of the Toys Division, Nordic.

The interview situations with the Disney representatives were very different from the interviews I conducted with the children and the parents in this study. Although I was the one setting the topic for the interviews, I was asked to submit questions beforehand (see Appendix 4) to Casper Bjrner, the Vice President General Manager of Disney Channel Scandinavia. No such request was made before interviewing Thomas Heegaard, the Director of the Toy Division however.

Both Bjrner and Heegaard were men in their forties with high positions in an international conglomerate, thus being used to speak in a public and official realm. I on the other hand, was a woman in my early thirties with no experience of being in the power positions that they both had. Being a woman and being younger, as well as having to be thankful for the opportunity to talk directly to the Disney Corporation, which is both difficult and seldom an opportunity one gets (see for example: Budd, 2005), influenced the power structure in the interview situation.

Although I had an interview guide, especially in the interview with Bjrner, it was the interviewee and not the interviewer who had control over the interview, suggesting when to talk about certain issues. Bjrner knew prior to the interview what issues I wanted to ask him about. Heegaard however, did not receive the questions, and only knew I was interested in tweens and their relationship to Disney and how Disney perceives tweens. As such, I was more in control of the interview with Heegaard (Appendix 5). However, this is not to suggest that the information I acquired from interviewing Bjrner was less fruitful, but rather to acknowledge the difference it makes. As a researcher, in the moment, it made me feel awkward and small, but in retrospect Bjrner as an informant was highly informative and during the interview I was able to create space to ask supplementary questions. The topics I asked both Heegaard and Bjrner about were how they saw tweens, who they considered to fall in the category tweens, and how they attempt to reach their target audience and consumer.

The interviews with the Disney representatives were conducted in English. Bjorner is Swedish and Heegaard is Danish, and myself being Norwegian I could have conducted the interviews in our native languages (as these three Scandinavian languages are very similar). However, the representatives for Disney are used to communicating in English as this is the language that is used when communicating with Disney internationally, and as I am writing in English it seemed like a good idea. As Lemish writes on interviewing children television producers when English is not the native language for the interviewer or the interviewee “this fact resulted in a less accurate or precise expression of ideas” (Lemish, 2010:31). As English is a second language for me, I found, as Lemish discusses, it made the communication more staccato. When listening to the interviews I hear that I struggle more in finding words while both Bjorner and Heegaard seem more at ease with the language. This could also be due to the fact that they are talking about what they do for a living, while I am new to the realm of talking and thinking about how to produce paratexts and television content targeting children in the tween ages. In addition, this could have something to do with the power relations between us.

Watching Disney

In accordance with the circuit of culture model the texts in question needs scrutinizing as well as the producers and the users in order to gain a broader understanding of how tweens are constructed through the Disney tween franchises. As Buckingham notes; “While we do need to acknowledge what readers bring to texts, we also need to account for what they find there” (Buckingham, 1993:59). The children in this study, although perceived as active users, were all exposed to the same media texts which they talked about and used. Thus in the text analysis I explore these texts closer.

As has been mentioned, the reason for focusing on *Hannah Montana* and the *High School Musical* trilogy came from the ethnographic field work where I constantly witnessed references to the two media contents, verbally, in play, and when children were online. Thus the sampling of the media texts were informed by the ethnographic observations I undertook.

For the text analysis I watched the three *High School Musical* movies several times while taking notes by hand. After this I read a body of literature on children's movies and movies in general (Bordwell, 1991, 2004; Bordwell & Thompson, 1997; Bulman, 2005; Wojcik-Andrews, 2000). I then went back to the media texts, watched them again while transcribing some of the dialogue and lyrics. This is what Rose (2001) calls "immersing yourself in the sources" (Rose, 2001:158). A second step in interpreting visual media Rose suggests is identifying key theses within those sources which is what I then did, focusing on themes and structure as I started writing what was to become the text analysis chapter.

While I will go into detail of all three *High School Musical* films, I have not scrutinized all episodes in all four seasons of *Hannah Montana*. The *Hannah Montana* series is quite different than the movies, there are more hours of produced television and the possibility to study the content the same way as the movies was not possible. The analysis here is based on a selection of the around 100 episodes that exist. I watched the first two, the last two and two episodes in the middle of each of the four seasons. Literature on situation comedies (Hartley, 2008; Mares et al., 2012; Medhurst & Tuck, 1996; Mills, 2009) and children's television (Alexander, 2001; Buckingham, 1993; Davies, Buckingham, & Kelley, 2000; Hodge & Tripp, 1986) was then embarked upon, after which I turned to the content yet again focusing on themes, morals and values in order to understand how the imagined tween audience were constructed within *Hannah Montana*.

Before immersing in the analysis of my work, I provide a short discussion of how I have analysed the body of data. After this ethical considerations will be undertaken as well as a reflection on the quality of my data.

An abductive approach to analysing

The process of analysing the data involves a continuous process of reflection and interpretation, drawing on both theory, earlier research and the data collected (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Nilsen, 2005). As such the interpretations are not neutral or value-free but are rather made by me as the researcher coloured by both concepts and

perspectives. The analysis process does not begin after the field work is over and the data is collected. Analysis begins within the context of the empirical work, when taking field notes, deciding what to include in the interview guide and also during interviews with the follow up questions, and continues throughout the research process.

The interviews with parents, the Disney representatives and the children were all taped and transcribed. After having collected the data I started analysing the collected material using the computer program NVIVO to help me organize the information. I indexed my transcribed interviews with numerous categories using the computer software NVIVO (Bazeley, 2007). I did this after reading thoroughly through the interviews several times. This was to make the data collected more manageable by gathering all data on a particular topic under one heading. This software does not do the job for me, rather instead of printing out, cutting, colouring, and compiling paper in categories, this is done on the screen. By using nodes I can jump back and forth within both nodes and interviews as well as go back to the wider context of the interview with a click.

A question is how do we deal with data? How do we interpret phenomena? What role does theory and previous research in the field play? How should one balance between empirical findings and theoretical guidance? There are several approaches to deal with data and theory. The deductive approach starts with a general rule and uses this to explain a singular case (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). This approach thus makes use of theory to explain what is going on in the data. The problem with a deductive approach is that instead of attempting to explain what is going on in the data one merely reproduces “truths”. The inductive approach on the other hand uses singular cases and assumes that if it is found in singular cases, then there is a connection to similar cases. “This approach thus involves a risky leap from a collection of single facts to a general truth” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009:3). Both these approaches are problematic. While the deductive approach chalks findings up to previous rules and theory, the inductive approach on the other hand risks making claims that might not be true for the next case.

There is however, a third way, the abductive approach. Abduction is a possibility where previous research and theory plays a part but does not obliterate the expansion that the data might provide. An abductive approach claims to be informed by previous research

and theories making the point that data are always interpreted; there is no untainted data so to speak. The data comes into being in the meeting with the researcher. However an abductive approach also opens up for more or less “new” understandings. The goal is thus not to test hypotheses (deductive) or to make new theses (induction), but rather a mix of the two, drawing on previous research as well as producing new knowledge. The abduction process can be seen as a constant move back and forth between data on one side and to theory and previous research on the other.

Abduction starts from an empirical basis, just like induction, but does not reject theoretical preconceptions and is in that respect closer to deduction. The analysis of the empirical fact(s) may very well be combined with, or preceded by, studies of previous theory in the literature; not as a mechanical application on single cases but as a source of inspiration for the discovery of patterns that bring understanding. The research process, therefore, alternates between (previous) theory and empirical facts whereby both are successively reinterpreted in the light of each other. (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009:4)

My approach in this thesis is an abductive approach. This means that what I ask, what I look for and how I interpret my data are all coloured by my own theoretical understandings. It is informed by the theoretical framework, thus it is not inductive. I do not “find” new knowledge that is radically different from what others before me have found as I am influenced by previous research on the topic (and similar topics). What I look for and what I end up “finding” is influenced by my personal meanings and understandings of previous theory and research.

The data gathered are always seen in a certain frame of reference: “Data are thus always contextually interested in a semantic frame, which gives them their sense to begin with” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009:6). Patterns emerge not by themselves, but as they are interpreted by the researchers with their theoretical glasses and knowledge. By reading the interviews numerous times I saw recurring themes and topics and was thereby given the possibility to index them. This is a standard way to embark upon a qualitative data set (Frankland & Bloor, 1999).

The analysis was also shaped by the domestication framework. The four phases from the media studies version and the three aspects deriving from the science and

technologies studies version informed the analysis as will be observable in the analysis chapters that follow. The four phases (appropriation, objectification, incorporation, and conversion) helped focus the analysis: How did the girls talk about how they appropriated the paratexts? How did the paratext become part of the moral economy of the household? How did the girls express the conversion phase, that is, how did they report on making use of the paratexts as symbols of their devotion to the Disney tweens franchises?

Regarding the Disney tween content the three aspects drawn from the STS version of the domestication framework were used. In the analysis process I focused on how both boys and girls in the data talked about the practices involving references to the content. Another analytical focus was how meaning was ascribed to the content by the children. The last aspect was that of the cognitive processes related to learning of practices as well as meaning, here the focus was on how the children expressed their biographical narratives tied to Disney.

Concerning the analysis of *Hannah Montana* and *High School Musical*, I was interested in how these media texts configured its users (Woolgar, 1997). Woolgar (1997) argues that targeting a specified audience with a specified product configures both the imagined user and the product itself. I also looked at what themes were prevalent within the frame of the sitcom and the trilogy. Thus, another key theoretical tool employed in this analysis is that of script (Akrich, 1992). How does Disney Channel frame issues, what issues are emphasized, and what issues are absent. Other questions were how the movies and the sitcom scripted gender, consumption, age, and identities as well as morals in an attempt to read the ideology in the content.

Ethical considerations

In qualitative research there are ethical issues to consider. According to Hill (2005) when researching with children, there are four general ethical considerations: involvement of children in research, consent and choice, possible harm or distress, and privacy and confidentiality (Hill, 2005:65).

Regarding the first consideration, I have not used the children as co-researchers as others have done (see for example: Alderson, 2000). However, they are involved in the sense that they were free to talk or not talk to me. Also, by determining the topic of my work based on my field work ensures the children's participation in forming the research considering what to focus on. As Hill states: "research may give children as respondents choices about which themes to explore, within a pre-set research topic. In this limited way, children may contribute to the research agenda" (Hill, 2005:67). While the children I talked to were not co-researchers, they were partly involved in the methodology as I had methodological discussions with several of the children about how to best gain an understanding of them.

When one is engaged in researching popular culture there might a problem in conveying to the children that one is genuinely interested in children's experiences with and thoughts about popular culture. Popular culture in general and children's popular culture specifically is often frowned upon as of no apparent value (Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2002). In order to convey to the children that I was interested in their experiences and reflections, I treated them as the experts they are (Latour, 2005; Tiller, 1989). I clearly stated to the children that I wanted to learn from them and that they were the ones who had the experience and knowledge I was looking for.

The second issue, consent and choice are important ethical issues. Respecting all people (adults and children alike) as individuals, taking part in research should be voluntary. In addition if I were to force children who did not want to talk with me about a topic I chose, the data would not be useful. The interviewees were informed that they could pull out of the study at any time. This option was not taken by anyone who I had first made initial contact with. In the beginning of the interviews I informed the children that they were free to refuse to speak about what I asked them, and I stressed to them that there were no right or wrong answers and that anything they would want to share would be of great interest for me and the project. I chose in my field work to be open with the children about why I was present due to ethical considerations. I believe that it is more respectful towards those who we do research with to openly inform them of what one is interested in and for the researcher it feels less like spying on them. Concerning consent I needed their parents' consent allowing me to talk to their children (see Appendix 6).

Although the children did not sign any form consenting, I stressed in the interview situations that this was voluntary and that they were free to answer or not as they pleased. Before venturing out in the field the project was approved by the Norwegian Social Science Data services, NSD (see Appendix 7).

The third consideration according to Hill (2005) is that of possible harm or distress to the children involved. In this study due to the topic at hand, there were not major considerations needed to be taken, other than generally if the interviewees become upset one should stop talking or if any abuse comes out in the data one should take measures to ensure the follow-up of the children (Hill, 2005). In my work, as we talked about Disney and everyday lives, these issues did not surface. The data did also not contain sensitive information about the children that could potentially be harmful.

The last ethical consideration one should take when researching with children is privacy and confidentiality. The participants in this research were told on several occasions that what they said would be traced back to them as individuals. This was especially a relevant theme when interviewing the children in their home, guaranteeing that I would not tell their parents what we had talked about. The children I have talked to, their parents, and the after school programs have all been anonymised to secure confidentiality (Kvale, 1996). Protecting the people involved in the research is a key concern. This means securing their anonymity. A task for qualitative researchers is to respect the integrity of the interviewees (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005). This is partly done by securing anonymity and confidentiality.

The relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee is key to the collection of 'good' data (Pole, 2007:67). By establishing a relationship with the key interviewees (the girls) in this study I was able to benefit from this in the interview situation. According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2005) being ethical in qualitative research specifically in the interview setting means "being open to other people, acting for the sake of their good, trying to see others as they are, rather than imposing one's own ideas on them" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005:161).

It is important in qualitative research settings to be sensitive to the uniqueness on the person in the particular situation (Kjørholt, 2004; Van Manen, 1990). This implies being

attentive in the interview situation in regards to how and when to ask follow up questions and to leave room for the child to elaborate. As my interview guide was semi-structured there was room for improvisation. The interviews thus differed in relation to how long we spent of different topics and how elaborate different themes were. Generally in the interviews with the boys for example, the topic of the Disney tween franchises was shorter and less elaborate than of the girls who were more engaged in the franchises.

Quality of the qualitative research

How can useful knowledge be derived from such a subjective line of work? I would argue through transparency. By giving the reader a thorough step-by-step description of the process I want to make the process transparent so that the reader can follow my arguments and analysis. In qualitative research projects such as the one I have undertaken it is important to make the research process as transparent as possible for the reader so that the reader can get a glimpse of the interpretations the researchers has made and in this way the analysis can be critically read by the reader. As Kvale (1996) states: “The reader of an interview report needs to know the methodological procedures in order to evaluate the trustworthiness of the results” (Kvale, 1996:262). Being transparent and being reflexive I find are two major components when engaging in qualitative work. The method chapter is designed so that you as the reader can scrutinize who I have talked to, why I have talked to these people, and how I interpret the data collected.

In relation to securing the quality of my data the concept of validity is of importance. Kvale (1996) states that to validate research is to check, to question, and to theorize. The process that I have undertaken in order to ensure the validity in this work has been done by continuously looking at similar research, checking with theory, and talking with colleagues about my interpretations to see if they agree as a way to ensure my interpretations. I have questioned my questions looking at what my questions in the interview setting do in the situation, and reflected on how my questions put parents in a position where they defend and perform their parenthood. Kvale’s (1996) third strand of

validating is to theorize: “Deciding whether a method investigates what it intends to investigate involves a theoretical conception of what is investigated” (Kvale, 1996:244). In my analysis work the theoretical framework is a highly visible and sturdy one. Thus, together with my research agenda, which is also informed by the framework, I am able to assess the validity of my work theoretically.

According to Kvale (1989:79) reliability is a question of whether repeated investigations of the same phenomenon will give the same result. Here I come back to the need for transparency. For in writing up the analysis, arguments are meant to be presented as somewhat transparent, letting readers follow a line of thought and make up their own mind to whether or not they find arguments and judgments logical and reliable.

When analysing the data I looked for patterns in the different interviews. It is important to emphasize that these patterns are not attempts to make universalizing generalizations, but rather generalizations as context-bound typicalities (Halkier, 2011). In other words, ‘generalizations’ does not here relate to producing knowledge as universal “truths”, but rather as Bradley states

To assert that qualitative research produces knowledge that is context-bound is not to deny the possibility of understanding many contexts or of developing abstractions that may apply across contexts. But such understanding must be built inductively, from the ground up, establishing relationships that hold for specific situations and then using these to guide inquiry into other situations. (Bradley, 1993:438)

One of the strengths of qualitative research is that explanations and interpretations are connected to context, while also producing possibilities for cross-contextual generalities (not to be confused with de-contextual generalizations) (Mason, 2002). Halkier suggests that generalizing on the basis of qualitative studies must recognize and try to represent the dynamisms, ambivalences, conflicts, and complexities that constitute various overlapping contexts and the knowledge-production processes in relation to these contexts. Just as generalizing should not be universalizing, generalizing should also not produce stable representations but rather representations characterized by contingency and instability (Halkier, 2011:788).

It is been claimed that traditionally “scientific practitioners have ignored the role they play in shaping the outcomes of their research” (Gergen & Gergen, 1991:76). This is a naive line of thought because we are a part of a highly subjective and dynamic world, thus as a researcher one is part of the construction of the research process. This is thought to be especially prevalent when working with individuals who differ from the researcher (as is the case here with an adult researching with children), thus, it is important to be aware of the differences (Christensen & James, 2008). Nilsen (2005) concurs with this as she states: “Research with children as informants serves to illustrate the necessity of *reflexivity* in the analysis” (Nilsen, 2005:118). Reflexivity can be said to be the act of mirroring the self. Researchers will, because nearly all are adults, most likely be seen as an authority, this is important to keep in mind while conducting research with children. Thus, there is a need to reflect around issues influencing the research.

Reflexivity is important in the analysis process as Nilsen (2005) states, but also highly important in every stage of research, from planning, to conducting, to analysing. It is important to reflect how one as a researcher can influence how the children in question answer, and also how the situation influences you as a researcher. Throughout the research process it is important to check one’s self, to go back, reflect around what the researcher as a person *does* with the interview setting, the ethnographic context, and also what the researcher *does* through her choice of theoretical framework.

By engaging in a process of reflexivity I am not suggesting to undermine the outcomes of this research. What I present to the reader in this thesis not mere reflections, it is knowledge that I have co-produced in my meetings with the children at the after school programs, in my interviews with children, parents, and Disney representative, with my meeting with the media texts, and with my meetings with theory and earlier research. A concept that I find useful in relation to the knowledge produced is that of situated knowledge.

Situated knowledge is knowledge specific to a particular situation (Haraway, 1988). Central to this concept is the idea that there is no one truth out there to be uncovered and, as a result, all knowledge is partial and linked to the contexts in which it is created.

Thus, the knowledge produced in my study is specific to my meetings with the children, the parents, the media texts and the Disney representatives. This situation partially transforms science into a story. What we hear in interviews are stories, but also how we present it is within a narrative structure. I defined the questions asked and I am also the one who interpreted the answers and consequently write it up as my story. Latour (1988) claims that “no amount of reflexivity, methodology, deconstruction, seriousness or statistics will turn our stories into non-stories” (Latour, 1988:172). I influence every part of the process, from my own part in the data collection process (influencing the interviewees and the context) as well as my understandings of previous research and theory to the way I write up this thesis. This thesis is my story. And my story consists of produced knowledge that is context- bound and situated. Hence, this is my story of my meetings with the assemblage of Disney, parents, and children.

As this thesis is based in qualitative work, knowledge produced in my meeting with this data cannot be decontextualised. Thus while I cannot claim any universality to the knowledge produced here for it is context-bound (Franck, 2014; Halkier, 2011) as well as the knowledge produced is a situated knowledge (Haraway, 1988) it is nonetheless knowledge. And this knowledge is transferrable if people can relate to what is being said, then there is confidence in the data produced.

With the theoretical framework in mind, as well as the methods that have been used to produce the data I now turn to the main body of work, the analysis. I start with Chapter 4, which focuses on how Disney representatives configured the tween user.

Chapter 4: Media configuring tweens: Disney's strategies

As mentioned earlier, when I began investigating the tween phenomenon, the presence of Disney as a supplier of TV and movies was striking in the after school programs. Consequently, I decided to study how Disney tried to define tweens. In this chapter, I analyse how two centrally placed interviewees in Disney Scandinavia accounted for their company's approach to reach those seen to inhabit the tween-ages. This chapter studies the instruments used in *Hannah Montana* and *High School Musical* to implement these strategies.

In the analysis, I use the concept of script derived from Akrich (1992) and the idea of configuring audiences derived from Woolgar (1997). The chapter will begin with a brief introduction to these concepts outlining the particular analytical framework for this and the next chapter. After this, I give an introduction to the Disney Company and Disney's presence in Norway before examining how Disney as a media producer attempts to configure its audience and how the tween category is inscribed.

Inscribing and configuring the audience

Akrich (1992) introduced the concept of "script" in the field of science and technology studies (STS) as a tool to examine how technological objects, their designers, and its users are defined by, and define, each other. As such, within the concept of script both humans and non-humans are given the status of actors. This line of thinking distributes power and agency to products, designers, and users in different ways. Woolgar (2012), when exploring how STS sensibilities can be of aid when researching children and consumption, adds to this perspective of both subjects and objects as having the status of actors by suggesting that the perspective of consumption as ontological enactment

emphasizes consumption as a relationship where entities enact each other (Woolgar, 2012:39).

In Akrich's (1992) use of script, designers inscribe a vision of the user and the world in their products: "A large part of the work of innovators is that of 'inscribing' this vision of (or prediction about) the world in the technical content of the new object" (Akrich, 1992:208). In this quote agency and power is thus given to the designer as they have prescribed notions of who the user is, and inscribe this vision in the technological object. In prolongation of this, the technical object thus presents possibilities and limitations for how the user can make use and sense of it. In this way, the producers, as Woolgar terms it; "configure the user" (Woolgar, 1997). Agency is also distributed to the technical object itself, as Akrich continues "technical objects define a framework of action together with actors and the space in which they are supposed to act" (Akrich, 1992:208). In the first part of this quote agency placed within the technical object as it, through what is inscribed in it, enables and constrains the user. This is coherent with Woolgar's notion of configuring the user, which entails defining, enabling, and constraining the user's potential action (Woolgar, 1997:74). The latter part of the quote however, opens up for users appropriating and negotiating this framework, as well as the importance of the social context in doing so. Thus, agency is also distributed to the user as they can resist and negotiate the inscribed meanings and usages—users can even produce new ways of using the object which were not planned or envisioned by the designers, and which are hence not inscribed in the object.

Although power and agency are distributed to all three stakeholders (producer, product, user) through the concepts, this is not distributed equally. There is for example not an endless array of readings enabled within the product. As Woolgar states: "Certain organizational features of texts provide 'instructions' which enables readers to make sense of content in terms of conclusions stated at the outset" (Woolgar, 1997:73). There are thus constraints inscribed in the product: "although users add their own interpretations (...) it is likely that the script will become a major element for interpreting interaction between the object and its users" (Akrich, 1992:216). This notion is echoed within media studies as media messages are perceived as always capable of producing more than one meaning or interpretation, and therefore cannot be

reduced to a “real” meaning (Morley, 1992:83). However, producers will attempt to communicate “effectively” providing: “‘direction’ or ‘closures’ within the structure of the message, which attempt to establish *one* of the several possible readings as the ‘preferred or dominant reading’” (Morley, 1992:84).

By configuring the user, embedded in the script, there are constraints for the potential user. However, in order to cater to the user the product also needs to enable different types of readings. As Woolgar (1997) states: “The text sells well if many different readers find a use for it” (Woolgar, 1997:77). User configuration, which limits the user’s interpretation, will thus not be successful. Resonating with this line of thought, Fiske (1986) claims that a television text must be polysemic, in other words, defined as having several possible readings, in order to cater to the broadest possible audience.

Understandings of users can be both complex and as shall be shown below, ambiguous. Making use of Woolgar’s term “configuring the user” creates a fruitful basis for studying how users are imagined by a representative of the producers of the media texts and a representative for the producers of paratexts. The two Disney representatives came from two different fields within the company, and although they were catering to the same consumer and audience group, their configurations differed concerning what they emphasized when discussing tweens with me. In addition, by applying the concept of script, facilitating a sociotechnical perspective, we are able to view the products, the producers, and the audience as social actors who are all perceived as having agency within limits.

Thinking from the circuit-of-culture model from the Cultural Studies tradition helps this thesis move beyond the classic dichotomy of structure versus agency by examining the construction of the tween by different stakeholders. In this case, they are Disney as producer, Disney media texts, and the audience. The concepts of script and configuring the user also coincide with the general notion of the circuit-of-culture focusing on different stakeholders, and as Woolgar (1997) claims is an attempt to move beyond the dichotomy of structure versus agency. Echoing the founding notion of the circuit-of-culture Akrich states: “We have to go back and forth continually between the designer and the user, between the designer’s projected user and the real user, between *the world*

inscribed in the object and the world described by its displacement” (Akrich, 1992:209). This is what in this thesis I set out to do.

Before examining the accounts of the Disney interviewees about their efforts to inscribe tweens as a category in their products, and subsequently trying to configure their audience, I will give a brief overview of the Walt Disney Company and its presence in Norway as this provides contextual information for further analysis.

The Walt Disney Company

Disney is one of the most recognized brands in the western world. The Global Disney Audience Project from 2001, a study conducted in 18 countries, showed that “the average respondent reported first being exposed to Disney when under five years of age. Less than 1% of respondents reported having no contact with Disney” (Wasko, 2001:192). Disney is not only one of the biggest brands, but differs from other big brands like Nike and Coca Cola in two main aspects: no other company of such a magnitude has a person so tied into its image (Walt Disney), and secondly, no other company of its size has such a clear communicated ideology associated with it. Disney *is* wholesome family entertainment. Disney as a brand thus seems to have succeeded in both being recognized and as communicating value simultaneously.

The Walt Disney Company is a conglomerate that today consists of several divisions: Walt Disney Studio Entertainment, Disney-ABC Television Group (under which Disney Channel resides), Disney Interactive Media Group (who has all online activity), Walt Disney Consumer Products and Walt Disney Parks and Resorts. Within these divisions we find (amongst others); ABC, ABC Family, ABC Kids, Disney Channel, ESPN, Jetix, Walt Disney Distribution, Walt Disney Motion Pictures Group, Walt Disney Television Animation, Walt Disney Records, Walt Disney Pictures, Touchstone Pictures, Miramax Films, ABC Studios, Playhouse Disney, Disney Consumer Products, Pixar, Soapnet, Muppets Holding Company, Disney Store, Toon Disney, New Horizon Interactive, and Hollywood Records. It is a highly diverse media conglomerate ranking second in the world, only surpassed by Time Warner.

In addition to being a household brand, merchandising also plays a pivotal part for Disney. The plethora of diverse paratexts bearing images of characters from the Disney universe is taken for granted when it comes to Disney, and which Disney has capitalized on. It can be argued that one of the main reasons that Disney is so present in children's everyday life is due to the large amount of merchandising (Drotner, 2003). In any toy catalogue, book store, or toy store (amongst others) you will find consumer items with *Cars*, *Disney Princesses*, *Winnie the Pooh*, *Mickey Mouse* or the line of *Fairies*, and products with *Hannah Montana*, and *High School Musical* on them. Merchandising has been a substantial part of the Disney Company almost from the very beginning. The first merchandise to come out with the Disney logo was writing tablets in 1929 with *Mickey Mouse* on them (deCordova, 1994:205; Telotte, 2008; Wasko, 2001:10). In addition to bringing more assets to the Disney Company economically, the merchandising also helps the publicity of the company. Merchandising is thought to become part of a mutually referential system of cross-promotion, which keeps the images in people's minds and acts as constant advertisements (Bryman, 2004:80). As Roy Disney (Walt Disney's brother) is quoted as saying: "The sale of any doll to any member of a household is a daily advertisement in that household for our cartoons and keeps them all 'Mickey Mouse Minded'" (Roy Disney, as quoted in deCordova, 1994:205). This type of merchandising, which is very common today, was pioneered by the Disney Company (Roost, 2005:263) and has been a part of the Disney company ever since. Not only was Disney one of the pioneers, according to Bryman: "No one can match Disney for such a synergetic complex of mutually reinforcing commercial activities" (Bryman, 2004:88). Disney thus has a strong brand presence and has had this for a substantial amount of time, something that is quite unique in this business.

The Norwegian context

In Norway—as in the rest of the Scandinavian countries—Disney has had an exceptional position when it comes to Disney as a text product. Scandinavians have incorporated the *Donald Duck & Co* magazine into their culture in a way that is truly unique. Norway is one of the countries with the highest consumption rate of the *Donald Duck & Co* magazine per person in the world today, surpassed only by Finland (Hagen,

2001). Some families have a tradition with either subscribing or going out and buying the weekly magazine every Tuesday.

In addition to the *Donald Duck & Co* magazine the *From all of us to all of you* Christmas special, which for years has been broadcast on Christmas eve on the Norwegian Public Broadcasting Services (NRK), makes Disney highly intertwined with Norwegian culture. This show has become a part of the celebration of Christmas for parents and children (Hagen, 2001). In this way, Disney manages to be both a highly visible and an invisible actor at the same time. Visibly, Disney can be seen by some as a conglomerate that spews out capitalist glossy American ideas and values (Drotner, 2003). As shall be seen in later empirical chapters this was the case for some of the parents in this study. However, it also blends in with other traditions and thereby becomes somewhat invisible, or rather a taken for granted as part of society. In addition Disney becomes part of children's and parents' biographical narratives, which shall be explored further in Chapters 6 and 7.

A fairly new addition to the Disney universe in Norway is Disney Channel Scandinavia, which started broadcasting in 2003. And with this recent development in the Disney Universe in Norway, Disney's presence in Norway has propelled: "Disney Channel is the most seen children's channel in Norway amongst children 3–14 as of the last 12 months (August 08-July 09)" (e-mail from PR manager at Disney Elisabeth Elhazza, 19th August 2009). Hence the majority of Norwegian children are highly exposed to the Disney tween franchises. In addition to being the first choice of children when watching television, according to the PR manager, the Norwegian market differs from other Scandinavian and European markets as a very strong one (ibid.).

The Walt Disney Company is thus a highly visible and substantial commercial contributor who caters to the segment they call tweens. As such, their configuration of the category tween needs to be examined and accounted for as one aspect in the examination of how tweens are constructed by the different stakeholders (producer, text, users). The chapter will analyse how the Disney representatives I interviewed talk about how the company configures the tween segment.

Ambiguous configurations: Configuring tweens in relation to age and gender

The term tweens is short for “in-between” and usually thought to be between children and teenagers. I will begin by examining how tweens were depicted by the Disney representatives with regard to age and gender. Although the two representatives were catering to the same segment—tweens—they differed in their configuration of this segment. In the interviews they drew on different ideas about configuring tweens as an audience and consumer segment, mapping out a complex understanding of those inhabiting the tween years. Selling media content suggested a wider configuration than then selling paratexts. When asked what characterized the tween audience, Bjorner, representing Disney Channel Scandinavia, answered:

I think their character traits is that they got one leg in sort of their childhood, and from a television channel perspective, they still very much watch some of those shows and enjoy the entertainment that we provide, but they are getting very curious about some of the slightly older shows, like the live action shows, and are finding them very exciting.

Bjorner argued that tweens move back and forth age wise, regarding what they would watch. By describing tweens through the metaphor of straddling feet, Bjorner echoed researchers such as Tufte (2011) and Rysst (2005). As Bjorner stated in the first sentence, tweens have one leg in childhood. Adding to this Bjorner also claimed in the interview that some classical Disney characters such as *Winnie the Pooh* and *Mickey Mouse* are part of the tweens’ emotional lives and that they will continue to watch them. Bjorner claimed that tweens would describe these characters as “old friends”. Implicitly here one can understand that characters such as *Winnie the Pooh* serve as something that is safe and well-known and to which tweens come back to solidify their leg in childhood.

The other leg, although not worded explicitly in the quote over, is implied as being curious about shows aimed at an older audience. As an example of such shows Bjorner used the sitcom *Friends* as something that Disney found children in the tween category to be watching. A reason for watching shows aimed at older people is worded here as

“getting curious about”, implying an aspiration to be older, which can be seen as an act of anticipatory socialization. ‘Anticipatory socialization’ is a term used by Wærdahl (2003, 2005b) to describe how children prepare for change in social identity and age. In relation to how anticipatory socialization works, Wærdahl claims; “The sources of information could be anything from live role models (siblings, friends, peers), adults and media messages” (Wærdahl 2003:211). Media use can thus be seen as facilitating this aspiration or anticipation, and as a source for growing older. In the quote above, children in the tween category are thus, according to Bjorner, configured as flexible as they draw on different age performances through their television use, moving between shows for young children and shows aimed at an older audience, while still grounded in childhood.

Where Bjorner provided an account of the audience being configured as flexible, moving back and forth age wise, The Disney Consumer Products representative, Heegaard, gave a different and supplementary account of how Disney as a company configured the tween segment. In Heegaard’s interview tweens were depicted as being in growth or aspirational—moving forward and not wanting to be associated with younger children.

Heegaard: They are influenced by what teens are doing, and wearing, and want to distance themselves from anything that their little sister might own or like.

Heegaard thus emphasized a configuration of tweens as wanting to distance themselves from younger children while simultaneously aspiring to be older. Heegaard used paratexts as an example of this. As he said, “when you talk about for instance products, it needs to fit the goals in the target groups. When we talk about tween products we are talking more about eight to 10.” Being age specific was important, and within such a statement the age repertoire the tweens are thought to be able to act upon, is limited. Through his account of how Disney configures the audience in such a way, Heegaard took part in constraining the users’ potential action (Woolgar, 1997). He continued by discussing the challenges of targeting tweens through products: “One of the challenges is to make sure that we focus on the products for the tween category and not move it down to the younger age groups for these movies.” Several times during the interview

Heegaard expressed a concern that they would lose the tween consumer if products aimed at tweens were made to fit younger consumers. Thus, it seems as though from a consumer products perspective there was a need to limit the age demarcation of tweens.

Following the concept of anticipatory socialization, or tweens as being aspirational teenagers, toys were not seen as a big tween thing. “Tweens are more narrow in the way that for instance toys are not huge on tweens of course, so when you go to tweens, it is very much fashion based, I would say,” Heegaard commented. Heegaard used the word fashion quite often in the interview. When he talked about fashion, he talked about fashion statement, not fashion as in clothes, but rather as an identity marker. Fashion statement thus meant whom do tweens identify and relate to and whom do they want to be associated with? Stationary was used as an example of fashion based products.

Heegaard and Bjorner differed in their accounts of the company’s configuration of tweens as an audience and consumer group. Both Heegaard and Bjorner talked about tweens as being in-between; however the media content and the paratext configurations of the target group were quite ambiguous. Heegaard discussed tweens as moving forward in life, calling them “transitional tweens”—in *transition* from childhood to teenagers. Heegaard was thus describing tweens as children as becoming (Qvortrup, 1994), as persons on their way forward in life. Bjorner however focused on tweens moving back and forth *between* childhood and teenagers. As such, in his account of Disney Channel’s configuration of the audience, Bjorner enabled a broader set of possible actions for audience where Heegaard constrained the possible actions of the consumers.

When it comes to the subject of the Disney tween franchises, gender is a prevalent theme. *High School Musical* and *Hannah Montana* have struck a chord with the girl audience more than the boy audience. Lemish (2011) claims; “the global hits (e.g., *High School Musical*; *Hannah Montana*) are clearly perceived as “girl oriented” (Lemish, 2011:360). Lemish (2010) also brands Disney Channel as a whole being more girl oriented based on her research with media producers (Lemish, 2010:117). According to Clancy in her research on tweenhood and fashion, Disney Channel’s tween content was

the most watched in her sample, and *Hannah Montana* was for the most part watched by girls (Clancy, 2011:182).

With this in mind it is interesting to see how Bjorner and Heegaard configured respectively their audience and consumers as gendered or not. When asked about tweens in general Heegaard tended to answer with a focus mainly on girls, while Bjorner talked of tweens as a segment that had to do with age, not gender.

Ingvild: I was wondering if you could tell me about the ideal tween consumer, if you have any ideas who he or she is?

Heegaard: No, we don't have any research or thoughts about that. But I would say it's typically a girl in school, very much interested in music, mobile phones, very aware of having girlfriends, being very much aware of again starting to look more and more fashion, thinking about what kind of stationary she use at school.

Ingvild: Are tweens basically more girls than boys?

Heegaard: From a consumer product standpoint it's more girls we have to say.

It seems to be of importance to know whom commodities are meant for, both in terms of age as discussed above and in this case in terms of gender. Bjorner however, when asked about gender, was apprehensive to specify whether it was boys or girls or both they were targeting:

Ingvild: Could you tell me just short about the Disney Channel ideal tween consumer, do you have any vision of what the ideal Disney tween consumer is?

Bjorner: No I can't.

Ingvild: What about gender, interest, family background?

Bjorner: We are totally interested in tweens of any gender, nationality, colour, we are a global company, so we try of course to attract consumers and viewers. In our case, that's our business at any time at any technological platform. That's what we do.

Thus, Bjorner strategically avoided having to gender the Disney Channel audience opening up for a diverse audience in the same manner in which he opened up for the flexibility of age doings when watching Disney and other television content.

There is a difference between media content and consumer products. Consumer products rely on purchasing and thus Heegaard's focus on not missing the target,

catering specifically to the imagined tween consumer, may be more rigid than from a television perspective. The configuration of the audience/consumers is thus ambiguous in relation to age appraisal and gender. Consumer products, be it clothes or stationary (and according to Heegaard, stationary was one of the main tween products), can serve as what Goffman speaks of as sign vehicles (Goffman, 1959). They indicate to others the individual's taste, and in prolongation of taste, their social identity. Within domestication theory this can be labelled the conversion phase.

Watching television on the other hand can be seen as an activity of passing time (Buckingham, 1993; Greenberg, 1974), such as when Bjorner describes how children in the tween age might be watching content aimed at both older and younger people. As we shall see this was also the case among my tween interviewees as such television viewing does not demand the same commitment. In addition, watching television can be a private activity, whereas wearing a *High School Musical* t-shirt or having a folder with a *Hannah Montana* logo on it is socially on display as sign vehicles (Goffman, 1959). Where Bjorner's configuration of the audience group enabled the users a larger freedom in age performances, moving back and forth, Heegaard constrained the user's age performance to only be moving forward.

While these two perspectives were ambiguous when it came to both age and gender, they also have a commonality. In addition to being between, either moving forward or fluctuating back and forth, both representatives gave a clear indication that tweens were configured as still being grounded in childhood. Thus they belong to the category of children and subsequently to the category of tweens. In the interviews both Bjorner and Heegaard would alternate between identifying the audience and consumer group as tweens and as children (or kids), thus demonstrating that those in the tween category are, in fact, children. However, in order to market specifically to this target group, there is a need to segment the market (Cook, 2004; Turow, 1997). This brings us to the topic of how the audience and consumer group were configured by Disney as both an ambiguous yet also an essential category.

The essential tween as the generalized user

As stated, Bjorner and Heegaard differed in how they placed tweens in relation to enabling and constraining the tweens' age performance, in their accounts of how Disney configures the tweens. However, they were both very much in tune when talking about what they both described as essential issues in tweens lives. Thus generally, throughout the interviews, the Disney representatives painted a picture of the essentialised tween. As Woolgar states: "a generalized formulation of the user" is more beneficial than "a heterogeneous rag-bag of customers with varying attributes" (Woolgar, 1997:77). The market logic thus seems to be to configure the audience as a general singular user. This notion is closely linked to Cook's (Cook, 2000; Cook & Kaiser, 2004) use of the term *commercial persona*, where the inhabitants of a target group are constructed as "the consumer" in the abstract way, as a symbolic person or persona, in order to create new markets. Thus the commercial persona is a type of *ideal consumer* in the marketer's eyes, and the Disney representatives here configure a type of ideal consumer that they can then target.

Heegaard and Bjorner spoke about issues that they perceived relevant for all tweens no matter where in the world they grow up. These were described as moving from being family oriented towards being more peer oriented and becoming more independent, drawing on general developmental perspectives. In addition, both Disney representatives talked about tweens being exposed to the same type of popular culture (general popular music, celebrities, and Disney Channel) as an explanation of what tweens were. They thus drew on social context and being part of a global world with the same cultural references.

From the general developmental perspective, one issue was moving from being family oriented towards being more peer oriented.

Heegaard: They still care what their parents think, but their friends hold greater importance in what they do, and how they present themselves.

The emphasis on friends as important influencers on tweens' lives corresponds with both developmental psychology and sociological research where middle childhood is

seen as a stage where children move from being very family oriented to being more peer oriented (Adler & Adler, 1998; Berndt, 1999; Borland, Laybourn, Hill, & Brown, 1998; Larsen, 2003; Suoninen, 2001). As Heegaard suggested above, tweens care more about what friends think than parents in relation to what they do. From the perspective of developmental psychology, children in the tween ages are becoming more aware of the social realm and become increasingly occupied with how they think that they are being perceived by others (Bunkholdt, 2000). Bjorner also commented on how friends seem to play an increasing part of tweens' daily lives: "We also want very much to promote friendship. It's a core part of what kids do every day, kids, if you ask anybody up to 12-13, involuntary, just say, you know, 'who's part of your day' 'it's my friends, mom and dad and my friends.'" Hence both Disney representatives perceived friends to be an important part of tweens' lives, and as Bjorner said, Disney attempts to cater to tweens through promoting friendship.

In line with the observation that friends played an increasingly substantial role in how tweens perceive themselves, Heegaard also explained that tweens become more assertive in relation to their parents:

Heegaard: I would say tweens are, we haven't done any big, huge thoughts about that, but it is as a group as I see it, it's more and more individual kids growing older.

Ingvild: More and more individual kids, and what do you mean by that?

Heegaard: They would you know, they wouldn't ask their parents if it's ok for me to wear this Hannah Montana t-shirt, they would say they would like to have this one.

From this quote emerges an understanding of tweens as more assertive than their younger counterparts. According to Heegaard "[t]hat is the big difference from for princess and fairies where the parents are much more involved in the buying decision, compared to when you are a tween." Becoming more individual can be interpreted as becoming more independent in relation to parents. Becoming more independent from their parents also bears with it a notion of potential struggle between tweens and their parents, and parental pressure was discussed by Bjorner as a fact of life for tweens. When Bjorner talked about tweens he often used the plot of the *High School Musical* as an example of what was relevant in tweens lives. Bjorner, in the first interview, kept

coming back to Troy's (the male protagonist) different relationships in the movies to highlight typical tween issues.

Bjorner: Troy is this basketball player and his dad really wants him to have a career, but he really wants to do something else also. Can he have a dual, you know, can you do more or do you need to follow somebody else's dreams? Kids all over the world say, well in India a lot of the kids would say, my dad is the same way about me playing cricket, in other countries it's football, it's tennis, whatever sport is the local you know, it doesn't really matter, the concept of: you're good at something, should you be pushed to pursue that or should you have more options available to you and the kids totally get it.

In this quote Bjorner intertwined the media text with the lived lives of those in the tween ages and as such describes how Disney as a text producer inscribes its vision of its audience in the media texts. Later in the interview he continued, "whether you're Norwegian or from Buenos Aires or Peking, the same parental-child-peer-pressure situation always exists." In these statements Bjorner suggested that tweens all over the world can relate to parental pressure and not seeing eye-to-eye with parents regarding choices to make. Thus there is implicitly the same argument that Heegaard made when talking about how tweens become more and more individual, or more independent from their parents. As such both Heegaard and Bjorner expressed how Disney inscribes a notion of an emancipation struggle between children and parents in their separate products or scripts. Also, by talking of tweens as more independent of their parents, the Disney representatives provided an account for Disney's configuration of the audience/consumers as unattached, enabling Disney to cater directly to tweens and not through their parents. Heegaard for example, claimed that when targeting infants, mothers and grandmothers were primarily the target, as infants rarely demand or ask for things. With tweens however, it is different. As Heegaard explained, they are thought to demand more rather than ask for merchandise with *High School Musical* or *Hannah Montana* on them.

Tweens were seen to go through the same issues of becoming more independent from their parents and that their friends played a larger part in tweens lives. They were also depicted as sharing the same cultural references across national boundaries. Both Bjorner and Heegaard highlighted the Disney tween media texts as common cultural

references. Thus, tweens as a category were not only configured through developmental issues, but also contextual issues, being exposed to the same cultural references, or scripts, across national borders, as we can see:

Heegaard: For Disney it's the same TV-series and show in Denmark as we show in the US, so our consumers are having the same, let's say, exposure or the same visuals coming into their minds about *Hannah Montana* or *Winnie the Pooh* as someone in Italy.

As discussed earlier, Disney has an exceptional position in Norway specifically, and in Scandinavia generally. According to Bjorner, Scandinavian children and tweens are used to being exposed to, amongst others, US culture. Thus, there was an idea that this was a welcoming market in terms of broadcasting US based productions. And when I asked Heegaard whether products differed geographically he answered:

Heegaard: The product for tweens are very much the same products you put out as tweens are very global, the way they think is global. The products that we put out in the Nordic market, is very much the same product that you'll find in the rest of the world.

Ingvild: When you said tweens are very global, could you elaborate on that?

Heegaard: Well, it's about you have the same values if you are a tween in Copenhagen, or a tween in New York. You have the same heroes, you have the same fashion statements, it's, the products we do on tweens is based on these TV-series where you have the universe that is very fixed, so you can say "High School Musical" is "High School Musical" and you know what to expect within that universe and the role play elements is out of it, so the products you are wearing is very much based on a fashion statement which is the same, I would say on global scale.

Again there is a notion of tweens globally (at least in the western world) being exposed to the same scripts, they are thought to have the same heroes and have the same knowledge of the fictional universe that Heegaard expressed. Being global here does not imply being aware of what is happening in other parts of the world, rather it means that they are exposed to, and embrace the same scripts.

Bjorner summed up what he perceived as being the general issues children in the tween category are believed to have:

Tweens, they by large have the same stuff happening in their lives, they have a family, they have brothers and sisters that they have issues with or

they fight with or have fun with. They have desires of what they aspire to be, or heroes, or icons or even idols that they, that they adore, whether it's a Bollywood singer or it's a Scandinavian Eurovision contest singer. Pretty much the same thing, they have homework whether you're Chinese or you're Danish, they have parents that allow them or disallow them stuff. All that is, almost I'd call it, it's a kind of a same DNA, that you're finding kids' lives, tweens lives and teens lives throughout anywhere in the planet, but it's all in their local cultural context, but the background is the same.

Both Bjorner and Heegaard defined tweens as a unitary target group, thus following the notion of both the commercial persona (Cook, 2000, 2004) and the formulation of the generalized user (Woolgar, 1997). By doing so they also made it easier to cater to this group, taking for granted that tweens all have the same issues growing up and that they can find resonance in both content and merchandise which Disney offers.

The television perspective; Configuring tweens as nostalgic yet relevant

As mentioned, the accounts Bjorner and Heegaard outlined in how Disney configured its audience and consumers differed. Where Heegaard talked of tweens as being in growth and moving forward, focusing mainly on girls, Bjorner presented a perspective of tweens moving back and forth in relation to age and included both genders. Themes that were present in the interviews I had with Bjorner, and which were absent in my interview with Heegaard, were how Disney configured the audience as being concerned with their experiences in their day to day lives, while simultaneously configuring tweens as being nostalgic and thus enabling their audience to indulge in regressing.

Through Bjorner's explanation of how Disney catered to the tween segment, tweens seem to be configured by Disney as both nostalgic and emotional. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Bjorner expressed how tweens are seen from a television perspective to have one foot in childhood; still watching shows aimed at a younger audience. In addition to enabling tweens to be nostalgic through the media content, building on already existing relationships tweens were perceived as having with the Disney brand and characters was an important strategy of connecting with its audience. Disney has, as previously stated, a unique position in Scandinavia and in Norway, and according to Bjorner, due to this unique position, the longevity, and the presence of the brand,

Scandinavians have a connection to Disney. In the first interview with Bjorner, he stated that Disney has a strong brand presence; “The Walt Disney Company has a brand that kids grow up with” as he worded it. At the end of our first interview Bjorner summed up the rationale behind Disney (not specifically tweens, rather Disney and all its audience):

We’re very much about the emotional connections, I think I’ve been talking some generally today about how we want to be relevant in their lives, but that is also about emotional connections and about how we promote celebrating your life, your successes what you do, that’s emotional connection, I’m emotional, I’m personally emotionally connected to Disney, I grew up with some Disney Classics in my life, kids will do that today as well

In this quote here, history seems to play a part in connecting with an audience, thus configuring audiences in general, and not merely the tween segment, as emotional and nostalgic. Bjorner thus implied that if Disney were able to connect to the children growing up, this connection would be sustained throughout one’s life, as he used himself as an example of.

If you can maintain a strong brand presences and performance and perception, half the battle is won that when we offer them something they say “well, that’s from Walt Disney Company.”

As Bjorner here suggested, Disney configures the audience as emotionally connected to brands and characters. By attempting to inscribe themes and issues which will enable an emotional connection, Disney seems to believe that if one is able to connect strong and early with its audience and consumers, selling new products is deemed easier. And, as shall be explored in the analysis of the children interviewed for this thesis, this was often the case. The interviewees described a trust and belief that Disney Channel catered to them. Thus, what was presented on the channel was something that they would like.

In addition to continuing the perceived emotional connection with the brand, being relevant and mirroring tweens lives today was mentioned several times as another major issue in catering to the tween segment. Merging the past and the present as Bjorner suggested:

They [Winnie the Pooh, Mickey Mouse] are like the old friends that they can always come back to. They know what they stand for and, so they have this very sort of warm relationship to these characters, and it's really amazing. It's like Winnie the Pooh. A lot of kids have had that bear in their life since they grew up, he is part of their emotional life, where some of the new live action series they display something that is totally different, they display their life as actually they experience it today, so whether you're a Norwegian tween, or a Danish or Swedish tween, some of those stories that we tell about day to day life, of course with funny twists and plots and humour and all that to make it entertaining, but they can mirror that, they understand it.

In this segment above, Bjorner gave an account of the tween audience as being configured as different from the younger pre-school audience. Where *Winnie the Pooh* stories are not talked about as mirroring lives, the tween content is. Thus, the configuration of the two audience segments differ from one another, and subsequently the different media texts are inscribed differently. Implicitly the above quote tells us that Disney does not attempt to inscribe its visions of the lived lives of younger children. Rather the focus for the younger audience seems to be warm, safe and stable. Bjorner also claimed that something happened when moving from young children to tweens; the tween content is something completely different. It is supposed to “display their life as actually they experience it today” and is thus being inscribed by what Disney perceives as being a part of the lived lives of tweens.

Conclusion: Disney configuring tweens

Tweens were, through the accounts given by the two Disney representatives, configured as an audience and consumer group that is situated in-between children and teenagers, moving back and forth, and being in transition. However, tweens were simultaneously seen as being grounded in childhood. There was thus a double strategy in configuring the audience/consumer groups from the television perspective and from the consumer products perspective. Talking about what and who tweens are does not solely depend on tweens as subjects. Rather, material goods such as products and media content also become subjects, as Akrich suggests in her use of script (1992), and as Woolgar suggests in his perspective of consumption as ontological enactment (2012). Depending on one's preoccupation, content, or products, tweens are configured as audience and/or

consumers. Thus, when Bjorner and Heegaard were talking about what was typical for tweens, they were not describing what tweens “are really like”. Rather, they were giving accounts of how Disney configures tweens as a category to fit with where they are coming from professionally, inscribing different attributes, enablements, and constraints in their different scripts. The Walt Disney Company’s use of ambiguous configuration of the target group enables a broader reading of paratext and content, thereby widening their prospective market (Fiske, 1986; Woolgar, 1997). Thus, there was no single script provided for the audience and consumer.

This chapter has examined how two Disney representatives accounted for the company’s configuration of tweens as an audience and consumer group. Following this chapter is a text analysis of the *High School Musical* trilogy and the *Hannah Montana* sitcom focusing on what “instructions” the texts hold (Woolgar, 1997) and in what “direction” the texts suggest that readers read it (Morely, 1992). As an audience segment tweens were through Heegaard and Bjorner’s talk configured as having the same issues developmentally and contextually regardless of origin. As tweens are seen as moving from the family sphere to the peer- sphere, a question is whether the media texts portray this, in addition the themes as well as parent-child pressure issues, friendship issues and having to deal with making choices in their lives which Bjorner was focused on in his interviews. In the following analysis of the media texts, these issues, which were seen to be universal for the children in the tween ages, will be explored.

Chapter 5: Configurations of tweens in Disney media texts

In the previous chapter I explored how the two Disney representatives provided accounts for how tweens as an audience and consumer group were configured by Disney as a company. In this chapter I aim to explore what type of script the media texts aimed at tweens made available for their target audience. In other words, this chapter builds on the previous chapter that described the (at times) ambiguous configurations of tweens as an audience and consumer group by the two Disney representatives. Are the scripts provided by the Disney representatives and the media texts coherent?

For the purpose of exploring the scripts the Disney Company offers their tween audience through media texts aimed at tweens, it is important to look at the content through what is being said and done in light of morals, themes, and identity. It is also important to look at how, as an audience member, one is positioned in relation to the characters, and where one's identification, desires, and hopes for the movies story is scripted (Bordwell & Thompson, 1997:123). By focusing on whose point-of-view the movie favours, what motivations and goals the protagonists have, and the obstacles that lie in the way of achieving the goals, we can read how the audience is configured as this serves as a guideline for how to interpret the text and what sympathies as an audience one should have. As Morley (1992) expresses:

In analyzing programs, it cannot be enough simply to look at the content of what is said. We have also to look at the assumptions that lie behind that content. There will be assumptions about us as an audience, and these assumptions need to be made visible if we are to understand the implicit 'messages' which a program may transmit over and above what is explicitly said in it (Morley, 1992:84).

In this chapter I will continue using the analytical framework based on scripts (Akrich, 1992), and configuring the user (Woolgar, 1997). This framework is combined with

media and film scholars, as “formal systems both *cue* and *constrain* the viewer’s construction of a story” (Bordwell, 2004:245-246). This notion resembles Woolgar (1997:74) and his concept of configuring the user as technologies define, enable, and constrain the user.

In addition to guiding the viewer in how to construct the stories told, the media texts also configure their audience by providing scripts for how to be a tween. As Hendershot suggests: “Like children’s literature, children’s TV is designed by adults to fulfil their conceptions of what childhood should be” (Hendershot, 2004:183). This implies that through media, texts producers inscribe their ideal version of what childhood *should be* or as Vogler puts it:

I came looking for the design principles of storytelling, but on the road I found something more; a set of principles for living. I came to believe that the Hero’s Journey is nothing less than a handbook for life, a complete instruction manual in the art of being human (Vogler, 1999:ix).

As such media texts are thought to cue and constrain the audience’s construction of what is happening on screen and relate this to what is happening off-screen. Hence what is being broadcasted in tween content can be said to provide scripts for the tween audience on how to be tweens. As Kellner suggests; “identity in contemporary society is increasingly mediated by media images which provide the models and ideals for modelling identity” (Kellner, 1995:247). And in continuation, as the tween stage is seen as a liminal stage, media texts can be said to provide a script for how to become an autonomous individual by providing resources for the identity making project/process tweens are thought to embark on. Kellner (1995) also suggests that media “possesses important socializing and enculturating effects via its role models, gender models, and variety of subject positions which valorise certain forms of behaviour and style while denigrating and villainizing other types” (Kellner, 1995:240). As such, a question becomes what character traits seem to belong to the heroes and to the villains in the media texts in order to explore how the Disney media texts take part in the socialising and enculturating of their target audience, the tweens.

Even though children in the tween category tend to watch content over and over again (Lury, 2002; Tally, 2005), which I also found in my study, this does not mean that they will in fact internalize the scripts provided. That topic will be embarked upon in the next chapter. Nevertheless, by analysing the content we can see what scripts Disney provides for how to be a tween. For in addition to acknowledging how the user makes sense of the media text, we need to give an account for what they find there (Buckingham, 1993). Or as Latour words this notion: “Looking at the mechanism alone is like watching half the court during a tennis game” (Latour, 1992:247). The other half of the court (the user) will be elaborated on in the next chapter.

The idea that people, through reading, seeing, and hearing other people’s stories, make sense of their own life, consciously or unconsciously, has been considered essential: “Our appetite for story is a reflection of the profound human need to grasp the patterns of living, not merely as an intellectual exercise, but within a very personal emotional experience” (McKee, 1997:12). Learning about life through art is an age-old idea. Aristotle in ancient Greece believed that through watching a tragedy, the audience would go through a cleansing experience, a moral purification experiencing what he called catharsis (Golden, 1973). Watching someone faced with moral dilemmas and choosing the ‘right’ path despite of the fact that it would lead to their demise was thought to be cathartic. By watching a tragedy the audiences were believed to be relieved of their moral duties as well as receiving moral education and upbringing.

Even though I am focusing on television content, the idea is the same: stories are being told, and there is a belief that one learns through stories, that one makes sense of one’s own life and that of others through those stories, and that these stories play a part in one’s socialization process. “Storytelling is vital to every society as a way of searching for and sharing truth, but the role of storyteller in culture has changed, affecting what is told. Today, popular film has become a central storyteller for contemporary culture” (Ward, 2002:1). The same formulaic story, or narrative, being told over and over again can be seen as contributing to a narrative structure that becomes experienced as a ‘natural’ for individuals. The two media texts in question can therefore be viewed as tools for the audiences’ identity making process.

Identity in this thesis is thought of as a project and as a process rather than universal and essential. It is constructed and needs to be performed and managed, as argued by Goffman (1959, 1974, 1983) and Jenkins (2000, 2004). As an individual one is responsible for managing one's own identity (Bauman, 2000, 2002; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Côté, 1996). Identity is thus perceived as developing in and within relations with other individuals, other groups of people, and with social structures rather than something one is born with.

In line with the notion of identity as being dynamic, dialectic and a process, the perceived development of an increasingly individualized social world (in the west) is also an important aspect. There is said to have been a shift in social and personal identity where in pre-modern times one was ascribed a social identity, while in late-modern times one has to *manage* one's social identity, meaning: "reflexively and strategically fitting one's self into a community of 'strangers' by meeting their approval through the creation of the right impressions" (Côté, 1996:421). This chapter is partly inspired by the writings of Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) and Bauman (2000) who explore what they define as the individualization of society. Before leaping into the analysis of the media texts, I will briefly explore the concept of individualization derived from these two books as individualization is a value that I find inscribed in the Disney media texts.

The individualization thesis is based on the societal context of today, which Beck and Beck-Gernsheim term second modernity (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). It can also be referred to as late modernity (Giddens, 1991) or in Bauman's term, liquid modernity (Bauman, 2000). Common for these different terms is a focus on social structures becoming increasingly individualized. In Côté's words, what happened in late modernity is that: "market-oriented policies and consumption-based lifestyles are replacing community-oriented policies and production-based lifestyles" (Côté, 2002:117). As a result, issues that in earlier times were addressed through the public domain with collective solutions are becoming increasingly individualized, meaning that it becomes the responsibility of the individual to resolve issues on their own (Bauman, 2000; Beck, 1992; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Côté, 2002). Beck and Beck-Gernsheim explain the concept of individualization as having two meanings,

which overlap and intersect each other. On the one hand individualization means the disintegration of previous social forms such as social status and gender roles, while the second meaning of the concept is that in modern society new demands, controls, and constraints are being imposed on individuals (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002:2). In other words, in a social world where one is no longer born into a preformed static identity, one is now required to take on the task of becoming the primary architect of one's own identity (Côté, 2002; Giddens, 1991:38). This individualization is, according to Bauman, a fate, not a choice, and: "the option to escape individualization and to refuse participation in the individualizing game is emphatically *not* on the agenda" (Bauman, 2002:xvi). Thus this social context is thought of as something all humans in the western world *have* to live, everything must be decided (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002).

The societal context of today is thus claimed to be increasingly individualized. As a result, individuals have to make and justify lifestyle choices among a diversity of options (Bauman, 2000, 2002; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Giddens, 1991:5). In addition, as I have argued, media texts provide a scripting and configuring of tweens' identity making processes. Disney can be said to offer, through their media texts, a tool in the audiences' identity making processes. The question thus becomes; what is the identity making option that Disney offers its tween audience? What identity-making tools and resources do we find in the scripts?

Drawing on the findings in the previous chapter, I want to inquire if the themes expressed by Heegaard and Bjorner are observable in the media texts. The two Disney representatives provided a somewhat ambiguous account of tweens when it came to age and gender. Thus, a question is; do we find this ambivalence in the television scripts? How are the tween audiences configured in relation to age? How is gender conveyed? Both Heegaard and Bjorner expressed how tweens are seen to start their journey moving from the family-sphere to the peer-sphere. Is this mirrored in the media texts? As these were the themes most prominent in my interviews with the Disney representatives, I will pay special attention to how age, gender, and identity are represented and conveyed to the audience. In addition, boys and girls are said to become more segregated and to have what can be perceived as separate cultures in their pre-adolescence (Adler &

Adler, 1998; Thorne, 1993), which is the same age group as what in this thesis is referred to as tweens. This is also a reason to pay attention to how gender is being configured within the Disney media texts. By examining the norms and values embedded in the texts we can also read from the media text what type of identity is deemed both accessible and favoured (Kellner, 1995). In addition, as the Disney franchises are embedded in a plethora of paratexts on which the company reportedly thrives, another question surfaces; how is consumption and materialism inscribed in the media texts?

The sitcom *Hannah Montana* will first be discussed before moving on to the *High School Musical* trilogy. Both parts will start with a short synopsis on the media texts before venturing into in the exploration of these media texts define, constrain and enable its audience in its configuration of the audience, and especially how age, gender, and identity are inscribed.

Hannah Montana

Hannah Montana is a sitcom aimed at the tween audience in which the main character, Miley Stewart, leads the double life of a regular, not very popular school girl by day and a teenage pop star by night. Hannah Montana is the artist name that Miley uses to keep her private life private. Miley lives with her father, Robbie, and older brother, Jackson, in Malibu. Her mother is dead but sometimes appears in Miley's dreams. Much of the series' situations tend to focus on keeping the secret life of Miley as Hannah secret. In addition to her family knowing about Hannah Montana, her two best friends, Lilly and Oliver are let in on the secret in two different episodes and acquire their own secret identities to be able to accompany Miley as Hannah in celebrity life—Lola Luftnagle and Mike Standley III. Miley's character through the four seasons that have been made has developed from a girl in middle school to a freshman in college.

Hannah Montana belongs to the genre of situational comedy or sitcom. The sitcom is a well-established genre within television and is often very recognizable. Classic characteristics are that they are, of course, comical, they tend to last for around 30 minutes, they usually deal with easy-going topics, and stereotypes tend to serve as a

fundamental base. Medhurst and Tuck argue that the sitcom “cannot function without stereotypes” (Medhurst & Tuck, 1996:111). Not only are characters stereotypical, but also the situations. In other words, both characters and situations are predictable and ritualistic.

The sitcom formula hinges on “the tendency to resolve conflicts, reduce problems, by resorting to folk wisdom and proverbialism” (Medhurst & Tuck, 1996:112). The wisdom and proverbialism can thus be read as the intrinsic moral and values inscribed in the media text. The morals and values are conveyed through the use of humour, and humour is, of course, a substantial part of the sitcom. Humour is said to have a disciplinary aspect as by laughing at others’ expense, as an audience member, one learns how *not* to act (Billig, 2005:39). And as Marc suggests: “The sitcom has generally upheld the sanctity of the proscenium, and producers working in the genre have taken careful pains to respect the age-old tradition of grafting humour to moral suasion” (Marc, 1997:20). As shall be discussed here, *Hannah Montana* as a sitcom stays true to the traditional setup of the genre using humour as tool for conveying the script (in Akrich’s (1992) use of the term script, not the actual television script) for the audience.

Traditionally in the genre of sitcoms, family and family values are placed in the centre (Hartley, 2008; Marc, 1997). However, the nuclear family is absent and non-standard families are often depicted in sitcoms (Hartley, 2008). This is true for *Hannah Montana* as well, as she lives with her stay at home father and her older brother Jackson. As *Hannah Montana* is aimed at tweens it can be seen as an introduction to media literacy (within the live action sitcom genre) and as teaching life skills (Hartley, 2008). I will now explore how moral, doing age, and gender are inscribed in the sitcom.

Scripting the production of identity through morale

In *Hannah Montana* we, the audience, are told stories about Miley and her struggle to keep her private life private while living the life of a teen-pop-star. The double-life is often used as a tool to perpetuate other topics as friendship, doing the right thing, and how to behave socially. The sitcom’s generic task is, according to Marc: “to illustrate, in practical everyday subphilosophic terms, the tangible rewards of faith and trust in the

family” (Marc, 1997:191). As such, generally sitcoms seem to provide scripts for doing the right thing according to the hegemonic ideal. Even though Miley’s life is quite different from the life of her audience, there are still mundane conservative issues being propagated through this sitcom.

As a tool to convey what is right and what is not, the narrative structure guides the audience. The narrative structure in sitcoms generally is built on a particular mould: Familiar status quo, ritual error made, ritual lesson learned, familiar status quo (Marc, 1997:190-191). This structure is easily recognized in the *Hannah Montana* episodes. There is always a lesson that Miley learns. Often these lessons concentrate on being a true friend, not lying, listening to her father after going against his will, and understanding the consequence of not adhering to the correct moral codes. Thus, doing the right thing, independent of the outcome of the situation, is reoccurring in the sitcom. In other words, inscribed in this sitcom is a clear moral of conforming and not rebelling. I will now look at how this is done, by making use of three episodes of *Hannah Montana* and focus on the ritual error and subsequently ritual lesson learned.

The ritual lesson learned, in other words, the right thing to do, is sometimes learned by first not doing the right thing and then experiencing the bad consequences that are the results of not being morally responsible. For example in the episode “Ooh, Ooh Itchy Woman” from the first season, when Miley and Lilly do not do the right thing, there are consequences. Miley and Lilly decide to retaliate on Amber and Ashley, the school bullies who make fun of Miley and Lilly in school, at a school camping trip. Talking about their plans in Miley’s house, Miley’s father warns Lilly and Miley of seeking revenge stating that “if you lay down with the dogs, you’re gonna end up with fleas.” They disregard Miley’s father’s warning and go through with the plan, which falls through and Miley and Lilly end up with poison oak. Miley does not start itching until she is on television being interviewed as Hannah, which is what makes it funny as she itches and tries to convince the interviewer that it is a new type of dance that she has been working on, getting Lilly/Lola on stage helping her scratch attempting to mask it as a new dance-move.

In this episode, the ritual lesson is learned by ritual error made. In other episodes the ritual lesson is learned before any consequences take place. These types of episodes rather rely on the self-control and an internalized moral stance within the characters. For example, in the episode named “The Idol Side of Me” in the first season, Amber is going to participate in the television program “Singing with the Stars” to sing with Hannah Montana. Miley uses this as a chance to get back at Amber, making a plan with Lilly to ruin it for Amber by making a fool out of her on television. However, Miley cannot go through with it, changing her mind at the last minute, which results in Miley as Hannah being humiliated on television instead. Satisfied with doing the right thing Miley hopes that Amber will change and act more humbly in school. However, this is not the case and she continues her ways. Yet Miley is convinced that doing the right thing is still right even though Amber did not change her ways. As such the lesson being conveyed to the audience is that even after doing the right thing, one is never guaranteed that there will be any benefits to reap, except the benefit of being the better person.

In the sitcom staying true to your friends is an important theme which is elaborated on for example in the episode “It’s My Party And I’ll Lie if I Want To” in the first season. In this episode Lilly as her alternate ego Lola Luftnagle is backstage at a Hannah Montana concert and Hannah’s posh celebrity friend Tracy deems her uncool as she does not act worldly but is instead overly enthusiastic. Lilly/Lola is unaware of this, and when Tracy calls Hannah the next day to ask her to a celebrity party, Hannah/Miley keeps it a secret from Lilly/Lola as she does not want to be embarrassed by her. Miley makes up an excuse for why she cannot hang out with Lilly on the night of the party, but there are paparazzi’s at the party that take pictures of Miley as Hannah which Lilly sees in the newspaper. Miley feels bad and realizes that she acted wrong. This episode therefore follows Marc’s (1997) mould, as Miley learns her lesson after having made the ritual error. The focus on friendship and being a true and good friend as strong moral values in the sitcom, can be seen in relation to the notion of tweens from both sociology scholars, and psychologist scholars moving from the intimate family sphere to the peer sphere (Berndt, 1999; Frønes, 1995; Kohen-Raz, 1971; Suoninen, 2001), and echoing both Heegaard and Bjorner and partly the scripts from *High School Musical* as shall be discussed.

Although friendship and doing the right thing are important issues in the sitcom there is within this focus also a strong emphasis of individualization. For it is Miley who has to take the consequences for the actions she takes and it is through the lessons she learns and internalizes that we oversee her identity-making process.

Identity making through configuring gender

In the series gender is often at the base of jokes and whole episodes revolve around different gender issues. Thus, gender often serves as a framework for both whole episode-topics and jokes. Generally, media dramaturgy is often based on clear dichotomies and gender dichotomies fit well into this system as the feminine and the masculine are often portrayed as being complete opposites (Jacobson, 2005). There are several instances where masculinity is seemingly lost due to being too feminine. Robbie, Jackson, and Oliver all have episodes where their masculinity, and thus their identity, is contested due to actions they take.

Robbie, as the father, several times tries to correct both his and his sons (Jackson's) 'girly ways.' For example, in the episode "Miley Get Your Gum" from the first season, Jackson buys his first (used) car, and the car turns out to be a 'girl car,' which Jackson has failed to see. Jackson tries to return the car, but is not able to. A neighbour makes fun of the 'girl car' uttering, "My wife had one, but traded it in because us it was too girly." Robbie helps Jackson transform the car into a "guy-ride" by putting big speakers in it to salvage the masculinity of his son.

In the first episode of season three "He Ain't A Hottie, He's My Brother", Robbie is caught highlighting his hair at home when Jackson comes home early. Clearly embarrassed Robbie utters; "Macie couldn't fit me in this week! Hair like this doesn't just happen, son. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm gonna' go upstairs and watch some football, monster trucks, you know, man things!" Thus taking care of one's appearances is scripted as a feminine project here and Robbie needs to do "man things" to save his masculinity from deterioration.

There are several episodes where the comedy revolves around Oliver "acting like a girl". Oliver likes to watch soap operas but uses his grandmother as an excuse why he

watches it. “It has been argued that the central themes of soap opera (...) chime with the traditionally domestic concerns of women so that soap opera is a space in which women’s concerns and points of view is are validated and from which women take pleasure” (Barker, 1999:106).

When the men in the series act feminine, this is funny, but there are no instances of women acting in a masculine way for humorous reasons. Femininity is an issue both for the women and men in the programs. For the men it is about avoiding being feminine, while for the women it is about how to assert their femininity. Thus masculinity is not an issue except when masculinity is seen as contested.

While the boys fight to avoid being too feminine, in the third episode in the second season, “You Are So Sue-able To Me”, Lilly, who is the stereotypical tomboy, works hard at becoming feminine enough. In this episode Lilly is upset because as she says; “I don’t have a date for the dance! I’m a failure as a girl!” “For female characters, the focus is on physical appearance, sexual appeal and romantic success” (Cole & Daniel, 2005:3). A boy does ask her out, and Miley decides to help Lilly to act more like a girl; “You gotta start acting more like a girl,” Miley tells Lilly. “Analyses indicate that girls and young women are repeatedly encouraged to look and dress in specific ways and to use certain products in order to be more attractive and desirable to men” (Jacobson, 2005:22). Lilly gets a makeover and acts more ‘girly,’ which is talking slowly in a deep voice. In this episode it is not just gender but also age that is an issue. Miley tells Lilly that “there is a ninth grader in there” and promises to get her out. In the second season, Miley and Lilly have just started high school, so there is a sense of developing as a girl, from a tomboy to a more feminine girl, acting your age so to speak. Changing schools as Wærdahl (2005a) has noted also represents a change in social identity.

In this episode the boy who asks Lilly out stands her up because he liked her for who she “really” was and does not want to hang out with her as the ‘girl’ she has become. There is a double message being sent here as the notion of authenticity trumps that of performativity. This episode confirms the notion of individualization as it is Lilly and not Miley who has to bear the consequences of Lilly’s actions (performing a more ‘girly’ version of her). While this episode clearly inscribes individualization and taking

responsibility for who one is, generally in the series Lilly does go through a transformation from tomboy to a more feminine girl, becoming more obsessed with her appearances and toning down the tomboyish side of her.

The way Disney inscribes gender traits in the sitcom helps to socialise what is accepted behaviour for boys and what is accepted behaviour for girls (Kellner, 1995). However, for the most part it communicates what is “girly” through boys failing to be masculine. The representation of gender for the most part lies with the boys in the series, as they take part in scripting what is actually deemed feminine, and thus out of reach for boys. Through this comedy Disney is communicating what is masculine and what is feminine, providing scripts for how boys and girls should act, as the humour is based on the characters displaying gender traits that are perceived as not fitting with their gender. “Children learn at an early age which personality traits are linked to their own gender. By virtue of our gender we learn the appropriate ways to behave in accordance with society’s definition of masculinity and femininity” (Gunter, 1995:2). By placing gender at the centre of comical actions Disney provides scripts that reinforce gender stereotypes and thereby take part in making and upholding gender categories as ‘real’ (Gauntlett, 2008:151). Thus, there is a binary of boys versus girls being inscribed in the sitcom.

Age configurations in Hannah Montana

High School Musical, as will be explored later in this chapter, mainly revolves around past and future, and age performance can be seen as a major theme in the trilogy. In *Hannah Montana* however, the focus is not so much the large issues in life. The entertainment lies within the situational comedy and is grounded in the present. Thus age, while still present, is not an explicit theme. However, it is interesting to look at how the media text of *Hannah Montana* provides age-scripts for its audience. When examining the sitcom the age group portrayed belongs to the age category slightly above the age group that is the target audience. In other words, the sitcom can be said to be providing an anticipatory script and hence an identity-making tool based on what is to come.

The sitcom provides a safe distance as it is based on comedy. Although, as mentioned, morals and doing the right thing is conveyed, no issues are too serious. The humour is

often a type of slapstick humour, serving the audience misunderstandings, physical comedy, and dress up. It resembles play, and as such, configurations of the audience can be seen to be young, innocent, and playful. For example, when Lilly is let in on Miley's secret identity she is also shown Miley's secret closet, which is hidden in her room. Part of a wall in Miley's room opens up and inside there is a large walk-in closet with various stage outfits, fancy clothes, shoes, handbags, and other accessories. The items are sometimes used as treats for Lilly so that she can pick out something that she gets to take home. Miley's closet also serves as a playground, where they both try on outfits. "Pleasure can be found in trying on that image for one's self" (Blue, 2012:9). This resembles what Mitchell and Reid-Walsh (2005) discuss as playing *with* teen culture, not committing to it. As such the media text is inviting its audience to play along with the characters, playing with teen culture.

Throughout the seasons there are several love interests, and some culminate in kissing; however, there are several cases of infatuations from a distance, which again makes it safe. In the later series, the previous best friends Oliver and Lilly become boyfriend and girlfriend. Following this, Oliver leaves to go on tour with his band, and Lilly and Oliver maintain their relationship from a distance. Thus, the script conveyed here is an ambiguous one. On one hand, the texts is configuring its audience to be interested in boyfriend/girlfriend relationships, which can be said to belong to a more teenage lifestyle than that of tweens. And on the other hand they are keeping things safe and at a distance by having Oliver go on tour and thus avoiding relationships becoming too serious, too physical, and too close.

Disney Channel's tween series are made for the younger audience. *Hannah Montana* follows the convention of traditional sitcoms and teen television as a genre. It mirrors teen television. However, the edge (if there can be said to be one) is omitted. Issues dealing with sex, drugs, teenage angst and serious domestic problems are nowhere to be found in *Hannah Montana*. The format is the same, but a more sanitized version. Often in teen television the actors portraying teens are actually in their late teens early twenties, in tween television the actors who portray teens are actually teens. In the first season of *Hannah Montana* Miley Cyrus (the actress) was 12 years old and when the series ended she was 17. The actors in the tween series are thus younger than other teen

television series. Puberty is not mentioned in particular. The closest utterance I found is when Dolly Parton, who guest stars as Miley's great aunt, exclaims, "Teenage life is harder than walking through a balloon store with a porcupine purse." There are other issues such as dating and kissing which can be said to belong to the teenage realm more than the tween realm. As such the notion of anticipatory socialization can be said to be a theme in the sitcom.

I will now venture into a quite different media text, namely the trilogy *High School Musical*. Both *High School Musical* and *Hannah Montana* aim to attract the same target group, but differ in form and content. Keeping in mind how age and individual identity is being scripted in the sitcom I now turn to how these themes are present in the trilogy.

High School Musical

When discussing the *High School Musical* trilogy an obvious place to start is the genre of high school movies. Bulman in his research on Hollywood high school movies divide them in three categories: urban, suburban, and private school films. The *High School Musical* trilogy embodies the criteria for the suburban movies, where the middle-class is portrayed. Bulman found that in suburban films there is a focus on expressive individualism, which can be described as a type of individualism that focuses not on material achievements but rather; "the discovery of one's unique identity and the freedom of individual self-expression" (Bulman, 2005:20) in other words, a type self-realization based within the individual. The stories being told in the typical suburban films thus mirror the notion that in late-modern society individuals are encouraged to continually discover their identities through consumption and pleasing others (Côté, 1996; Gergen, 1991). As shall be elaborated in this chapter, discovering, and subsequently asserting one's unique identity, and expressive individualism are important themes in the *High School Musical* trilogy. Before exploring how gender, identity and age are scripted for the audience through this trilogy, I will give a synopsis of all three movies.

High School Musical Synopsis

The first movie starts at a New Year's Eve party at a skiing resort, the movie's protagonists, Troy and Gabriella, meet for the first time. After winter break Troy sees Gabriella in his homeroom at East High School, she has just moved there with her mother. Troy is the captain of the basketball team and very popular at East High. Troy shows Gabriella around the school, and they pause in front of the sign-up sheet for the winter musical auditions. This alarms the movie's antagonist, Drama Club president Sharpay Evans, who assumes that Gabriella is interested in auditioning. Wanting to eliminate competition, Sharpay investigates the new girl and arranges for the scholastic decathlon captain, Taylor, to find out about Gabriella's past academic achievements so that Gabriella will join the scholastic decathlon team. Gabriella and Troy both go to the musical auditions. When the call-back list is posted, Sharpay is furious to learn that she has competition for the lead in the musical, and the rest of the Wildcats (the basketball team) are shocked that Troy and Gabriella have auditioned for a musical. Other students confess their own secret passions and talents in a song, alarming both Taylor and Troy's friend Chad. Since Gabriella has agreed to join the scholastic decathlon team, both Taylor and Chad want their teammates to focus on their upcoming competitions rather than the musical.

To help Troy and Gabriella return to normal, Chad and the basketball team trick Troy into saying that Gabriella is not important while she watches through a video-transmission. Gabriella is hurt and she refuses to talk to Troy and decides not to audition for the musical. Chad and Taylor then feel guilty for ruining Troy and Gabriella's relationship, and decide to tell them the truth. After Chad and members of the basketball team tell Troy what they did and offer to support him in call-backs, Troy goes to Gabriella's house and they make up. Overhearing Gabriella and Troy practicing, Sharpay convinces Mrs. Darbus, the theatre director, to change the call-back time to coincide with both the basketball championship and the scholastic decathlon, so that Gabriella and Troy cannot participate. Kelsi, the student composer, overhears the conversation, and the basketball team and the decathlon team work together to come up with a plan. On the day of the competitions, Taylor and Gabriella use the school's computers to cause a series of mishaps that delay the big game and the decathlon. With

both competitions delayed, Troy and Gabriella rush to the auditorium, and the whole school comes to see them. Troy and Gabriella then audition, and Mrs. Darbus gives them the lead roles, making Sharpay and her brother Ryan understudies. Troy and Gabriella both win their respective competitions, and the film ends when the entire school gathers in the gym to celebrate singing, “We’re all in this together.”

High School Musical 2

The second movie starts out at school 15 minutes before the bell rings for summer vacation. At the moment the bell rings, a large song and dance number with the whole student body starts. This sequence alternates between song and dance and dialogue. Through the song and dialogue the audience is told by Troy that “now my girl is what it’s all about” in addition to earning money for the future, both for his car, an old rusty pickup truck, and for college. Sharpay and Ryan also have their lines in both song and dialogue that tell us that they are going to their parents’ Resort, Lava Springs. And Sharpay explicitly says that she has her eyes on Troy since he is the primo boy and she is the primo girl at school; “it just makes sense.”

After a basketball practice in his home, Troy receives a call from someone who is offering him a job at Lava Springs that he did not apply for. Troy is able to convince the man on the phone, Fulton, to also hire Gabriella and the rest of the Wildcats. The plot moves to Lava Springs, and as Sharpay tells her brother Ryan, “we are on our turf now.” When learning that Fulton hired Gabriella and all of Troy’s friends she is furious and asks Fulton to make their working life so miserable that they all want to quit, except Troy. Fulton gives the workers hard tasks and acts mean. The Wildcats and friends start talking about quitting as this is clearly not worth it. Troy however convinces them to stay through the song “Work this out”.

Sharpay notices that Troy is worried about college funding and has her father talk to some of his friends who are in a position to help Troy get a basketball scholarship and lure him away from Gabriella and his friends. Troy has trouble keeping his dates with Gabriella and his promises to his team as he is offered to practice with a college basketball team and having dinner with Sharpay’s parents and college alumni who can help him get a scholarship. This eventually leads to Gabriella quitting her summer job

and his friends not talking to him anymore. Sharpay also tricks Troy into promising to sing with her at the talent show, which he originally was going to do with Gabriella.

Ryan stands up to Sharpay and goes to play baseball and dance with the rest of the Wildcats when he finds out that Sharpay wants to replace Ryan with Troy in the talent show. The rest of the Wildcats and Ryan start working on a dance and song number for the talent show, Sharpay instructs Fulton that none of the staff can participate in the talent show to eliminate competition. When Troy reads Fulton's notice on the talent show he starts to question himself and what is the right thing to do, this is done through his song "Bet on it". To make things right he refuses to sing with Sharpay even though there will be college scouts in the audience. Troy apologizes to his friends for neglecting them and for being egotistical. They accept his apology, but ask him to sing, to which he responds that he'll sing if the rest of the Wildcats can participate. At Sharpay's supposed instruction, Ryan gives Troy a new song to learn moments before the show. As Troy goes onstage, he asks Sharpay why she switched the song, and Sharpay is shocked to find that her brother tricked her. Troy sings the song alone, until Gabriella surprisingly joins him onstage. After the talent show, all the Wildcats go to the golf course to enjoy the fireworks and Troy and Gabriella has their first real kiss on screen after many almost kisses.

High School Musical 3: Senior Year

High School Musical 3: Senior Year marks the end of the trilogy as the characters are graduating. A major difference from the two first movies is that this one was not a TV movie, but opened in the movie theatre. The opening shot is a close up of Troy's face sweating as he is in the midst of the last basketball game of the season and hence of the seniors high school basketball career and the Wildcats are losing. There is a time out. The coach, Troy's father, gives the team a pep talk, saying that they only have 16 minutes left in their Wildcats uniform. The game starts again with a big song and basketball number: "This is the last time to get it right! This is the last chance to make it or not! Work together!" The Wildcats win the game.

After the game there is a party at Troy's house where Gabriella and Troy talk about the future and that they don't want to be apart and that they wish the world would just stop

for them. Mrs. Darbus, the drama teacher from the first movie, tells the students about the last musical theatre production that they all will make and which will be about themselves and their last days at East High. Mrs. Darbus reveals that Sharpay, Ryan, Kelsi, and Troy have all been considered for a scholarship at the Julliard School. Troy is confused as he has not sent in an application. At the show there will be two representatives from Julliard to decide on who will get the scholarship. Troy does not know what he wants to do for college but his father and Chad are expecting him to join Chad at the University of Albuquerque to play basketball. Sharpay tries to convince Ryan to get Kelsi (the composer) to give her and Ryan the song that she is writing for Troy and Gabriella in order to win the scholarship. Sharpay does this through the elaborate song and dance number “I want it all”.

Gabriella has been accepted to Stanford and has been asked to come to early freshmen orientation, but going would mean not participating in the show. She does not know what to do and is considering staying but Sharpay learns about the early orientation and sees this as an opportunity to get rid of Gabriella and take her place in the show. Sharpay prints out information about it and hands it to Troy. Troy, believing that it is the best for Gabriella, convinces her to go to Stanford, telling her they still have prom and graduation. Gabriella goes, but decides not to come back as she does not want to say goodbye again. Troy drives from Albuquerque to be with her on prom night and brings her back on the night of the show. They come back in time to do their duet. At the end of the show Mrs. Darbus informs the whole theatre that Ryan and Kelsie will receive scholarships to Julliard, and Troy tells them that he has chosen basketball and theatre as he will attend Berkley, which offers him both and which is not too far from Stanford. The last scene is the graduation where Troy gives the class speech about the wonders of East High where you can be yourself and where there are no social divides all due to Gabriella moving there.

Who am I? Providing scripts for the independent individual

In the *High School Musical* trilogy we follow Troy, the protagonist’s, point of view, and so as audience members, we are positioned in relation to Troy. Thus the media text extends an invitation where our identification, desires, and hopes for the movie’s story

should lie (Bordwell & Thompson, 1997:123). It is Troy's journey we as an audience become invested in. From the beginning of the movie Troy is depicted as a sympathetic and well-rounded person, helping others and being liked by the student body. The obstacles in the trilogy are ones that Troy needs to overcome in order to achieve his goal of being able to do both basketball and the school musical, and being able to cross the lines of social groups, socializing across the social borders. As such, he becomes a poster child for the fluid fragmented identity of the late modern society.

In the sitcom, doing the right thing, making the right choice, were main topics, and as such provided a script for educating the audience on what is right and wrong. The trilogy on the other hand does not provide a script for the rights and wrongs of everyday life but rather provides a script for the correct way of becoming an individual. According to Geertz (1973): "Becoming human is becoming individual, and we become individual under the guidance of cultural patterns, historically created systems of meaning in terms of which we give form, order, point, and direction to our lives" (1973:52). The trilogy thus configures the tween ages a process of becoming human, of becoming an individual, of growing up. As the trilogy deals with the larger issues of how to discover who one is, it can be linked to the individualization of society in a more direct way than the sitcom.

Heegaard and Bjorner, as we saw in the previous chapter, provided accounts of how Disney configured tweens as residing in a struggle for emancipation from their parents. As shall be elaborated on, the story of the troubled parent-child relationship was indeed evident in the media content. As such, there was coherence between the scripts conveyed by those representing the producers and those I found in the texts. In addition, Heegaard and Bjorner described friends as being more important than parents to children in the tween category. This is also inscribed in the trilogy as the trilogy is set in a high school realm, where peer-relationships and friends also serve as a place for emancipation for becoming an independent individual. I will now turn to how this is manifested in the media content.

In the trilogy there is evidence of Troy struggling with both parents and peers in relation to the choices he makes. The individual's goal in the typical suburban high school

movies is to “find their identity and to express their true selves apart from the expectations of their school, their parents, and their peers” (Bulman, 2005:20). Troy’s discovery of his own identity and his assertion of this is depicted as a road he, if he is to be true to himself, has to go down. By doing so, the media texts configures tweens identity-making project as a process of individuation, meaning the becoming of an autonomous individual (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002).

This focus on self-realization and the task of discovering one’s self is evident in the *High School Musical* trilogy as Troy has to break free from both parents and friends in order to truly come into his own. This individuation can be linked to how identity, in late-modern times, due to the individualization of society, is transformed from a “given” to a “task” (Bauman, 2002). In today’s society this is not actually a choice but rather something the individual has to do on his or her journey to becoming an individual (Bauman, 2002; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Giddens, 1991). It is Troy’s task to discover himself and the audience follows him, as the hero of the story, in this discovery and the adamant assertion of that identity. One of the struggles thus becomes the paradox of individuation and autonomy on one side, and obligations to others on the other side (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002:12). Troy in the trilogy constantly struggles with this paradox. However, the outcome configures the need for individuation in becoming human as I will argue below.

In all three *High School Musical* movies Troy goes through different ‘crises’ forcing Troy to reflect on who he is. This reflection is lacking in the *Hannah Montana* sitcom as the focus there is on everyday practices, not the bigger questions that Troy struggles explicitly (especially through the song lyrics) with. In the first movie, both parents and peers oppose the idea that Troy can be both captain of the basketball team *and* have a part in the school musical. Troy’s identity is threatened as his peers and father try to convince him that he can only be the ‘basketball boy,’ a term frequently used in the first movie by Troy, as below when talking in private to Gabriella:

Troy: My parents’ friends are always saying, "Your son's the basketball guy. You must be so proud." Sometimes I don't wanna be the "basketball guy." I just wanna be a guy. You know?

Gabriella: I saw the way you treated Kelsi at the audition yesterday. Do

your friends know that guy?

Troy: To them, I'm the playmaker dude.

Gabriella: Then they don't know enough about you, Troy. At my other schools I was the freaky math girl. It's cool coming here and being anyone I wanna be. When I was singing with you I just felt like... a girl.

As Buckingham notes: "'Identity' only becomes an issue when it is threatened or contested in some way, and needs to be explicitly asserted" (Buckingham, 2007:2). Troy struggles in all three movies with his identity. He is categorized as "the basketball guy" or the "playmaker dude" by his friends and teammates, and by his father, who also happens to be the basketball coach. It is this fixed and constraining category of "basketball guy" that Troy attempts to escape and widen, enabling him to take part in both basketball and musicals. Troy is through the whole first movie defined by people around him, something that he rejects after a while, as Jenkins claims: "Labelling may also, of course, evoke resistance" (Jenkins, 2004:21). From what Gabriella says here there lies a longing for being free from being defined by others, being just a girl, and as Troy says, "I just wanna be a guy." The Disney text thus offers a script of an ambiguous and fluid identity as something that is a goal for Troy. A goal of being free from labels, not being placed in a static identity category but rather discovering, and asserting, and managing that identity (Côté, 1996).

Repeatedly Troy is told by his father why he cannot move beyond the fixed category where he belongs. For example, after having missed his first basketball practice in three years his father/coach scolds him:

Coach Bolton (father): You're not just a guy Troy, you're the team leader. What you do affects not only the team but the entire school. You're a playmaker not a singer.

In this quote Troy's father explicitly tells him what Troy is, and what he is not, thus restraining and defining his identity and possible actions. Here we see that not only does Troy struggle with this constraint on his identity when talking to Gabriella as we saw in the previous excerpt, but he is also put in his place by his father/coach. Being in opposition to one's parents and other adults figures as a typical theme in suburban high school movies as the students must: "form their identities *in opposition* to adult figures"

(Bulman, 2005:94). Troy has a difficult relationship with his father, as he is the coach of the basketball team, and as the rest of the school, Troy's father does not support Troy doing both basketball and the musical. At the end of the first movie however, Troy's father understands more of his son's multifaceted identity as Troy is able to free himself from the expectations from his father and grow as an individual, making his own choices.

Not only does Troy need to free himself from his father's constraints, but also from his peers, and especially his best friend and teammate Chad, as Troy's identity and loyalty is questioned by him:

Chad: Look... do you see what's happening here, man? Our team is coming apart because of your singing thing. Even the drama geeks and the brainiacs suddenly think that they can... talk to us. Suddenly people think that they can do other stuff. Stuff that is not their stuff. They've got you thinking about show tunes, when we've got a playoff game next week.

Both Chad and Troy's father explicitly inform Troy that by him wanting to sing he is affecting the whole student body, in a negative way. The school's social structure in *High School Musical* is based on social cliques, which define, enable, and constrain the individual's identity. According to Bulman (2005) this structure is typical for high school movies. In the quote here Chad opposes the idea of the clique-structure of East High being dismantled, which is the outcome of Troy refusing to be contained within his category. Troy is confronted with his choices and the fear others (Chad and Troy's father) have that Troy, stepping out of his assigned category, will ruin things for those around him. The fears that his father and Chad communicate present the paradox of the autonomous individual versus the community (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). In addition, Chad and Troy's father also represent a traditional view of identity, the static, what Coté discusses as "inner-directed" personality (Côté, 1996). According to Coté: "inner-directed persons exercise choice and initiative, but the general heading and pattern of acceptable behaviour is set" (Côté, 1996:419). This fits with both Chad's and Troy's father attempting to keep Troy in his assigned category. Troy, on the other hand, through his journey of first discovering then asserting his new fluid multi-faceted identity, comes to represent the late modern individualization.

After having been confronted by both Chad and his father, Troy is still determined to be “himself” and is now sure of who he is and will pursue and stay true to himself. Troy then convinces Gabriella that individuality, being ‘true to one’s self,’ is more important than doing what is expected of you:

Gabriella: Troy, the whole singing thing is making the school whack. You said so yourself. Everyone’s treating you differently because of it.

Troy: Maybe it’s because I don’t wanna only be the basketball guy. They can’t handle it. That’s not my problem; it’s theirs.

Gabriella: How about your dad?

Troy: And it’s not about my dad. This is about how I feel, and I’m not letting the team down. They let me down, so I’m gonna sing. What about you?

The moral of most suburban high school movies according to Bulman is that “you should follow your heart, regardless of what your friends, your parents, or your teachers advise” (Bulman, 2005:18). This is an example of how Disney, through this text, is subjecting the characters as individuals, encouraging them to be themselves and not let others dictate, and hence conveying the message of individuality. In addition Disney through this communicates the notion of bearing the responsibility for being the primary architect of one’s own identity (Côté, 2002; Giddens, 1991) to its audience. The importance of listening to one’s own heart and not to others is evident in Troy’s actions. White and Preston (2005) claim in their analysis of Disney Channel programs; “All social relations are subordinate to Disney in the process of self-actualization as an individual” (White & Preston, 2005:252).

As was mentioned earlier, there is a paradox between becoming a unique individual and one’s obligations to others (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). As the first film ends it becomes clear that Troy benefits from finding and asserting himself. Through Troy’s individual agenda, he consequently takes part in ‘freeing’ the school; the community benefits too from his quest for independence. Thus the paradox is resolved. Troy is rewarded socially as the act of freeing himself from the constraints of expectations enables him to free the whole school. Subsequently, the individuals at the school become more at one with each other. One could say that the individualization of late-

modernity and its fluid, multifaceted identity, through this story, trumps the notion of the unitary identity project belonging to the early modern society.

In American cultural history there is claimed to be a conflict and contrast between community and individual, constructed by the dominant discourses. On one hand there is a strong emphasis on individualism, simultaneously as there is a long for belonging and a longing for sameness (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Grant, 1986; McKinley, 1997; Pugh, 2009). Through the trilogy Disney is implying that becoming an independent individual, one needs to take part in community, and it is only when one is truly an independent individual that the community will prosper. Bellah et al. (1985) describe the typical American belief that: “To serve society, one must be able to stand alone, not needing others, not depending on their judgment, and not submitting to their wishes. Yet this individualism is not selfishness. Indeed, it is a kind of heroic selflessness” (Bellah et al., 1985:146). This serves true in the trilogy as generally *High School Musical* suggests that the individual, by staying true to himself or herself, can change the structure. Troy and Gabriella do not change their own identities. As a result the student body learns to accept multiple social identities. Troy refuses to compromise his identity for the sake of the rest of the school and in his quest to assert his expressive individualism, the whole school changes and also benefits. Change is possible on a structural level (the school opens up for a more diverse student body within predefined groups) and on a personal level (when one is able to discover the true self, accepting the multiple identities one has).

In the trilogy I observed a tension between the modern and the late modern in relation to identity and individuality. Troy can be seen as representing an individualized society belonging to the late-modern realm, whereas Chad and Troy’s father on the other hand, at first represents a more unitary modern notion of identity, however, through the trilogy they come to accept the late-modern idea of individualization.

I now move on to reflect on how gender is scripted in *High School Musical*. Gender was, as discussed, a distinctive characteristic in the *Hannah Montana* sitcom. It was a theme at the base of both jokes and the narrative structure in whole episodes. How is gender scripted for the audience in the trilogy?

Configuring gender in High School Musical

In *High School Musical* I found gender absent as an explicit theme, as opposed to in the sitcom. Rather, this media text configures gender in a more subtle and indirect way. Even though Troy is the protagonist, as the audience of these movies are predominantly girls, I will examine the different gender identity-making tools that the Disney texts offer its audience through the two main girl characters, Gabriella and Sharpay. There is, as shall be explored, a clear binary between these two roles.

In the sitcom there is a clearly configured gender binary enabling and constraining the potential actions of girls and boys or women and men. In the trilogy however, there rather seems to be a dichotomy between different ways of being girl. This dichotomy is being conveyed through the portrayal of Gabriella, the love interest, and Sharpay, the antagonist. While in the sitcom we learn about the differences between girls and boys, in the trilogy we learn about the right and wrong way to be a girl.

According to Douglas (1995), traditionally in Disney animated movies there has been a dichotomous representation of women, leaving girl audiences with only two choices; “the powerless but beloved masochist or the powerful but detested narcissist” (Douglas, 1995:29). In the *High School Musical* trilogy, Gabriella and Sharpay seem to embody these two binary representations. On the one hand, we have the antagonist Sharpay, the mean, rich, power-hungry girl, and on the other hand we have Gabriella, the love interest of the protagonist, who is pretty, humble, smart and most of all a passive girl.

In a more recent study, Guthrie suggests that: “Tween protagonists are always defined as good, and a common shortcut in this definition is to contrast the protagonist to a more popular, meaner, girl. In such texts, mean girls gain popularity through fear and intimidation” (Guthrie, 2005:80). Sharpay fits the mean-girl image here as she rules the school with fear, while Gabriella is consistently good. There are other girls in the movies as well, but they serve as supportive roles and are not given much screen time. I will now consider the dichotomous gender configuration the Disney text offers its audience through looking at Sharpay and Gabriella.

Gabriella- the passive 'good girl'

Gabriella's character embodies much of what Guthrie discusses as the 'ideal tween' in her exploration of tween television shows. Guthrie (2005) found that the 'ideal tween' television character is economically well off, smart, pretty, has both girl and boy friends, and is not very popular (2005). Gabriella is well situated in the upper-middle class as she is a part of a one-income household living in a fairly large house with a large bedroom with a balcony. She is definitely smart as she was the 'freaky math genius' at her last school and also corrects her chemistry teacher in the first movie, and she does this in a very humble way. In addition to being smart, she sings beautifully.

Gabriella is not very popular when she arrives at East High as she does not know anyone. During the course of the three movies, she does not seem to become highly popular, but she becomes very well-liked by her peers. There is no doubt that she inherits the characteristics of a 'good girl'—she helps other students, does not plot against anyone to advance herself in any way, and facilitates Troy's discovery of 'true' identity.

Gabriella's character is not a strong causal agent. Her character is passive in all three movies as she does not actively plan or attempt to change herself or her surroundings, giving up and not fighting for Troy. However, both her social status and her surroundings do change for the better for her sake however, not through her own doings. Even when she is partially torn between joining the scholastic decathlon team and trying out for the musical, her character does not give the impression that this is important and that the essence of herself is at stake, as is the case with Troy.

All three movies contain a ballade, which Gabriella sings. All three songs are about heartache and all three songs end with her walking away. In the first movie hurt by what Troy said in the video transmission, Gabriella sings:

I thought you were my fairy-tale/
A dream when I'm not sleeping

After the song, and after their friends feel bad and tell her that they set Troy up to say those things, she still keeps away from him. Troy goes to Gabriella's house but she does

not want to see him. Troy then goes in the back yard and climbs up her balcony and sings acapella, the song that they sang on New Year's Eve. He wins her over and hence rescues her for now. They are a team, and now they can do both the musical and basketball/biology contest. Thus, Troy actively wins her back, and she is swayed.

In the second movie when Sharpay attempts to steal Troy away from Gabriella, Gabriella does not fight it although it is obvious what Sharpay is up to, and we know that Gabriella also knows. Thus the script for Gabriella, and in prolongation for good girls, is not standing up for what you believe or fighting for what is yours. In comparison to how Troy's struggle for emancipation from the constraining identity category and for doing right for himself is communicated as both important and good, the message being sent through Gabriella's character is quite different.

Gabriella is the 'nice' girl that does nothing and good things still happen to her. In her case it seems that it is not about being one's own architect by discovering, constructing, and asserting one's self, it is not about the actions she takes or does not take; it is about *who* she is. She is a nice girl with no ambitions other than to be a good person to others. The lesson here is that good things happen to those who wait.

As an example of the passiveness and the partly ambiguous script the Disney text presents, in Troy and Gabriella's first song in the third movie, "Can I have this dance", Gabriella tells Troy that she will show him how to do the waltz as he does not know, but the lyrics in the song say something different. Troy sings, "Count on me, I will catch you if you fall, I will take the lead." Even though he supposedly does not know how, he is a man and he will catch her and he will take the lead.

Traditionally in Disney films, according to Seiter (1995) heroines are innocent and selfless. Gabriella possesses characteristics of the 'nice girl,' which the protagonist (Troy) falls for, and she is mainly a passive agent within the narrative of the movies. As such, her purpose in the movies seems to be inspiring Troy's journey of individuation. The antagonist Sharpay on the other hand, drives the plot forward and possesses character traits that are quite opposite of those of Gabriella. As such the Disney text offers two highly visible, very different scripts for being a girl in these movies. I will

now look at how the media text of the trilogy configures the mean girl through the portrayal of Sharpay.

Sharpay, the active mean girl

Characters in movies convey meaning by making use of different tools, appearances, and actions being two tools in this communication (Bordwell & Thompson, 1997). Sharpay's qualities are made clear early on in the first movie. Sharpay is defined firstly through what other characters say about her; early in the first movie, in response to Troy saying Sharpay is "kind of cute" Chad utters, "So is a mountain lion, but you don't pet it." In the very first scene Sharpay is in, she hastily passes Troy and the basketball team in the hallway causing people to look with awe after her and members of the team say "I guess Sharpay spent the holiday's as she usually does ... shopping for mirrors!" and "There goes the ice queen."

Sharpay's character is true to the prior depiction, which helps the spectator form a clear impression of her (Bordwell, Staiger & Thompson 1985:14). Other than the very last scenes in all three movies, Sharpay is depicted as very one dimensional and goal oriented. Bulman (2005) found that in the private school films the upper class is depicted as "morally bankrupt and focused only on superficial measures of status" (Bulman, 2005:120). Sharpay's parents own Lava Springs and Sharpay has a pink convertible with the initials SE (Sharpay Evans) on the hood in addition to a flashy wardrobe and her locker at school being filled with clothes, leaving no doubt that she belongs to the upper class.

Sharpay's character is clearly not meant to achieve any empathy from the audience by depicting her as shallow materialist and egotistical. "While the protagonist is explicitly good and the antagonist explicitly bad, the audience can still enjoy watching the antagonist. In most cases, the antagonist gets to have—and demonstrate that she is having—so much *fun* being bad. By the end, though, the bad girl always loses" (Guthrie, 2005:81). This is the case with Sharpay. She gets to set off sprinklers that soak Troy and Gabriella, moves the dates around for the audition, prints out information about Gabriella's past as a whiz-kid in the first movie and Gabriella's early acceptance

to Stanford in the third movie. Several of the comical situations in the movies are caused by Sharpay's actions.

Meehan (1983) in her study of women stereotypes in US television found that representations of women on television cast 'good' women as submissive, sensitive, and domesticated while 'bad' women are rebellious, independent and selfish. Or in Banet-Weiser's words, the dichotomy of feminine representation: power, when connected with women characters generally are depicted as corrupting, evil and lethal (Banet-Weiser, 2007:108). As I have argued here, this traditional representation of women was highly accurate in this trilogy.

Configuring tweens as soon-to-be-teenagers: Tensions of growing older

The *High School Musical* trilogy is about teenagers as they attend high school, while it is the younger age group, tweens, who are the main target audience. Implicitly, this tells us that the Disney text configures its audience as aspiring teenagers. Thus these movies can be seen as Disney providing scripts for the tween's anticipatory socialization.

Through the accounts the two Disney representatives provided and through the media texts, we observe that tweens are configured as being in a liminal stage or a place of limbo between adolescence and childhood, between family and peers. As a potential source for anticipatory socialization Disney, through this trilogy, scripts difficult parent-child relationships and peer-relationships as normal for teenagers. Hence the narrative can be seen as an invitation to imitate, or prepare for things to come. Thus one question is how age—past, present, and future—is portrayed in the movies. As was explored in the previous chapter, the two Disney representatives provided ambiguous accounts of how tweens were configured in relation to age. Tweens were seen as either moving forward and growing, or being flexible moving back and forth between childhood and youth. Was this ambiguity present in the movies? How was age presented in the media texts?

Like other texts the trilogy is about what it is to be human—as Vogler claims all media texts are (1999). The first movie is mainly about Troy finding, and asserting himself in the here and now of the high school realm, as discussed earlier. In the second and third

movie, Troy still fights for his individuality and independence. However, as this issue has partly been resolved in the first movie, the focus moves from present to both the future and the past. The past and the future are fused together in a mutually dependent dilemma.

Generally when examining the three movies, one can find several references to becoming older as something uncertain and scary, which then results in a nostalgic longing for younger childhood when life supposedly was easier. These two types of stories combined create a script of being in limbo. Hence being in between is the focus and as a prolongation of this, the script Disney offers tweens, is one preparing them for a supposed liminal stage, which other scholars have suggested is the state tweens reside in (Cody & Lawlor, 2011; Johansson, 2010). How is this done?

In the first movie Troy and Gabriella experience that going out of the potential actions of one's predefined social group and status is not well received by the student body. They reminisce about how life was easier in kindergarten, a time where they presumably did not need to perform identity:

Gabriella: Do you remember in kindergarten how you'd meet a kid and know nothing about them, then 10 seconds later you're playing like you're best friends because you didn't have to be anything but yourself?

In this quote, being in kindergarten is defined as being free from having to adhere to an identity-type or belong to a predefined category or the necessity to assert one's self. This is uttered as a reaction to the other students not accepting Troy and Gabriella wanting to be in the school musical. Keeping in mind the constraining categories that Troy and Gabriella both were subjected to, Gabriella as the "freaky math girl" in her previous school, and Troy as the "basketball guy" at East High, implicitly Disney is providing a script of constraint for the soon-to-be teenagers. Becoming older is scripted as being in a place of limited scope and as such conveys the constraints, trials, and tribulations of becoming older. However, the scripts also entail enablement of resisting the constraints as the story shows that Troy, through asserting his individuality, is able to define himself. As such the script can be read as a warning of things to come, and

also suggesting a window of opportunity for overcoming these tribulations, enabling the individual's agency.

The romantic notion of childhood as being a "free space" in relation to identity performance might be a common idea, but it has been rejected by amongst others James (1993). In her study on childhood identities James found that children perform identity and engage in identity 'work' in the social arena to situate themselves where they wish to be at a very early age (James, 1993). Still, the notion of the trouble free childhood exists and is conveyed here as well. As Chad and Troy sing in the third movie in the song, "The boys are back"

Take it back to the place where you know that it all began./
We can be anything we wanna be!

In the quote from Gabriella above, the idea is that one is free to be "one's self", whatever that might entail. Thus, there is a notion of a singular identity that is you and that you are free to be and not cover in early childhood. In the song however, the scope is unlimited, you can be whoever you want to be. Thus, the first example focuses on the perceived constraint-free existence of small children in kindergarten. The song on the other hand, emphasizes all the possibilities one has at a younger age, and which supposedly become more restricted when one grows older. The prelude to this song is a conversation between Chad and Troy:

Troy: Don't you ever feel like your future is laid out in front of you?
Chad: What is your point?
Troy: I don't know. I just want my future to be ... my future.
Chad: Do you see what happens when you do a show? You're, like, five people.
Troy: Yeah, but what's so bad about that, Man? We used to come here as kids, we'd be 10 people. We'd be spies, superheroes, rock stars. We were whatever we wanted to be, whenever we wanted to be it. It was us, man!
Chad: Yeah, we were, like, eight years old.

Troy and Chad here have two quite different stances. Troy opens up for still being able to be different people, longing for childhood when he was not defined by others and could do what he wanted to do. Chad's talks about being eight years old, which is the age that the tween age is perceived as starting. After eight, according to the script

provided by Chad, you can no longer play the same way, thus preparing the tween audience for things to come. Through taking part in the drama club and in the musical, however, one can seemingly prolong the existence of this childhood wonder where you are not defined and have unlimited scope. One could argue that Chad is firmly positioned within a modern version of identity as a unitary feature, while Troy argues for a multiple and flexible identity rooted in late-modernism. Within this segment lies a struggle between these two notions of identity, where the Disney text can be said to favour the late-modern notion of individualization as it is Troy who is the one who the audience is invited to be invested in.

Regressing to a state of younger childhood in the movies is a theme in the trilogy. What Disney hence is communicating is that a troublesome future lays ahead, one of trials of adolescence and adulthood. This regression/progression dilemma is also evident in several songs and dialogues in the movies, and is one of the main themes in the last movie.

There is a scene built on clichés in the third movie where the boys do not want to dress up for the prom, but it is the night that the girls have dreamt of all their lives. The prom itself is not shown as this happens when Troy and Gabriella are driving back from Stanford, and it might be that depicting a prom would be too 'grown up' for tween content. Proms are usually portrayed as the night for sexual activity in teen movies like *American Pie*. As Talley suggests: "while they (tweens) aspire to being teenagers, this does not necessarily mean that they are comfortable watching films that feature more sophisticated teen themes involving sex, drugs or alcohol" (Talley, 2005:316). By making the prom a song number from the musical that we see them rehearse, it is just that, rehearsing, playing with teen culture (Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2005:3). It becomes a stylized song and dance number, not attempting to mirror real life, thus creating a safe distance to be watched and enjoyed. This can also be seen in light of the Oliver /Lilly relationship mentioned when discussing *Hannah Montana*. Disney is able to simultaneously touch upon issues, which can be seen to belong to the teenage world, while still keeping it at a safe distance.

The trilogy ends with a graduation scene, which culminates into a song number, where the whole cast takes part. In this song, the potential dilemma of past versus future is resolved in the suggestion that you can do both:

High School Musical/
Who says we have to let it go?/
It's the best part we've ever known/
Step into the future but hold on to/

High School Musical/
Let's celebrate where we come from/
All together/
Makes it better/
Memories that last forever

In these lyrics one can read the ambiguity that is scripted in becoming older. Again, whatever paradoxes Disney serves its audience, they also serve a neatly packaged solution. In these lyrics the moral is that being together as individuals make us stronger. Like Bauman suggests, individually together (Bauman, 2002). In addition these lyrics also enable flexibility, holding on to the past while simultaneously stepping in to the future. How age is scripted in this trilogy is closely related to freedom of choice and the necessity to assert one's autonomy in teen years as a resistance towards being merely labelled. This becomes a key issue both when examining how age is being portrayed as well as how individual identity is conveyed as in the previous segment. Doing age becomes part of the emancipation process.

Consumption as an identity-making tool

The audience is not ideally configured as consumers through the morals and values embedded in the media content. For the characters in the movies, self-expression trumps materialism. This is evident as those who are in possession of 'too many' material goods and take part in conspicuous consumption are the rotten apples in the stories. In *High School Musical* Sharpay is an example of this with her pink convertible, her flashy wardrobe, and her school locker filled with clothes. In *Hannah Montana* this is exemplified by the school bullies, Amber and Ashley, who both constantly brag about their affluence.

At the other end of the consumption scale, Troy has a rusty car that he works on and pays for himself. Part of the plot in the second movie revolves around Troy working at the Lava Springs resort to save up for college and buying parts for his car. Troy's consumption is accordingly not excessive, and he works for what he has, implying his adherence to (and in extension what the text favours) the middle class work ethic.

In the sitcom, Miley/Hannah has to go through several ritual lessons in the series of becoming a responsible shopper, for example when she receives her first credit card in the episode "Debt It Be" from the first season. In this episode the credit card she receives from her father is only to be used for emergencies, and her lesson is that wanting shoes and clothes does not equal an emergency. Thus, conspicuous consumption is scripted as bad, and as a prolongation, moderate consumption is scripted as good.

Even though there is a clear focus on moderation in *Hannah Montana* there is also room for the notion that consumption is part of being a true girl. As the segment from "Debt It Be" clearly inscribes:

Miley: Oh, I have to have these shoes!
Oliver: Why?
Miley: They're shoes. I'm a girl. Do the math.

Dominant media messages have been claimed to stress beautification through consumption (Lemish, 2007:104), which is the case in the makeover that Miley does for Lilly in the "You Are So Sue-able To Me" episode. However, Lilly was made to be someone else than her true identity. Hence it has to be consumption that matches the person. Ross claims that "the media's clever trick has been to rebrand femininity as feminism and to conflate consumption with personal agency—I shop therefore I am" (Ross, 2010:30). Miley and Lilly assert their femininity through looks, be it their hair or clothes. Thus, consumption can be seen as a tool and a resource in the identity making process.

Conclusion: The ambiguous Disney configuration

In this chapter I have explored how gender, age, and identity are inscribed in the media texts of *Hannah Montana* and *High School Musical*. In the previous chapter, I reported being served an ambiguous configuration of tweens as a target group by Heegaard and Bjorner, both when it came to gender and age. The task I embarked upon was to see if the reported ambivalent configurations of tweens from the Disney representatives were mirrored in the media texts.

The two media texts that were analysed have two different tasks as it were in how to configure its audience. The sitcom, *Hannah Montana*, focuses on the small things, the day-to-day issues and choices one has to make, what should be done here and now, focusing on the daily practices of identity. *High School Musical* on the other hand concerns itself with the larger issues of identity-making in life and provides resources for making life altering choices and explicitly focuses on the big questions in life; who am I and how will assert myself? It is interesting that Disney is able to produce different scripts aimed at the same audience. The scripts provided for the target group—tweens—are not mutually exclusive, but rather ambiguous, mirroring the configurations provided by the Bjorner and Heegaard in the previous chapter.

With regards to gender, the two media texts inscribe a classical gender binary, which is explicitly expressed in the sitcom, but is rather mute in the trilogy. However, the trilogy does provide a binary between the ‘good passive girl’ and the ‘mean active girl’ as I have demonstrated through the analysis. Age is inscribed as ambiguous, moving forward, becoming teenagers and even adults. Simultaneously both media texts leave room for regressing (not in action but in thought) to the perceived easier life grounded in childhood.

In both media texts there are clear inscriptions of a society being individualized. Thus, the script Disney provides its tween audience in relation to individual and community is a script highly focused on the individuation of the individual. According to Taxel (1982), Disney’s notion of individualism is “advancement through self-help, strict adherence to the work ethic, and the supreme optimism in the possibility of the ultimate improvement of society through the progressive improvement in humankind” (Taxel,

1982:14). By showing that Troy comes out on the other end stronger and happier, and that his immediate community of East High is also a happier place, due to his adamant pursuit of what he believes is right for him, Disney favours and promotes the celebration of the independent individual within an individualized society. As Rönneberg (2001) claims, Disney's themes in general are, to 'be self-reliant,' 'finding oneself,' 'be accepted for who you are,' 'become someone,' 'to grow,' but above all it is the identity struggles that is central (2001:11).

I argue that although the two media texts differ in content and form, they are coherent in their scripts concerning what type of identity-making tools the audiences are offered. Disney can be said to make use of a pincer movement in its configuration of the audience providing and offering the tweens a well-rounded and all-encompassing identity-making tool. For while both media texts convey the same morals and values, there is a difference regarding the magnitude of the resources offered. The moral script being served in the two different texts support each other. Where the sitcom serves as everyday entertainment, the trilogy is packed with themes of great pathos. The questions the audience is invited to reflect on in the trilogy are the major questions in life, not merely on doing the right thing as is the case with the sitcom.

Disney Channel caters to the tween audience in the media texts of *Hannah Montana* and *High School Musical*, hence the media texts can be read as how Disney imagines its target audience but can also be read as how Disney attempts to reach this audience. By including issues that Disney imagines are relevant for the tween audience, they anticipate to attract viewers. From what the Disney representatives told me, and what I have analysed in the media texts, Disney imagines tweens as being children on their way to becoming teenagers, drawing on both childlike and teen interests. Issues that can be deemed as teen issues, such as emancipation, individuation, and romance, are presented from a safe distance, enabling Disney to attract younger viewers. The media texts analysed concern themselves with teenage issues, however they do so in a playful way. As Bjorner suggested in the previous chapter, tweens are getting curious about shows aimed at an older audience. By omitting typical teenage issues such as sex, drugs, and alcohol, Disney specifically targets the age group below adolescence. Between the two different media texts Disney provides topics that according to Bjorner tweens are

getting curious about older shows but still keep them safely grounded in childhood. In addition, Disney thrives on providing wholesome family entertainment and as such is able to market both to tweens and their parents. How some parents deal with what Disney provides tweens with will be further explored in Chapter 7.

The two Disney representatives presented a double strategy in configuring the audience group much the same way that the Disney media texts in question did through their pincer movement. Thus, Disney appeared to be able to configure its audience both generally and specifically. Disney provides at times ambiguous, but never mutually exclusive, scripts of what it is like to be a girl or boy residing in the tween ages and how to become an autonomous individual. As these media texts are about people inhabiting the age category situated over (in age) the audience target group there is also a safe distance, Disney is inscribing the future, preparing tweens for things to come and giving them resources for identity making.

After having looked at how Disney representatives provide accounts for the company's configuration of tweens as a target group, and having examined how this is scripted in *Hannah Montana* and *High School Musical*, we still need to take into account the users. How did the children—considered tweens—in this study make sense of these scripts? What place did Disney have in the interviewees' daily lives? Were any of the configurations of identity, age, and gender echoed in how the children in this study talk about the content of *Hannah Montana* and *High School Musical*?

Chapter 6: Audience placing Disney

In Chapter 4, I described how the two Disney representatives gave ambiguous accounts of tweens in relation to their age performances, suggesting that children in this age category could draw on a child-repertoire and a teen-repertoire, being in transition while simultaneously being grounded in childhood. While Heegaard, talking from a consumer product perspective, configured the tween consumer to be moving forward in age as an aspiring teenager, Bjorner, coming from a television perspective, discussed the tween audience as being able to move back and forth in their age performances. In relation to gender the two representatives also differed. Bjorner refused to discuss tweens as gendered, including both boys and girls as an audience. Heegaard on the other hand talked of tween consumers primarily as girls.

Chapter 5 focused on how the target group—tweens—were configured within two different types of Disney media texts, namely the trilogy *High School Musical* and the sitcom *Hannah Montana*. Both media texts portrayed the life of teens and not tweens. Thus, implicitly inscribed in the media texts there was a notion of anticipatory socialization, inviting the tween audience to anticipate teenage life. I also found that the sitcom *Hannah Montana* inscribed gender as a traditional binary, as much of the humour was derived from boys being too feminine and thus losing their masculinity. The trilogy on the other hand was partly mute with regards to the gender binary. However, gender was an issue as there was inscribed a clear “right” and “wrong” way to do gender which was portrayed by the wrong doings of the active Sharpay and the presumably right doings (or non-doings) of the passive Gabriella.

Keeping these findings in mind, I now turn to how the children in this study domesticated the media texts in their everyday practices. Whether or not the children domesticated the scripts of age and individualization provided by the Disney representatives and the Disney media texts will be further dealt with in Chapter 9 and in the concluding chapter, Chapter 10. The research question in this chapter is; what were

the interviewees' interpretations of who this content is made for, and how was Disney domesticated as a part of their daily lives? This is in other words the first chapter where the user meets the media text. What happens in the meeting or the assemblage consisting of Disney and those considered to be tweens in relation to the inscribed identity-making tools that I explored earlier?

The theoretical backdrop of this chapter is the framework of domestication, discussed in Chapter 2. Domestication as a concept was “developed to describe and analyse processes of (media) technology’s acceptance, rejection and use” (Hartmann, Berker, Punie, & Ward, 2006:1). A useful aspect of this perspective is that instead of looking at how people are being influenced by media and technology the focus is rather on how media and technology are domesticated and enacted within the household and daily lives (Sørensen, 2006). Domestication can therefore be a tool to help us look beyond the dichotomous structure versus agency relationship between audience and media/text and rather examine the reciprocal constitutive enactment. This is in line with Woolgar’s (2012) suggestion of looking at consumption as an ontological enactment where consumption is perceived as being relational and entities enact each other rather than consume each other.

In this chapter I employ the science and technologies version of the domestication framework. Thus, when examining my data I looked at how the children, in and through their talk of Disney Channel and its content, could be seen as domesticating both the channel and the content within the three dimensions of the STS version; a dimension of praxis, a dimension of meaning, and a dimension of learning (Sørensen, 2006). These three dimensions together can inform how Disney, both in form and content, was domesticated—or not—in the daily lives of the children in this study.

This chapter first contextualizes and establishes Disney Channel as a seemingly natural part of the children’s everyday lives; this thus constitutes the praxis dimension. After this, the focus is on the meaning dimension. I examine the children’s interpretations of the content regarding who they think it is made for and how they domesticated the content as belonging to girl and/or boy practices. The last part of the chapter addresses the learning dimension, dealing with the domestication of Disney as a tool for the

interviewees' life trajectory and biographical narrative. I propose that there is a parallel co-interpretation going on in these interviews. On one hand there is an interpretation of the Disney content, and on the other hand there is an interpretation of the self *through* this content. As such, the Disney content can be said to offer the audience resources for interpreting one's self, while those resources are a result of the interpretation of the content.

Disney Channel as everyday praxis

The main reason why I examine the Disney tween franchises in this study is due to its continuous surfacing when I engaged in my field work. As stated earlier, Disney was not part of my research questions when embarking on this thesis, and there was a substantial part of data gathered before this study focused on Disney. At the beginning of my time as a doctoral student I conducted four gender specific focus group interviews where the themes were age, identity, and consumption. In addition, I spent four months of ethnographic observation at the two after school programs, which also included six focus group interviews. After having done this and looking at the data, I discovered that Disney figured as a red thread in focus groups and observations. As Disney's presence was so striking, I felt that it deserved academic attention. How were these franchises domesticated and made sense of?

First, in order to establish and contextualize Disney's place and space in the daily practices of the children, I will share some of the data that prompted me to focus on the Disney tween franchises. Observing at the after school program I often overheard talk of the Disney tween phenomenon. An example here is from my field notes at South Side sitting at the computers:

When Missy was online, she asked me to help her spell yahoo.com because she was looking for an actress. She was on the star doll site (stardoll.com/no) and dressed up Vanessa Anne Hudgens, the actress who plays Gabrielle in the Disney movie: *High School Musical* that was mentioned yesterday as well. When Missy is done dressing up Vanessa she wants to find one of the songs from the movie and listen to it, but she can't remember the name of the search engine she wants, she tries yahoo, YouTube but she is not satisfied. She finds the song, but with no pictures so she turns it off. She wants to see her as well as hear her.

Amy is on Disney.no where she dresses up pop star Hanna Montana and she's online through Disney to the High School Musical.

A popular thing to do at Southside at computer time was to go to Stardoll.com. This is a website where you can dress up different celebrities in the same way that one dresses up a paper doll. The children at Southside, especially the girls, would dress up different celebrities from the Disney tween realm such as Troy, Gabriella and Sharpey, or their real names as they are portrayed at the website: Zac Efron, Vanessa Hudgens, and Ashley Tisdale. It was not a prerequisite to have seen the trilogy or the sitcom in order to take part in the daily praxis of Disney Channel. Having superficial knowledge of content and its existence was enough.

References to characters in the movies frequently came up in different settings, often when the topic of play or discussion was not Disney. As spontaneous references to Disney stars and content often surfaced, it seemed as though the Disney tween content is domesticated and intertwined with the children's general arsenal of cultural references and thus part of the routine of their everyday lives. Thus the Disney references seem to be akin to of any other type of cultural reference.

At Westside I also encountered several references to Disney. In addition to talking about the actors, I also experienced this scenario at the drawing table where Kristin, Patrick, and Simon sat:

Patrick is drawing a picture of him and his friends meticulously, the faces are in a square shape, and I notice that Kristin is also drawing her and her friends in the same manner. They draw a square and draw a cross inside it in order to place the eyes and nose.

Ingvild: How did you learn to do that?

Patrick: I saw it on Disney Channel they have something called toon help.

In this excerpt Disney Channel is referred to as a place to learn how to draw, and all the children around the table drew in the same manner. As such, Patrick can be said to domesticate what he sees on television as a resource to use outside the television realm and as a resource in learning to draw.

Throughout my data, as Disney Channel and its tween content was prominent, the impression was that this figured both as a daily praxis and current cultural reference. Disney was present in my data in a way that no other popular cultural items were. The children would discuss the texts, play with the ‘dolls’ online, act out scenes, dance and sing the songs, and talk about both the stars and the action that took place in the media texts. Several of the girls had stationary and clothes with pictures from *High School Musical* and *Hannah Montana*. Hence, in my data, Disney Channel served as a common denominator and as praxis, and the presence of Disney in their everyday lives seemed to be a given with these children.

In addition to being referenced to in social settings, in the interviews the children would talk of Disney Channel as *their channel*, as something which was a part of what they would do, or watch, on a daily basis. This thus supports my argument that Disney Channel becomes domesticated as a habit or praxis. Not only would interviewees report watching Disney Channel due to a specific content, they would tell me about watching even though the channel might not be airing what the children wanted to see:

Katie: *High School Musical* is boring. I’ve seen it so many times now, because it’s always on Disney Channel, and I can’t do anything about that.

Ingvild: So then you have to watch?

Katie: Yeah, if I don’t have anything else to do.

Ingvild: So you’ve seen *High School Musical* several times even though you think it’s boring?

Katie: Yes.

It is interesting that market literature such as Lindstrom and Seybold (2004) and McNeal (1999) tend to portray the tween market as fickle and difficult to both reach and hold on to. My interviewees, on the other hand, in addition to claiming to like what was being served on the Disney Channel, expressed a type of powerlessness in relation to what was being broadcast:

Ingvild: Do you like *Hannah Montana*?

Sam: *Hannah Montana* is sort of varied, like when I’ve seen the episode already and I know what’s going to happen, then it’s like...ehh.

Ingvild: Do you watch it again then even though you’ve seen it before?

Sam: Yes.

Ingvild: Why?

Sam: Well, it's on Disney Channel. I can't decide what's on Disney Channel.

There are several ways one can read Katie and Sam here. On one hand one could claim that Katie and Sam expressed being powerlessness in relation to television in general and Disney Channel specifically. By saying: 'I can't do anything about that' and 'I don't decide what's on Disney Channel,' Katie and Sam positioned themselves as an audience being served, not as an audience in demand. On the other hand, one could also claim that Disney Channel had been domesticated as part of their routine. It had been incorporated as a seemingly natural part of their everyday lives. Thus Katie and Sam were not passive victims of any sort, simply they would watch 'their' channel and even though the channel was not airing something new they would still watch it. Hence, what the children are watching is not necessarily the main issue; rather it is that they have incorporated Disney Channel as part of their lives.

White and Preston (2005) and Lury (2002) discuss the concepts of *place* and *space* in children's television channels. By establishing a channel identity that the children in this study seemed to relate to, Disney Channel is also established as a place (Lury, 2002). It seems as though Disney Channel has succeeded in establishing Disney Channel as a place and space in my data. Generally, the children expressed experiencing Disney Channel as "their" channel and the place to be, even though it might not always be what they want to watch. Kristin expressed this notion of a channel aimed at her:

Ingvild: Why do you watch Disney Channel so much then?

Kristin: Because the others, we have like 600 channels, and there are only grown-up channels so the only children's channels are Jetix, Boomerang and Toon Disney and Disney.

The question of *how* one watches surfaces here. As stated some of the children reported watching Disney Channel even though they claimed that they were not pleased with what was being aired on the channel, which begs the question; how attentive were they when they turned the television set on? In line with the above quotes I would suggest that the act of turning Disney Channel on in itself is the routine, not *what* is being watched (or not watched, but possibly figured as a background audio-visual noise).

Contrasting turning on Disney Channel as a routine, several of the girls reported watching both the movies and episodes of the series several times, intentionally and not simply because it is what is being aired. The fact that the girls reported having, wanting, and wishing for the sitcom and the trilogy's DVDs strengthens this argument of intentionally watching the content over and over. Most of the girls told me that they really enjoyed watching the *High School Musical* movies over and over again as they would learn the dances and the songs while watching. Thus, the mere act of watching television becomes an ambiguous and complex project with variation in how attentive the audience is and how intentionally the content is chosen.

Both the boys and the girls in this study would watch Disney Channel even if they might reject the content. As such, on the one hand, Disney in the data is clearly considered to be catering to the children as they domesticated it as "their channel". On the other hand, the children actually had seen the content of *High School Musical* and *Hannah Montana* several times, regardless of whether they liked it or not. I wondered, *why* watch what you do not like?

In addition to Disney Channel being "their channel", a motivation to keep up with the content on the channel was described by some of the children as a social tool and as a means for social gratification. Drotner (2000) argues that media today acts as a catalyst in the formation of social networks. Watching Disney tween content in order to gain social currency was evident in my interviews. Using media and consumer goods for social currency and a ticket into peer-group culture is a well-established research finding (Brougere, 2004; Brusdal, 2007; Wærdahl, 2003, 2005). As Brougere (2004) claims: "The sharing of common knowledge is crucial to children's peer groups" (Brougere, 2004:193). Katie worded this quite explicitly as she told me that she wanted to see the premiere of the second *High School Musical* as she knew that her friends would be talking about it at school the following Monday.

Katie: It's not really that important to me but it is fun when they talk about it at school and be able to know about it so that I can talk about it.

Being able to engage in phatic speech, a concept defined as "speech which serves simply to establish and maintain communication" (Buckingham, 1993:40), and using

the tween content as social currency was emphasized in several of the interviews. This is part of what solidifies the Disney tween franchises as a cultural common denominator and an important cultural reference for these children. When there is a feeling of needing to, if not see the whole movies or series, then at least have the basic knowledge of the content, it in a way becomes mandatory social culture reference curriculum. Even the ones who resented the Disney tween media texts admitted to having seen parts of it. This is not to say that it generates normative pressure to obtain these social currencies. However, in my data, everyone, no matter how they felt about the content, knew about the content and had seen at least parts of it. As Morley and Silverstone state: “Television is part of our socialization just as we are socialized to television – in parlours, sitting rooms and kitchens. We learn from television; television provides the stuff of family talk and neighbourhood gossip” (Morley & Silverstone, 1990:33).

Not only did the content figure as social currency, it could also be a part of a social setting. In my interviews, the children reported having parties and watching the premieres of Disney Channel Original Movies as an activity some of them had participated in at one time or another. Thus, with regard to how the media content is viewed, there are various ways of watching. The interviewees reported on watching alone before and after school. They would watch with a group of friends when visiting, and they would attend or arrange parties watching season premieres of the sitcom or premieres of the movies. How one watches Disney tween content is thus context and content dependent. Therefore, in addition to using the media content as social currency, watching as a planned social activity also contributed to Disney Channel being a part of the children’s social and personal lives. Exposing themselves to the Disney tween franchises thus seems to figure as an identity trait of the interviewees.

There seems to be several reasons for watching the Disney tween content. What makes the different Disney tween franchises become domesticated as part of the daily practices appears to boil down to different reasons for watching. One reason is taste. The children would watch it if they enjoyed it. Another factor is peer-to-peer advertising, where if enough peers talk about and advertise the content others are more likely to watch. And yet another reason seems to be the place Disney Channel had obtained with the interviewees as being domesticated as part of their daily lives.

Having established how Disney Channel was domesticated as a daily routine for the children in this study, I now turn to the meaning dimension. In other words I examine how the children described and divided the audience according to the type of television program offered by Disney. How was the content domesticated in relation to gender in the descriptions of the audience, by the audience?

Domesticating meaning: The audience constructing the audience

This section concentrates on how the children constructed the audience for *High School Musical* and *Hannah Montana*, specifically in relation to gender. Thus, here the focus is on how the children interviewed domesticated the meaning of the content as belonging to girl and/or boy practices. In my data, there was a clear distance between girl practices and boy practices. The content, as shall be explored, was incorporated and domesticated as belonging to either girl practices, or as being open for both boy and girl practices. However, the content in question was never constructed as pure boy practices.

Talking about media and television shows can be a stage for gender performances (Tobin, 2000:33). Mirroring Tobin's (2000) findings, there was a clear construction of stereotypical girl and boy practices. Drawing from both Tobin's work and my own study, one could argue that what is seen as stereotypically masculine and feminine is domesticated and incorporated, not only as performances, but also as a founding understandings of what boy and girl practices consist of, thus reproducing gender stereotypes and gender boundaries (Thorne, 1993; Tobin, 2000). Consequently, a co-interpretation of the content and of the self can be said to transpire. The content can be perceived as offering resources for the construction of gender practices while simultaneously these resources are the results of the interpretations of the content.

The children I interviewed seemed to agree on what was considered to be for boys and what was intended for girls and the content was subsequently domesticated correspondingly. Summing it up shortly, flirting and romance was considered to be for girls while fighting and comedy was considered to be for boys. As both Disney texts focused on romance and lacked fighting, in my data the texts generated an understanding of being typical girl content. Hence, there was an understanding and

subsequently a construction of gender in relation to this content. However, boys were constructed as being more homogenous whereas girls were constructed through differentiating as well. This is not to suggest that boys in general were constructed as a homogenous group. However, as the topic of conversation was what is typically understood as a “girl thing” there was more room for different girl performances with respect to the content. As the media texts were considered to be mainly for girls, this tended to exclude the boys from the content. Therefore boys were constructed as being in opposition to, for example, the *High School Musical* trilogy. According to Thorne (1993), children engage in borderwork, which is to differentiate one’s self and one’s gender by describing what one is not and thus what the other gender is. Goffman coined the term “genderism” as a behavioural practice to refer to moments in life that evoke stereotypic beliefs, as the men and women “play out the differential human nature claimed for them” (Goffman, 1977:321). In the quotes below gender practices are constructed through this type of borderwork and genderism.

The content’s genre in my data plays a pivotal part in determining how it was domesticated. *High School Musical* was domesticated as a girl-text and girl practice. The sitcom *Hannah Montana* on the other hand could be incorporated in both girl and boy practices. The main difference between the two media texts are the genre; the sitcom, based on humour, and the trilogy, which addresses the larger questions in life and focuses on self-growth through intra- and interpersonal relationships. The trilogy can also be said to be placed in a genre of romantic movies, and romance and flirting was by several of the interviewees described as something for girls.

Mary: Like boys they don’t usually like the romantic movies, and it’s some love and kissing and then they get like; ew and this it’s gross, and it’s for nine-15 years old because like eight year olds don’t really understand a lot of what’s happening, at least not in English, they don’t understand what they say and stuff.

Mary was 10 years old at the time of the interview and thus according to herself, belonging to the age category that enjoys the content. However, she stated that boys (in general and regardless of age it seems) thought it was gross. Thus, when talking of age, she implicitly referred to girls. Boys are, in Mary’s statement, constructed as

uninterested in romance, mirroring both Tobin (2000) and Adler, Kless, and Adler (1992). Mary implicitly drew on an understanding of maturity that girls are perceived to achieve before boys. Girls are said to be interested in romance earlier than boys (Adler et al., 1992). This was echoed in my data. Mary indicated that there are two different skills one needs to reach to understand the content—one needs to know English and one needs to understand interpersonal relationships.

Generally, when the children talked about *High School Musical*, the trilogy appeared to generate a more typical girl-movie label and was domesticated as belonging to the girl realm. An example of this was the way Eddie viewed *High School Musical*. This was not for boys. He described it to be for girls.

Ingvild: Are there many at school who like it?

Eddie: Yes, many girls like it.

Ingvild: Not boys?

Eddie: No, I don't know of any boys who like *High School Musical*.

Ingvild: Is it a girl thing, or?

Eddie: Yes, I think so.

Ingvild: What is it that makes it a girl thing you think?

Eddie: It's like, it's very much about girls in the movie.

Ingvild: It's about girls?

Eddie: No, but it's like very much girl stuff in the movie.

Ingvild: What is girl stuff?

Eddie: Make up and stuff like that.

Ingvild: What would have been more boy stuff?

Eddie: Fighting.

Ingvild: But you've seen one or more of the movies?

Eddie: I've tried to watch, but I haven't managed to do it.

In this excerpt Eddie domesticated the trilogy as belonging to the realm of girl practices. Eddie can be said to engage in borderwork or genderism by marking gendered difference in interest. He constructed girl practices and interests as being different to boy interests. From his statement one could conclude that in his view, girls are interested in make-up while boys are interested in fighting. By saying that it is about makeup, Eddie placed himself, as a boy, far from the content, depicting the content as non-versatile and non-watchable for him. Eddie also nominated fighting as something that would cater more specifically to the taste and interest of boys.

As opposed to the somewhat rigid definition of *High School Musical* being intended for girls, typically *Hannah Montana* was regarded as a more flexible and versatile media content. In my data, *Hannah Montana* represented a possibility to be domesticated as a boy practice as well. The children would suggest that the sitcom had elements that both girls and boys could enjoy. In the segment below, Cathy talked about *Hannah Montana* and who she thought the sitcom is made for:

Cathy: I think it's made mostly for girls because it's a girl's life we see, her, but it's also fun for boys to look more at Jackson and Rico who fight so it's like, I think it's mostly girls because you see a girl's life how she lives, but also for boys because it's a little funny.

Cathy's quote suggests that identifying with the main character is important to be able to like something. On a general note it seems that Cathy thought that boys could only identify with boys. This was something that can be seen throughout the data. When the media content is mainly about a girl, then it is per definition more of a girl thing than a boy thing. This is also well-established in earlier research (Drotner, 2003; Lemish, 2007; Lemish & Bloch, 2004). The reflections from the children suggested that girls would connect with girl characters more than boys would connect with them. According to Drotner's findings in her Disney in Denmark study, there does not need to be a female protagonist in order for the girls to connect: "There are some examples of girls preferring male characters. However, there are no examples in the data that boys prefer female characters in movies where there are both male and female characters" (Drotner, 2003: 114).

In addition to identifying, Cathy's statement also suggested that the sitcom was seen to be primarily for girls, as it's a girl's life, but the comedy within the series was thought to open the media text up for boys as well. There was here a suggestion that boys are seen as more likely to watch and identify with boys on the screen. There were according to Cathy several reasons why boys might like the show. First, Rico and Jackson are boys who fight. Another reason for boys to like the show, Cathy said, is because it is funny—in other words, boys appreciate humour in her view. Both the girls and the boys I interviewed constructed fighting as boy practices or typical boy interests. Again, this echoes a stereotypical gender divide.

In *Hannah Montana* the efforts to secure the continued secret life of Miley/Hannah led to slapstick-like situations where all the characters are at one point or another appearing clumsy. The clumsiness was something that most of the children talked about. It was also what most of the boys appreciated. Thus, echoing Cathy in her previous statement over, several other interviewees also focused on humour being something boys would enjoy:

Sam: Like Jackson, he's sort of a favourite of mine.

Ingvild: Why is he your favourite?

Sam: Well, he's sort of my favourite because he sort of jokes around, and he's a funny figure. He works for a guy named Rico. And he has like a funny voice and stuff.

Mike also expressed that what he could enjoy about *Hannah Montana* was Jackson and the father, Billy Ray, and the fact that they provide some of the comic relief in the series:

Ingvild: How about Hannah Montana?

Mike: That I watch because it's so fun with all the mistakes Jackson makes and stuff.

Ingvild: He's the funniest one you think?

Mike: Yes, and Billy Ray Cyrus, I think he's pretty funny as well.

Ingvild: In what way funny?

Mike: He does a lot of jokes on himself.

In my data there was a tendency amongst the boys to talk about Jackson, Rico and Billy Ray. They tended to not mention the presence of Miley and Lilly. There seemed to be quite clear elements that produced different reaction from the boys and the girls. Flirting and romance were domesticated as 'girl things' while action and humour were 'boy things,' The gendered clichés that were domesticated and articulated in my data may be reproductions of perceived 'truths' about boys and girls, as Thorne (1993) also found in her study of how boys and girls play. Children do not only reproduce, they also produce gendered boundaries. And as Goffman (1977) suggests through his term genderism, people will express gender identity as presented to them via society, where media is thought to play a pivotal part. As such, one could say that the interviewees domesticated the resources given in these media texts as scripts for how to *be* or *do* boy and girl, at least in principle.

Katie: It's a typical girl series because she is in love with everybody, and then the boys get like, they will throw up in my class anyway.
Ingvild: So being in love is a girl thing?
Katie: *They* think so at least.

From what Katie said in her segment about *Hannah Montana* it is not her as a girl who defined what a girl thing is, but rather the boys who defined it as such. Being in love is a girl thing because it is not a boy thing; hence we have a case of boys being defined through negation. Girl things were defined by being anti-boy things. In addition it is important to note that this does not mean that the girls were involuntarily being forced to supposedly like things that they did not like, as there was room for personal differences for the girls. The boys were constructed in a more homogenous way, as being opposed to the trilogy, but able to watch the sitcom as it had elements of comedy. However, there was, I suggested earlier, room for different girl interests within the girl practices, a diversity of domestication. Mary's statement below serves as a good example of this. She claimed that kissing might be interesting for girls, but she did not care for that:

Mary: For example boys, there are not that many boys who watch *Camp Rock* but they probably think that kissing, or at least they say that they don't like kissing, that it's gross and stuff.
Ingvild: How about girls?
Mary: Girls might think it's romantic and such. It really doesn't matter to me.

Here, Mary showed individual agency. By making room for differences within a category Mary portrayed not the binary either boy or girl, but rather a continuum of gender within the category girl. Here, diverse practices were allowed. The act of distancing instead of conforming in order to perform one's identity hence seems clear. Mary also questioned the truth in boys not liking kissing and romance as she said that the boys claimed not to like kissing and romance. As Thorne (1993) suggests, when engaging in borderwork, gender becomes a pivotal matter. However, borderwork or genderism only becomes a focus when gender needs to be asserted. In the same way that Katie over suggested that "*they*" think that being in love is a girl thing, 'they' being boys in that quote, it could be that Katie not necessarily believed being in love as a girl

thing, but rather as something that is *not* a boy thing. Also Katie through her interviews expressed that she did not care for vain girls:

Ingvild: So if you were going to tell someone who had never heard of *Hannah Montana*...

Katie: Then I would say that she is a pop star who is a teenagers and that there is a TV series. And then I would probably tell them that she is really good and stuff, because I like it more and more, but actually I like Lilly better, because she, she's like Lilly, she skates and she's not that vain.

When asked who the different Disney tween content was made for the interviewees' were clear in their definition of what was considered to be made for boys and/or for girls. Their domestication of the content corresponded with the scripts they were being served by Disney. Romance was described as something that girls and older children would enjoy, excluding boys and younger girls. Comedy on the other hand, while not excluding girls, was discussed as primarily targeting boys and younger girls. Thus, there was a sense of girls aspiring to be older and being able to move both forward and back in age performances, while boys were thought to not aspire to be older but rather stay grounded in childhood longer than girls.

A point of interest in this talk of gender and media text is that even though both boys and girls would describe especially the trilogy as belonging to a girl practice, all the boys in the study knew about the trilogy and had seen at least parts of it. This suggests two things: first, in order to define one's self and others, one needs to be able to distance one's self. This can be seen as definition through negation. Thus, in order to claim the identity of a boy, one needs to *not* be defined as a girl, and in order to do so one needs knowledge of what is constructed as girl practices. Another interesting aspect is the importance and unique place Disney Channel seems to have in relation to resources children use in their borderwork in their everyday praxis.

Having looked at how the boys and girls in this data domesticated the content as for girls and/or boys a question surfaces; how was Disney domesticated as part of an identity-making tool with regards to age?

Growing older through the co-interpretation of Disney and the self

Moving from the meaning dimension of how the children rationalized media content and its audience, I now focus on how the children domesticated Disney content in light of their life trajectory. This can be viewed as a learning dimension of the domestication process. The reason for this focus is that there were several instances in my data where the children would use Disney references to express their biographical narrative (Giddens, 1991). Disney was used as a tool to express their past and also their present. As such, Disney can be said to be domesticated to the point that it serves as part of the children's experienced life trajectory, becoming an inextricable taken-for-granted part of their lives. As Morley (2003) suggests, "our personal memories—especially of childhood—are formulated around media experiences such as emblematic programmes and TV characters" (Morley, 2003:444). Disney content becomes a symbol and a tool through which the interviewees tell their life stories. Below I examine how the interviewees talked of and thus, described the domestication of Disney as part of their biographical narrative.

In the data the notion that one grew out of specific content from Disney and moved on to Disney content aimed at older children surfaced, as well as growing out of Disney all together. Disney thus seemed to play a part in this trajectory and was a part of growing up, as the interviewees expressed their trajectory through various Disney content. Heegaard expressed in Chapter 4 how Disney configures its audience, a strategy in creating revenue was to segment their products age-wise. I found that several children used Disney as part of their biographical narrative:

Ida: But I would probably have been someone else if I didn't know about *High School Musical* and stuff.

Ingvild: How do you think you would have been different?

Ida: Uhm, I had been more like a smaller child than what I really am.

Ingvild: So *High School Musical* has given you something then?

Ida: Nyes....sort of, in a way yes.

Ingvild: Given you something that makes you not....be that little kid?

Ida: If not I would have gone outside and played in the snow every single day instead of, instead of sitting inside watching movies for example and I

would have read Tom and Jerry and Donald Duck instead of reading Julia [girls magazine] and Topp [teen magazine].

High School Musical can in this segment be seen as resource of growing older, as an introduction to more teen-interests. Ida claimed that it had changed her, or at least developed her possibly at faster pace, as she claimed that otherwise she would be “more like a smaller child than what I really am.”

Ingvild: If you were to explain, to someone who didn't know you who you are, would you say, “Well, Tone she's...” Who is Tone?

Tone: Well, I like *High School Musical* and Disney Channel.

Ingvild: Is that something that is sort of an important part of you?

Tone: When I was younger I used to copy Sleeping Beauty, and then I imitated Disney movies all the time. I had different dresses and crowns I also had a magic wand that I cared a lot about. And of course I had the movie of Sleeping Beauty

Ingvild: Was it the Disney movie?

Tone: Yes of course, all three year olds have to have that!

Although Tone knew that my primary interest when interviewing her was the Disney tween franchise, this was a rather open question, “who is she?” She answered this by expressing her biographical narrative of her past through Disney Princesses, and her present engagements with *High School Musical* and Disney Channel as identity indicator of her current self. Tone was a self-proclaimed *High School Musical* fan. Throughout her interviews she told me about acting out the movies and homemade scenarios, reading the books from the trilogy and practicing the songs and dances. Thus, she expressed a domestication of the Disney content following her as a young child and as an 11 year old, where there are different contents for different ages, in coherence with what Heegaard suggested. In this statement we see how she depicted herself as moving through Disney content according to her age. Disney can be said to be domesticated by Tone as a resource in her life trajectory. In addition Tone's last statement here was that all three year olds have to have Disney movies and possibly the paratexts. Thus, by talking about the dresses and crowns, there is a practice tied to Disney which is not only oriented towards the content, but also towards the paratexts. As such, the Disney franchises seem to become a taken for granted part of, and what Wærdahl calls, a standard material package (Wærdahl, 2003:265) of children's lives.

Media texts and paratexts seem to be taken-for-granted resources put to use and domesticated in order to tell one's biographical narrative. Employing domestication theory and actor-network theory with a sociotechnical perspective enables us to incorporate the non-human actors as elements in the construction of tweens. The children in this study seem to have learned to domesticate media texts and paratexts as being a part of their life trajectory. And Ida can be said to domesticate the content of the Disney tween content as a trajectory into becoming of age.

There are two processes going on in both Ida and Tone's quotes, on one hand the content is interpreted as belonging to different age groups (and as we saw in the previous section, gender), simultaneously there is an interpretation of the self through the content. This co-interpretation of the self and the content can thus be seen as a parallel process. Disney texts and paratexts became part of a routine practice and resources used to defining the self through.

In addition to drawing on Disney as a part of one's past and present with regards to the personal biographical narrative, there also seemed to be a rationale in general for children growing older and up through different Disney franchises. Mike rationalized who *High School Musical* is for by reflecting around his friend's younger sisters and thus uses the different franchises to be age-indicators:

Mike: I know a friend of mine and he has two little sisters, one who is two and one who is four years old.
Ingvild: And they like *High School Musical*?
Mike: No, they like those princess things, so I'm guessing it's (*High School Musical*) from three till eight.
Ingvild: I didn't quite understand, that they like...?
Mike: Princess things. That's why I think it's made for three till eight.
Ingvild: Because they like princess things first and then they like *High School Musical*?
Mike: Yes, because we grow, and then we like different things, from age to age. Me for example, I liked *Ninja Turtles* when I was seven or six, and I still like it.

The younger sisters of his friend like, what I assume to be Disney Princesses, as the wording suggests that he is referring to something specific as he calls it "those princess things" as well as the fact that the Disney Princesses franchise is a highly visible

franchise. Since 2000 Disney gathered all the princesses from their movies together to make an arsenal of princesses, called *Disney Princesses*, which has been hugely successful and which, according to Disney's own webpage, is the number one girls license toy brand in the United States, creating a revenue of \$4 billion worldwide (Products, 2013). Mike also here explained that on a general note, children grow and like different things at different ages, domesticating consumer products and media texts as a resource for one's development. As with Ida, we also here see references to popular cultural items other than Disney. I point this out merely to demonstrate that Disney is not the only mediated element in the children's daily lives. Mike told me that he used to like Ninja Turtles, and that he still does. He said this in a sentence that starts as an argument of how children grow out of interests. However, the argument culminates in Mike still liking what he liked years earlier. It could therefore be claimed that Mike placed himself between, being able to like something that belongs to the practices of childhood, thus drawing on a child repertoire, in line with how Bjorner described tweens. And possibly portraying what Johansson (2005) calls "free zone" regarding tweens and their age performance, being able to be flexible, moving back and forth in age performances.

Several of the interviewees talked about leaving Disney when getting older; however this does not mean that they would denounce it completely. Tone expressed how having artefacts linked to media content could serve as a place of reminiscences:

Tone: I used to think I was too big for it, but now I like Teletubbies again, I think they're cute. I like Winnie the Pooh as well. In kindergarten I used to collect Winnie The Pooh, I've collected things my whole life.

Ingvild: Why do you do that you think?

Tone: Because I probably want to have it with me when I get older, and then I can look at it and think: oh, yes now I remember why I liked it.

Tone did not reject her former interests. She regressed in old enthusiasms for characters like Teletubbies and Winnie the Pooh. She talked of them as keepsakes to remind her of her former self, and anticipated that when she grows out of her current interest (for *High School Musical*) she would still keep everything to remind her. The paratexts thus becomes part of her life narrative, almost like a diary. Others have also found this

tendency to grow out of liking things that they earlier were quite invested in (Brougere, 2004:192).

My data suggests that Disney becomes a place to develop from Disney Princesses and Winnie the Pooh, to the tween franchises, leading up to possibly an end of the relationship with Disney. However, as Tone claimed, having things to remind you of why you liked them, can be seen as being a part of one's biographical narrative.

Conclusion: The Disneyfication of everyday life

In this chapter I have argued that Disney Channel and the Disney tween media texts *Hannah Montana* and *High School Musical* were domesticated as part of the daily practices of the children in this study. There was a co-interpretation of the self and Disney as the content was domesticated as belonging to the children's biographical narratives, and incorporated as resources for interpreting the self both with regards to age and gender. There was a clear and coherent notion within the interviews when describing the audience.

Through my data we can see that there was indeed a domestication of the Disney tween media texts going on. Concerning the praxis dimension, Disney Channel clearly was domesticated in these children's practices. All of the children I talked to, no matter how much they liked or disliked the content, at one time or another had watched at least parts of it. It seemed as though Disney and Disney Channel was established as "their channel". Knowledge of the different contents was part of one's social currency or cultural curriculum. However, this curriculum did not come across as strictly mandatory. In all the interviews, focus group interviews, and observations there was no evidence that any of the Disney Channel movies or series generated a normative pressure to have seen them in order to have an opinion about them. Neither did there seem to be a necessity to even have a strong opinion on the topic, no side needed to be chosen. The content was just merely there, and everybody seemed to know it. As such, Disney was domesticated as seemingly invisible yet with a constant presence in these children's daily lives. However with this being said, being able to enjoy the content with friends was often mentioned as a perk, especially by the girls interviewed. Hence,

social gratification could be achieved when watching with others, and also when making use of content to for social currency in contexts not related to watching television.

In my data *High School Musical* was perceived as belonging to the girl realm, while *Hannah Montana*, although still more popular with the girls, seemed to generate a boy audience as well. Thus, regarding the meaning dimension the interviewed children domesticated the classical gender binary as reported on in Chapter 5. In a sense we can say that the children interviewed and their domestication corresponded to how the Disney configured its audience. Whether or not the children interviewed experienced standing with one foot in childhood and one in adolescence as Bjorner suggested, and as was observed in the media text analysis, will be more closely explored in Chapter 9. Also the issue of individualization and social obligations to others, which was a main theme in the trilogy, will be further examined in Chapter 9.

Media content can be seen as tools for understanding one's self and the social world and these tools form integrated aspects of everyday life (Drotner, 2000; Kellner, 1995; Vogler, 1999; Ward, 2002). In addition, Woolgar's (2012) concept of consumption as ontological enactment prompts us to focus on not on media as a secondary socialization form, which is somehow isolated from the "real world", but rather as an interwoven factor, amongst many socialization factors, which in turn, resides in relational contexts. Thus, probing the research questions further, after having established Disney's presence in the children's daily lives and as being part of their biographical narrative, a question is how the paratexts were domesticated amongst the interviewees in different settings. This question will be raised in Chapter 8.

However, before looking at how the girls in this study domesticated the paratexts, I will start with the home-setting and investigate whether or not parents of the girls interviewed incorporated the Disney tween franchises as part of the moral economy of the household. Were the Disney tween franchises domesticated by the parents? Did parents oppose the Disney tween franchises and if so, how did they deal with their daughters' investment with the Disney tween franchises?

Chapter 7: Parents' ambivalent domestication of Disney

The previous chapter focused on how children in this study domesticated Disney as a resource for interpreting themselves in relation to age and gender, as a life trajectory companion, and as part of their everyday practices. This chapter broadens the scope by examining how Disney content and paratexts were domesticated in the context of the girls' homes through their parents. The reason for focusing on the girls' parents and not the boys was that *Hannah Montana* and *High School Musical* in my field work were considered to be more girl-oriented. As such the girls' parents had to deal with the content and the paratexts as opposed to the boys' parents. As the girls in this study were still dependent on their parents, examining how parents deal with different issues surrounding the media texts and the paratexts provides us with a better understanding of their social, relational and contextual surroundings.

Parents and children are constructed relationally in this analysis. As Pugh (2003) and Buckingham (2011) suggests, a relational approach to children's consumption (media and paratexts) can help nuance what otherwise might be looked at as a "simple power struggle between two (or three) unequal contenders" (Buckingham, 2011:144). However, childhood is also defined as a category where parents have an authoritative status (Bae, 1996; Corsaro, 1997; Devine, 2003; James et al., 1998; Mayall, 2002; Qvortrup, 1994; Rose, 1999; Vestby, 1996). Parental authority is enacted on different levels. Adults are argued as having powers of definition in relation to children both in terms of defining values and also how children view themselves (Bae, 1996). Clark (2012) for instance claims that young people have largely internalized their parent's values of expressiveness and empowerment (Clark, 2012:92). Johansson, following this train of thought suggests that through children's participation in family purchasing decisions, children also learn "how to perform a rational consumer subjectivity" (Johansson, 2010:86). Thus, parents seem to play an important role in their children's

understandings of consumer life and the moral economy of the household. This is why a focus on the parental perspective is important when attempting to understand the surrounding relational context of those who are considered to be tweens.

In this chapter the main focus is how the parents in this study talked about, and subsequently domesticated the Disney Channel tween franchises. I explore which voices and arguments were represented in the parents' interviews when contemplating the Disney media texts. I look at how parents related the tween content to their own childhood, and also to their daughters' desires to watch the Disney tween content. In addition, the parents' strategies of condemning, defending, and explaining buying or not buying the paratexts (i.e., merchandise tied in with the franchises) is also investigated. The analytical question this chapter sets out to explore is thus: How were the Disney media texts and paratexts incorporated and domesticated as part of the moral economy of the household? In other words, in this chapter, the texts and paratexts meet the parents of the users.

Bakhtinian voices and the moral economy of the household

Two theoretical concepts shall be discussed before diving into the analysis part of this chapter. These concepts are the use of different (and sometimes conflicting) voices when discussing the content and paratexts and the concept of moral economy derived from domestication theory.

I find it useful to make use of Bakhtin (1981, 1986) and his concept of voices to analyse the moral economy. Voice is a concept within dialogic theory, based on a perception of the inherent relationship between values and utterance. A voice will reflect the values the speaker draws on, the speaker's point of view. Bakhtinian voices are always social and changing. "Bakhtin's dialogical model focuses on 'utterances,' which are produced by a 'voice,' a point of view. However, for Bakhtin, 'voices' are processes rather than locations: they never exist in social isolation" (Komulainen, 2007:23). Thus, instead of looking at utterances as something stable or a "truth", it is rather, as Komulainen states, a process. Bakhtin also distinguished between more or less authoritative voices. The voices of authoritative others or taken for granted truths can be heard within an

individual's talk. An authoritative voice can be political and moral (Bakhtin, 1981:342). As Tobin puts it; "Bakhtinian theory teaches us that the utterances of individuals are most usefully understood as expressions of the perspectives and tensions of their larger society" (Tobin, 2000:144). Thus, when examining the interviews with the parents I look for what type of authoritative voices they made use of. This can inform us both of how the individual parent deals with the larger tensions of society, but also of society itself as the authoritative voices becomes constituted through their reproduction.

In addition to voices not being seen as inherent to the speaker or fixed, Bakhtin opens up for several voices operating within one speaker at the same time. Bakhtin makes use of a metaphor based on the musical concept of polyphony, which can be summed up as several voices being heard and spoken simultaneously. Making use of this metaphor when examining the interviews suggests looking at how the parents evoked several voices within one utterance. Thus, it is possible for someone to draw on different and possibly conflicting voices when talking. Although Bakhtin used this concept for researching the novel, others have used it to explore speech in interviews (see for example Komulainen, 2007; Lagesen, 2005; Tobin, 2000). Lagesen (2005) claims that Bakhtin's ideas about language can be useful when examining data with contradictions, antagonisms and ambiguities. As this chapter will show, such features were prevalent in my data, where I heard different authoritative voices which operated simultaneously and which were in conflict with one another. Thus the lens used for this chapter is looking for what voices surfaced in the interview setting, and which voices had most clout.

Following the theoretical backdrop of the previous chapter, this chapter also builds on the theory of domestication. The concept of moral economy of a household, derived from this theory through Silverstone et al. (1991, 1992), turned out to be a particularly useful concept in the analysis. Ward (2006) summarizes this concept as: "the process by which alien and alienating commodities are appropriated from the 'formal' economy and brought into the domestic sphere, where they are inscribed with private meanings and transformed into acceptable symbolic objects, which construct and articulate the values of the home" (Ward, 2006:148).

This chapter focuses on how the values of the home were articulated through the processes of domesticating the Disney tween media texts and its paratext. The voices in the interviews represented different takes on the moral economy of the household. The moral economy of the household is conceived as both an “economy of meanings” and a “meaningful economy” (Silverstone et al., 1992:18). Public meanings inscribed in media content are open to negotiation within the household, are appropriated by, and made sense of within a family unit. According to Silverstone et al., at stake is; “the capacity for the household or the family to sustain its autonomy and identity (...) as an economic, social and cultural unit” (Silverstone et al., 1992:19). As such the members of the household are seen to engage in process of creating and sustaining value in daily practices, which in turn are both grounded in but also constitutive of Giddens concept of “ontological security” (Giddens, 1991). The moral positions are thus grounded in a sense of self (Silverstone, 2006) and as such, they are also a part of how one communicates identity to the outside world, and within the household. Media use therefore becomes part of the moral economy, and also identity work for the family as a social unit as well as for the individual. It is therefore interesting to examine how the Disney media content is domesticated in the data.

Authoritative voices about children and TV

In my interviews, ambivalence was expressed when talking about, and in effect judging the media content and the paratexts. Parents evoked several voices when contemplating issues dealing with the Disney tween franchises. As several others have explored, being a parent in relation to consumer culture can be experienced as somewhat paradoxical (see Brusdal, 2005; Buckingham, 2011; Clark, 2012; Linn, 2005; Schor, 2004; Seiter, 1995). Drawing on Bakhtin (1981) I outline four at times conflicting authoritative voices that previous research suggests are common for parents to make use of when discussing children and television: The educational voice, the autonomy voice, the wholesome voice, and the caring consumption voice.

The first voice I investigate in the analysis is what I call the authoritative voice of education. Livingstone (2009), Buckingham and Scanlon (2003), and Buckingham, Scanlon and Sefton-Green (2001) found that for parents, entertainment in the home

ideally should be teaching children and offering educating opportunities to children. With respect to this voice, the concept of edutainment becomes pertinent. Edutainment can be summed up as a “hybrid mix of education and entertainment” (Buckingham & Scanlon, 2003:8). The voice of education suggests that children need to be educated in the home, as well as in institutions in order to cope with the demands of today’s society. This voice perceives children as adults in the making, focusing on how the child can be educated for its future as opposed to focusing on the here and now of the child. This is what Qvortrup (1994) labels a perspective of human-becomings as opposed to children as human-beings. The voice of education can also be seen as tied in with the individualization thesis where individuals are seen to expect to be masters of their own fate (Bauman, 2002; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Thus there seems to be a notion that contains a hierarchy of mediated activities, where media technology used for purposes of learning is approved, and where media entertainment for the sake of entertainment is frowned upon. How strong was this voice of education in my interviews? While Buckingham et al. (2001) and Livingstone (2009) argue that home life works as an extension of the school setting through what Buckingham et al. (2001) discusses as the curricularisation of everyday life, the question remains what clout this voice carries in relation to competing and conflicting voices.

The second authoritative voice I call the voice of children’s autonomy. The notion of “the best interest of the child” entails parents both helping and guiding their children (parents as authorities), while at the same time making room for children’s resistance and an the expressive individualism of the individual (children as resisting and autonomous). Thus characteristically, in parent–child relations, there can be said to be a balance for parents between care and control, and for children between autonomy and dependence (Vestby, 1996). Buckingham argues that parents have a strong notion of children’s right to their own cultural expressions (Buckingham, 2011). And as Kjørholt (2005) claims, there is a public discourse, which she calls “the right to be oneself” where the notion is that children have the right to “realize themselves in ‘free activities’” (Kjørholt, 2005:158). Within this voice the perspective of children as beings, as opposed to merely becoming adults, weighs heavily. This voice can be said to express a strong sense of children’s right to indulge in their cultural expressions of their

own choice. Initially, the authoritative voice of children's autonomy can be contradictory to the authoritative voice of education. How did these two seemingly contradictory voices work in my data?

A third authoritative voice relevant to Disney and children is the wholesome voice. This voice is specifically tied to Disney as a brand and a content provider. Disney has a unique position when it comes to being "let into the home", generally in the Western world, and specifically in Norway. Historically, Disney has enjoyed the position of entertainer and creator of 'wholesome family fun,' thus avoiding critical reception of its media content (Bell, Haas, & Sells, 1995; Bryman, 2004; Giroux, 1995; Giroux & Pollock, 1999). The company has been able to manifest itself as one that makes 'good media' as opposed to 'bad media,' with bad media being media that makes children sexualized and violent (Giroux & Pollock, 2010; Sammond, 2005). Disney's 'good media' is, according to popular belief, all about family values, overcoming difficulties, and safe and wholesome for children to watch (Buckingham, 2001; Rönnerberg, 2001; Wasko, 2001). Grandiose statements have been written about Disney's place in society and in relation to childhood solidifying Disney's place in the home such as: "Today something like a sacred connection exists between Mickey Mouse and the idealized childhood" (deCordova, 1994:203).

As stated in Chapter 4, Disney has an exceptional position in Norway and is incorporated in everyday practices through the Donald Duck magazine and as cultural traditions especially during Christmas. Disney exudes wholesome family fun, it is safe, and it also bears with it nostalgic feelings due to its undisputed presences in Norwegian culture for decades. Thus, closely tied to this wholesome voice are the parents' nostalgic feelings. This nostalgia has been explored by other scholars (Buckingham, 2001; Drotner, 2003; Hagen, 2001; Wasko, 2001), and it was found in these that nostalgia helps manifest Disney's cultural and commercial position. Implicit in the wholesome voice is a notion of having to protect the child from harmful media. How did this voice operate in my interviews? Did parents make use of this voice when contemplating their daughters' television preferences?

The fourth authoritative voice is the voice of caring consumption. Pugh (2003) argues that for parents: “consumption is part of caring adequately, involving the complex tasks of managing and meeting children’s needs and desires” (Pugh, 2003:1). In relation to granting children’s desires Cross (2010) uses the term “childhood wonder”, which can be described as buying things for children in order to evoke their joy and delight. Zelizer (1985) and Cross (2004) both describe how the normative ideal of the child developed in the early 20th century as an exclusively emotional and affective asset. An important part of being parents was to give their children pleasure (Cross, 2004:186; Zelizer, 1985:10). In her study on how parents consume for their children, Pugh differentiates seven types of consumption. One of these types she labels “recognition” (Pugh, 2003:7) and describes this as: “Picking the right toy, meal, or clothing” as a part of what Pugh calls an “interactive dance” where the parents know the child, and the child is aware that the parents know them and this then underlies the communication between them. Pugh argues that there is a drive for recognition for both parents and children. On the one hand the parent “recognizes” its child, knowing what the child wants and hopes for. On the other hand, the child when receiving “recognizes” its parent for getting it right, thus acknowledging “the parent’s competence, accuracy and love embodied in his or her true knowledge of the child” (Pugh, 2003:10). When exploring how the parents discuss the paratexts, did this voice come into play?

The aim of this chapter is to analyse what voices and moral economy the parents communicated in the interview setting. The question becomes which voices had the most clout, and in prolongation of this, how tweens are configured through the authoritative voices and moral economy of the household.

Edutainment and Entertainment – Becoming and being

Throughout my interviews with the parents, the notion of entertainment being trivial and of lesser value emerged, echoing previous research (Buckingham & Scanlon, 2003; Hodge & Tripp, 1986; Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2002). Being mere entertainment, the Disney tween content was not discussed as desirable for the children by any of the parents. Hence this part of the chapter will partly deal with what I perceive as a

hierarchy of content being conveyed, where television for leisure was placed at the bottom by parents, while edutainment was described as desirable television viewing. This represents the voice of education. The question is whether the educational voice operated alone or if it encountered other authoritative voices, and if so, which voice had the most clout.

As television viewing was expressed during the interviews with the parents as being of lesser value than other activities, I asked the parents if there were any particular television programs they would like their children to watch. In response, anything that was perceived to be educational was ranked higher within a content hierarchy. It is important to keep in mind, through the lens of Goffman (1959), that parents responded in the research interview setting. This means that the parents were socially performing, and publicly displaying, the role as parents in relation to me in a specific context. This is not to question the sincerity of the answers provided. Rather to point out that this might generate more socially acceptable answers where edutainment outranks entertainment, as there can be said to be an authoritative voice in society celebrating edutainment. Thus, in line with Bakhtin, there can be said to be an authoritative voice from larger society operating within the parents' talk.

The parents in the interviews would often nominate television programs with a profile of learning (edutainment) as something that they would like their children to watch rather than television programs that did not have an educational agenda. By communicating a hierarchy of content one is also communicating values circulating in the moral economy of the household. The strong presence of the education voice may be exemplified by a quote from the interview with Katie's mother and father:

Ingvild: Are there any programs you would like Katie to watch?

Katie's mother: I'm happy when she watches something that's realistic, like Animal Planet, then I think, this is good. When they learn something because I like it when they can learn something and be entertained at the same time, now they've switched from watching Scooby Doo every morning, to watching Crocodile Hunter instead, and I think that's better in a way.

Katie's father: Yes, and it's nice to hear them learn from the television as well.

Katie's mother: Yeah, right? It has more substance; I feel it's nice, because

there is so much brain dead entertainment.

In this quote Katie's mother fused together learning and entertainment as what she approved of her children watching. The quotation ends with Katie's mother criticizing much entertainment as "brain dead". Katie's mother also used the word realistic, indicating a critical stance towards programs regarded as being unrealistic, a type of argument other scholars also have encountered (Ang, 1985; Buckingham, 2001). As such, fiction in itself was not held high, as she continued the sentence with suggesting Animal Planet and wanting her children to learn something from the television viewing. Katie's mother here positioned herself as a responsible parent emphasizing education and learning through media, not merely watching for entertainment. This type of explanation, where parents would like their children to use television for both entertainment *and* education was typical for the parents in this study. This statement serves as a good example of how the authoritative voice of education was expressed.

In addition to wanting their children to watch edutainment, some parents also expressed dislike for the content of the Disney tween programs due to the lack of educational aspects in these types of programs. Susan's mother for example was very explicit about how much she detested *Hannah Montana* and found it problematic that her daughter would spend time watching it:

Ingvild: But what do you feel is problematic with her watching it?
Susan's mother: I think it causes stupidity (laughing). It's not educational, I think it causes stupidity, *Hannah Montana* I think is stupid, literally speaking, I cannot for the life of me understand why it's fun.

Susan's mother, by claiming that "it's not educational" drew on an understanding of children as unfinished beings needing to be developed (James et al., 1998; Jenks, 1982; Qvortrup, 1994). Thus, underlining the educational voice there lies an aspect of there being a need for, or at least a want for, television shows to help develop cognitive and/or social skills. Susan's mother expressed that the show causes stupidity. In this manner she implicitly conveyed that if Susan were to be engaged in educational media content she would approve. Hence the argument Susan's mother used was that of edutainment over entertainment. Within the quote there also seems to reside a type of

cultural hierarchy where the tween content was discarded as being of less value than other forms for culture (Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2002). Through these type of statements where the parents would opt for edutainment rather than entertainment, the parents were communicating the moral economy of their household, what Silverstone (2006) suggests is a “kind of signature set of values” (Silverstone, 2006:236). In this case, the signature set of values was that of learning over leisure. The authoritative voice of education was prominent in my interviews with the parents.

However, the voice of education did not operate alone. While none of the parents expressed that they would *want* their children to watch *High School Musical* or *Hannah Montana*, most parents did not mind them watching it either. In other words, none of the parents refused their daughters to watch it. The voice of education was strong, but in the interviews this authoritative voice was often accompanied by another authoritative voice, namely the voice of children’s autonomy. While the parents would actively draw on the argument of edutainment over entertainment, simultaneously they would use arguments that drew on the children’s “right” to their own cultural expressions.

Hence, within the interviews I experienced a tension and polyphony as the parents performed with several authoritative voices within the interviews. On one hand, edutainment was placed hierarchically over entertainment, while on the other hand, the child’s right to be entertained was also seen as important. By drawing on the Bakhtinian idea of talking by expressing several authoritative voices we can map out the complex relationship between Disney and the parents. What the parents expressed to me was beyond a binary of either disliking it or accepting it but rather, a process of negotiation and compromise. As I suggested, embedded within the education voice lies the perspective of seeing children as becoming individuals. However, the parents in my data did not only talk of children as “human-becomings” (Qvortrup, 1994). The voice of education was moderated by the voice of children’s autonomy that focussed on the child’s right to be entertained. The voice of children’s autonomy focuses on the here and now of the child. Hence, the main perspective is children as beings, not merely a future becomings. Cathy’s father serves as a good example of this:

Ingvild: Would you rather see her watch something else than Disney

Channel?

Cathy's father: Yes, but she does that in addition, so we don't have..., sometimes it's a bit too much Disney, so we ask her to switch to NRK [Norwegian Public Broadcasting], but if it was up to her she would watch Disney Channel always, but Saturday mornings are her mornings, and that's when she watches it.

Cathy's father expressed that the parental unit was not thrilled with the content. However, he talked of Cathy as having a right to her own taste, Saturday mornings were "her mornings". Using such a phrase as "her mornings" implies giving his daughter ownership of specific periods of time during the week. This also implies that for the rest of the week, time is owned by others, for example by school, after school programs, different activities, and parents. Thus, by using the words "her mornings" Cathy's father acknowledged and contributed to what he might think of as her self-enjoyment. This notion was heard in the parent interviews as a right to one's own taste. In addition to the right to be one's self, the quote above can be read as ambiguous since Cathy's father also expressed wanting to restrict how much Disney was watched. Again we see several authoritative voices operating within the same statement.

Even the parents who at times in the interviews seemed to be perfectly clear regarding the moral economy of the household being non versatile were polyphonic in their utterances. For example Susan's mother, who was very negative towards *Hannah Montana* as quoted earlier, still expressed an understanding of her daughter liking the content. She connected Susan's love for *Hannah Montana* to her own childhood, thus implementing the authoritative voice of children's autonomy tempered by a feeling of nostalgia based on the remembrance of her own childhood:

Susan's mother: But I understand, I mean, I played, I didn't watch movies, there weren't really any series when I was I kid, but I know that I read a lot of books that I can say today that weren't really directly educational, but they were fun to read because they were sort of built on the same type.

Thus, there seemed to be an acceptance for television watching for leisure and entertainment. Susan's mother, earlier in this chapter, expressed being puzzled by Susan liking *Hannah Montana*. Again Susan's mother made use of education as an argument for why content is seen as being of a lesser value than for example educational content.

She also expressed the joy of reading (in her case) stories that “were sort of built on the same type”, thus there is a notion of recognition within this quote which she used here as a defence and understanding for Susan liking to watch *Hannah Montana*. This is an example of the complex relationship the interviewed parents had with the content—which they on one hand did not care for, but on the other hand understood and defended their children watching.

The two authoritative voices of children’s autonomy and education tie in with different perspectives on children as being or becoming. Where the educational voice draws on a perspective of children as becoming, the voice of children’s autonomy is more focused on the here and now. What is interesting is that these perspectives, although seemingly in opposition, appear within the same interview. There are thus polyphonic utterances encompassing both these two authoritative voices simultaneously. This in turn confirms that the moral economy of the household is complex and dynamic.

In this section I have explored how the authoritative voice of education, while seemingly head strong, was moderated by the authoritative voice of children’s autonomy and parents’ reflections around their own childhood. The voice of education was performed when parents said that they wanted their children to watch something else than Disney. On the other hand the authoritative voice of children’s autonomy and right to their own cultural expressions came forward in the statements where parents said that they would let their daughters indulge with the Disney tween television programs. When the two voices contradicted each other, the result was that the autonomy voice moderated the voice of education to the effect that the television programs were deemed watchable. None of the parents said that they would deny their daughters to engage with the Disney tween programs. Thus, the voice of children’s autonomy moderated the educational.

The voices of the good, the bad and the commercial American

As expected, the authoritative voice of Disney as wholesome surfaced in my interviews with the parents. The parents would generally talk of Disney as safe content, echoing previous research (Bell et al., 1995; Bryman, 2004; Giroux, 1995; Giroux & Pollock, 1999). What was not expected however was the voice that accompanied, and nuanced

this authoritative voice. For while the parents expressed feeling safe letting their daughters watch the Disney tween programs, they also expressed dismay with the ideology conveyed in these programs. Thus, the voice nuancing the wholesome voice was a voice I label the culture critical voice. All the parents used the culture critical voice when discussing Disney with me. They described a tension between feeling safe with what the Disney media texts were serving, while at the same time opposing what the parents described as Disney's American values (as opposed to Norwegian values). These perceived American values were often described as superficial and commercially oriented. Thus, the authoritative voice of Disney as wholesome collided with the culture critical voice. The two oppositional voices often could be heard in the same utterance. Katie's mother is as a good example of this polyphony when describing her ambivalence with regards to Katie watching Disney we can see parts belonging to the wholesome voice, and also parts which belong to the culture critical voice within the same quote:

Katie's mother: I have to admit, despite the fact that Disney possibly is Satan, it's very innocent, which makes me actually like Disney. I prefer her watching Disney over a lot of other stuff, especially if Disney, if the marketing from Disney doesn't make her want to go out and buy things, then I think it's ok. Disney has existed for a long time, so you sort of have your own feelings towards Disney and their characters, like when you yourself were young, so it's natural that one feels almost a sort of safety towards Disney.

In this quote, we see the two voices being articulated. This represented an ambiguity, which I also witnessed in the other parent interviews. If we dissect the segment we can see that Disney was seen to serve children "good media" and that as a parent one also had a relationship with the brand. Thus, the wholesome voice was also strengthened by nostalgic feelings and reflections around one's own childhood. Hence, Disney seemed to have a link to the parental generation through nostalgic feelings. Katie's mother in the quote above used her own experiences with Disney characters as part of her own biographical narrative. However, Katie's mother also mentioned a potentially harmful issue, which had to do with the commercial aspect of Disney.

In the quote above Katie's mother seemed to be moving back and forth, drawing on several voices. Katie's mother uttered a fear of her daughter possibly becoming materialistic, claiming that watching Disney was acceptable if the marketing from Disney did not "make her want to go out and buy things". Thus, she implied that embedded within the Disney realm, there is commercial influence and pressure. However, simultaneously, through her own history, she perceived Disney as innocent and safe. In other words there seems to be a place for the Disney tween programs in the moral economy of the household due to its perceived wholesomeness. Despite the culture critical voice, Katie's mothers' remembrance outweighed her critical stance.

In addition to the content being perceived as safe because it was a Disney product, the wholesome voice also had another angle. Disney content was not only perceived to be safe. Disney also exuded what can be seen as proper messages, and thus in effect, became a "good" influence. The parents did not report on having issues with what can be determined as *good* messages, which can be perceived to be typical for Disney media texts. According to Rönnerberg (2001), Disney typically conveys in their movies to be: "self-reliant", "finding oneself", "be accepted for who you are", "become someone", "to grow", and above all the identity struggle (Rönnerberg, 2001:11). This is also what I found in both *Hannah Montana* and *High School Musical* as discussed in Chapter 4.

Parents in the interviews would draw on the culture critical voice stating that Disney was too materialistic and too superficial. However, simultaneously the Disney content was perceived as safe and proper, legitimizing why it was acceptable for their children to watch it. Disney was hence incorporated into the moral economy of their household due to its safe and "good" messages. Several parents would express how they disapproved of the commercial aspect of the Disney tween concepts, but their dismay was not strong enough to ban the television shows from their home.

As well as the fear of Disney content communicating superficial and materialistic messages, there were also voiced issues about American bad messages that could potentially disturb and influence the typical Norwegian way. Thus, the prominence of the culture critical voice was heard clearly throughout the interviews. These potentially

bad issues were the focus on what some parents discussed as *Americanized* or merely American as being different from Norwegian.

Susan's father: It's not anything I am concerned about exposing the kids to, but at the same time.

Susan's mother: Don't you get embarrassed?

Susan's father: Yes, no, I have some version of the "Simplified states of America". I think they have a simple view of life, often.

Susan's mother: Especially in the movies.

Susan's father: Especially in the movies yes, but it infects society, I think so anyway.

Susan's mother: It's just something about getting everything fed with a teaspoon.

Susan's parents expressed a concern and made use of a voice about media being powerful in relation to society, fearing that this simple view of life will leak into society. This excerpt clearly belongs to the culture critical voice. Within the culture critical voice there also seemed to reside an anti-American voice. In the quote, the United States was dubbed "simplified states", suggesting a different and possibly inferior way of life and ideals for them as Norwegian. By distancing themselves from the "American" way of life and view of life, which was often explained as being more individualistic, materialistic and self-serving, the parents solidified their own belonging to Norwegian culture of social democratic ideals. In the segment below Mary's father sums up what he thought of American culture:

Ingvild: What do you think of *High School Musical*?

Mary's father: I think it's very American.

Ingvild: What do you mean by that?

Mary's father: I have to admit, I have negative connotations, and it's sort of gaudy, techny-color, type story, with all the right ingredients in place. Making use that all the American groups are there, to make sure that everyone can identify with something, and of course music and everything that helps support and make it broad to appeal to a wide audience, and that's catchy, and pompous. According to my taste it's pompous. I can see that there is something there that the kids like, and, well it's not the worst, I think *High School Musical* is less tiring than that sitcom. The movies are less intense. And I understand that they like the songs, they're catchy. Generally I think there is too much influence of American culture; it would be nice with a counterweight.

Ingvild: For example?

Mary's father: Well, they could have elements from other parts of the world.

Ingvild: Do you consider American culture to be very different from Norwegian culture?

Mary's father: No, we're getting to be more and more Americanized in this country, we are, and it's probably both good and bad.

Ingvild: So what is it specifically that you don't like about this "pompous American"?

Mary's father: Well, it's sort of the whole Disney concept, it's a thoroughly commercialized product, even if they do tell stories about friendship and that has a positive ring to it, but everything is tied together with the commercialization, a commercial package with tons of merchandise and very much tied into idolization and consumption, which I am very skeptic towards.

As with Katie's mother in the previous quote, in this segment Mary's father seemed to be in a state of ambivalence as he claimed he did not approve of the "thoroughly commercialized product" while simultaneously acknowledging that the stories told had "a positive ring to it". Thus he was engaging in polyphony drawing on both the wholesome voice and the culture critical voice. Mary's father, as Katie's mother, made use of the "good media" argument, but also the "bad products" argument. Mary's father ended this segment by talking about idolization and consumption, two values he did not approve of. He described these values as "American"—as opposed to Norwegian—and as typical of Disney. There is also a danger lurking within the influence of American culture as Mary's father suggested; there is "too much influence of American culture." He later claimed that this culture is the commercialized culture. Thus, subsequently buying into the content could also mean buying into the commercial aspect, which was deemed undesirable. As such the content figured as a potential danger for the unvoiced Norwegian culture in this segment as it also did in the segment with Susan's parents. Through these utterances Norwegian culture can be seen, ideally at least, as the opposite of commercialization and idolization and as such provided a strong presence of the culture critical voice.

The ambivalence and polyphony, which Susan's parents, Mary's father, and Katie's mother worded, emerged in all of the parent interviews. This polyphony made the domestication of these texts and paratexts a complex process, especially when including these contents and commodities as part of the moral economy of the household. Thus, this was not a straightforward process, but rather one that was under negotiation and

construction. Generally the parents in this study did not like the content, but felt it was safe. They also wanted their children to enjoy themselves, although watching television was not considered to be time well spent.

As I have demonstrated, in my interviews contradicting voices of the moral economy of the household surfaced. While the content was for the most part deemed watchable, even though parents would not peg it as their favourite, the commodities being offered carried with it another layer of complexity. After having examined the different voices present in my interviews with the parents when discussing the media content, I will now focus on how the parents negotiated how to perceive the plethora of paratexts that are a part of the Disney Channel tween franchises.

Domesticating the paratexts into the moral economy of the household

This part of the chapter will explore how the Disney paratexts were made sense of by the parents. While watching or not watching the content does not involve, in itself, monetary outlays, the Disney tween content also bears with it a multitude of paratexts that can be bought. In the previous part of the chapter, parents were quoted as being sceptical of the commercial aspect of engaging with Disney—paratexts were perceived as problematic. Buying the products can be seen as “buying into” the commercial aspects of the Disney tween franchises. However, parents were able to make room for the paratexts in the moral economy of the household through different strategies, which I explore below. Thus, the voices that were articulated in relation to the paratexts seem to be on the one hand the voice of caring consumption and on the other hand the culture critical voice.

A strategy for, if not banning, but rather negotiating the paratexts and their potential inclusion in the moral economy in the household, was employing a strategic argumentative voice, which I call the durability argument. In the parent interviews, when talking about paratexts, the idea that they should be useful and durable surfaced. According to both Evans and Chandler (2006) and Brusdal (2005, 2007), the perceived use and value of a product is an important dimension in how parents prioritize children’s requests for consumer goods. My data also indicates such a finding. Being useful could be described through the quality of the paratexts and what type of items

they were. Generally, from my interviews it seems that the paratexts were seen as expensive and of poor quality. This was an issue for several of the parents, like Susan's mother:

Ingvild: Do you have any opinion about all the merchandise one could buy, I mean there are clothes and...

Susan's mother: I haven't seen it all, but I do have an opinion that, I want, really it doesn't matter to me if there is a Hannah face on it, if she really wants a Hannah face, but then the rest needs to be ok. I mean if she wants a sweater with a Hannah face, then I need to be able to wash it, and it needs to look more or less ok after that, and needs to last for a while, if you understand what I mean. I'm not going to spend money on something that is useless in the first place. Even if it has a Hannah face on it.

Ingvild: Do you think that the products with Hannah faces on them are useless?

Susan's mother: Not all, but many of them are. Some of the stuff, I've bought them for people who want them for their birthdays, and I go and touch towels, right, and they are really thin, and I think, ok, when you've washed the towel three times, how much is left of it, and that I think is unnecessary.

Begin useless as Susan's mother here suggested some of the *Hannah Montana* paratexts were, was tied up to being of bad quality. Susan's mother used a sweater and a towel as examples, which seemed to be useful items. However, if the print on the sweater washed off and the towel disintegrated they were, in fact, useless. According to Susan's mother, a product should be durable. Thus, Susan's mother situated herself as a critical consumer, not someone who would like to take part in what can be seen as conspicuous consumption. While she stated that she did not mind if Susan wanted a Hannah face on a product, she felt that most Hannah face products were of bad quality.

As a continuation of the durability argument, another strategy for avoiding paratexts was to use risk as a strategic argument. Insisting that Hannah products are of poor quality can also be used as a reason for not having them. For example, Ida's mother told me:

Ingvild: Do you have any general opinion about all the merchandise one can buy?

Ida's mother: She hasn't asked to get any of it really, so I haven't needed to say no, but I think that if she had asked for *Hannah Montana* beddings, I would have said no.

Ingvild: Why?

Ida's mother: First of all because I'm afraid that there is too much dye in them, so I would have used that as an argument, that there is harmful dye in them. That would have been my main argument, but it's mostly because I don't like them.

For Ida's mother it was not only the potential lack of quality, but the fear of paratexts being physically harmful. Although, as she stated, she would use this as an argument, she claimed that her "true" feelings were that she did not like them. Thus, Ida's mother was mobilizing the notion of the protective and responsible mother. She performed this as a role in her arguing for not letting her daughter have the *Hannah Montana* bedding and not necessarily telling her daughter that she simply did not like the product. We may also observe the work that the parents did in relation to the commercial features of Disney products. Ida's mother was not talking about some negotiation that had happened between her and Ida, but rather what her response and what arguments would be used if Ida were to ask for a *Hannah Montana* bedding.

In addition to avoiding the paratexts, another strategy of dealing with the commercial aspect was simply to not pick that fight. While parents displayed their moral economy and performed the part of the concerned and responsible parent in relation to consumerism, the parents also seemed to claim a position as powerless in relation to the paratexts. As Seiter claims: "Mothers object to children's consumer culture, but they usually give in to it as well" (Seiter, 1995:8). The interviews with the parents showed that there was an overall idea of not being able to fight the buying of paratexts even if one would want to. Actually the parents seemed rather at ease with the idea of their children having some of the paratexts. The paratexts in themselves were not defined as harmful. It was consumerism that was the problem. For the most part it seemed like a battle none of the parents would want to engage in. Kristin's mother told me that she had bought a *High School Musical* board game, which she had not yet given to Kristin. She was still contemplating whether she should give it to her or not:

Ingvild: What do you think will determine if she get it or not?

Kristin's mother: Well, it is *High School Musical*, so she really wanted it. It's really popular, I see her wanting these things, so it's not like I don't buy it for her. It's been like this with all things as far as I can remember. I've never bothered to oppose these things, because it's impossible to go against

it, but one can try to limit it a bit, I think, but I'm not like opposing it. There is no use in doing that.

When Kristin's mother stated, "it's impossible to go against it," she rendered the parent somewhat powerless. The real power presumably was with the producers, or possibly with the peer group if it was considered important to have specific consumer goods to be part of that group (Brusdal, 2007; Seiter, 1995; Silverstone et al., 1992; Wærdahl, 2005). However, Kristin's mother also claimed to exercise resistance by attempting to "limit it a bit". Being moderate in paratext consumption seemed to be an ideal and also part of the moral economy of the household. There was a sense that the parents had a tense relation to the paratexts. On one hand, the products were perceived as bad, simply because they were commercial products. On the other hand there was also a clear notion of fighting an uphill battle when resisting the buying of the paratexts, thus rendering the products as not dangerous enough to engage in open protest.

Ida's mother: There is absolutely a lot of commercialization around it [the Disney paratexts], and that's probably the most important aspect of it as well, but I guess I've sort of given up in relation to, or it's so big that you can't just sit and think about it. I know that one should be critical towards it, and also reflect around being a consumer of it, but I've sort of resigned as it's so big and strong, that you can't just start.

Parents did not only express animosity towards the paratexts. There were also instances of parents wanting to please their children through paratexts. This is where the authoritative voice of caring consumption emerged:

Ingvild: So for example the merchandise aspect of it, does Mary have any *High School Musical* or other Disney stuff?

Mary's father: Yes.

Ingvild: How does this agree with your ideology?

Mary's father: I have to admit, I'm probably, I probably have as much of a double standard as everyone else I would think, I feel on one hand that this is not good, but when it comes to the situation, where you want to please your child, then I think about what Mary likes, yes she likes *High School Musical* for example, and then I buy something with that on it, and then you're suddenly against what you really think and mean. Then you've sort of gone into the trap, but at least the consideration for her is the priority.

Mary's father's statements here mirrored what Pugh (2003) labelled consumption as recognition as he recognized Mary's wants and interests. And as Vestby found, parents want to be those "who contribute to fun and amusement for the child" (Vestby, 1996:82). Mary's father talked earlier of the problem with the commercialized Disney concept and what he perceived as an excessive focus on things. This could be perceived as a danger, in the sense that it might corrupt the more egalitarian social democratic discourse and support a more hedonistic consumer ideal. Mary's father clearly experienced a dilemma of wanting to raise his child with politically correct ideals while at the same time wanting to please his daughter by giving her Disney paratexts. Thus, we hear the voice of caring consumption being moderated by the culture critical voice. This ambivalence resembles what Pugh found in her research, where parents were ambivalent about consumption and wanting to please their children on the one hand, while simultaneously attempting to control their children's wants so that they would not want the "wrong" commodities (Pugh, 2009:119). In the quote from Mary's father above, Mary and her want for these things outweighed his animosity towards the commercial aspect of Disney. Thus, the voice of caring consumption outweighed the culture critical voice.

In addition to wanting to please, but using a voice based on the durability of products, another strategy was simply to verbally protest the commercial aspect. Thus, applying the culture critical voice, while simultaneously turning a blind eye to gifts received resulted in implicitly and non-verbally evoking the caring consumption voice. Often the paratexts came (with more or less parental approval) through the "back door". The girls' paratexts were often gifts from other adults and relatives. I found that there were several ways to achieve childhood wonder, evoking joy in children's face by giving them commodities (Cross, 2010). Ida's mother for example did not actively purchase paratexts for her daughter, but let other relatives do this. Therefore Ida's mother did not "buy into it", but Ida still was able to consume paratexts of her favourite movies.

Ida's mother: She doesn't have a lot of *Hannah Montana* things I don't think, not that I know of, but she has *High School Musical* things, innocent things, she has a puzzle that's a ball, with *High School Musical* on it, and that sort of proper toys, only it has a picture of them on it, she doesn't really want for much of that stuff. I mean, if she wants, if she needs a new book

bag, then she doesn't want a *Hannah Montana* book bag or anything, then she wants different kinds of bags, so she doesn't want a lot of that stuff, I don't experience it as her wanting a lot. And what she has, she has not gotten from me, she gotten it from, I think mostly my mother and father because they have been out shopping together, and Ida comes home with the things. A *Hannah Montana* book I think she has.

Ingvild: How do you feel about that?

Ida's mother: It's totally fine, it's sort of a free haven.

Here Ida's mother avoided "buying into" the commercial aspect, but rather let Ida receive paratexts from family around them. Also this segment shows how Ida's mother as a parent kept her distance to the paratexts, letting other adults in relation to her daughter give such gifts. Thus it was a win-win situation for her. As a mother, she was able to keep her critical consumer stance while her daughter was able to enjoy paratexts. This was a strategy to include *High School Musical* in the moral economy of the household without actually including it. Rather it was included by default.

Conclusion: An ambiguous moral economy

In this chapter I have explored how the Disney tween franchises were domesticated and "transformed into acceptable symbolic objects, which construct and articulate the values of the home" (Ward, 2006:148) by the parents. In other words, how the parents in this study, through discussing both media content and paratexts, were conveying their moral economy to me. I have argued that the moral economy of the household, through the domestication of the Disney tween franchises was a complex ongoing process, which was both dynamic and ambiguous leading to complex dealings and negotiations. Framing this analysis with Bakhtin's concept of voices made it possible to dissect these voices and see them in relation to one another.

Based on earlier research I outlined four authoritative voices which I also found in my data. First, there was the educational voice with its focus on learning through media. Second, there was the voice of children's autonomy, perceiving children as having the right to their own cultural expressions. A third voice was the wholesome voice which suggested that children needed to be protected and being served "safe" media content. And the fourth voice was the caring consumption voice in which care for one's children

was facilitated through consumption. In addition to these four voices, my data suggests that there was a fifth authoritative voice which was highly present. This is the culture critical voice. The moral economy of the household was constituted by how the parents navigated between the five different authoritative voices.

Out of the five voices, none had a supreme status. As demonstrated there was a constant polyphony heard in the interviews. The parents mobilized the education voice, celebrating edutainment. However, this voice was moderated by the autonomy voice, advocating children's right to their own cultural expressions as well as parents own nostalgic contemplations about popular culture from their own childhood, especially tied to Disney.

When discussing the content the wholesome voice was prominent, celebrating Disney content as safe and proper. However, the wholesome voice was moderated by the strong presence of the culture critical voice, which focused on what was perceived as "bad" American materialism and superficiality. Several of the parents said that they struggled with conflicting notions. On one hand the messages were perceived as morally proper. On the other hand, they did not wish to commit to the commercially oriented media content and paratexts, which were seen as being in conflict with the household's moral economy.

The culture critical voice was also heard when talking about paratexts. However, even though the culture critical voice was strong, it did not outweigh the caring consumption voice or the autonomy voice. Complexities of the moral economy of the household surfaced when discussing paratexts. A strategy parents reported on enabling them to avoid while simultaneously include the paratexts in the moral economy of the household was to let other adults purchase paratexts for their daughters. This facilitated a complex inclusion of the paratexts in the household's moral economy, by the parents not actively bringing the items into the household, yet still not excluding them.

As my data shows, the moral economy consisted of constantly navigating within the voices, and which voice had most clout would depend on the context. My data suggests that there was flexibility when it came to outcomes and that these outcomes were ambiguous and non-predictable. A point to be made is thus that we cannot predict the

outcomes of the negotiations. Although there was not a singular voice having the most clout, the authoritative voices of caring consumption and autonomy prevailed. In the interview situation the parents would defend the children's "rights" to be merely entertained. Hence the wholesome voice and the autonomy voice together solidified Disney's place in the moral economy of the household. However, the culture critical voice was also detected with a strong presence. I argue that even though parents would not deny their daughters engagement with the Disney tween franchises, Disney's place in the moral economy was not unambiguous. As shall be explored in the following chapter, the critical voices that the parents evoked did not go unnoticed by the girls in the study. As such, we can talk of a compromise where Disney indeed has a place in the moral economy, however, the critical and the educational voice was evoked and heard. The parents in this study enacted a complex moral economy regarding the domestication of the Disney content.

The focus in this chapter has been the authoritative voices parents enacted when discussing the Disney tween franchises, and also, as a result the moral economy of the household. In relation to constructing tweenhood, I have mapped the complexity of the moral economy of the household that was the reality and everyday context for the tweens in my data. The moral economy was expressed through the way these voices articulated and moderated in the household. As such, the moral economy enabled and constrained the tween's potential actions, and thus affected the relationship the tweens had with the Disney tween franchises. Tweens were configured through the voices that the parents made use in the upbringing of the tweens. The moral economy of the household affects these children with regards to morals and values, but in an unclear way.

After having explored Disney products in the relational setting of the home, I will now turn to how the paratexts are domesticated and enacted by the girls in this study through the lens of the four phases in the media studies version of domestication theory. I have distinguished two levels of commitment when it comes to the franchise and consumption, as will be further explored in the next chapter on consuming Disney. In brief, there is a difference between enjoying the media content and being recipients of or collecting the paratexts.

Chapter 8: Enacting Disney

The previous chapter was concerned with how the parents of the girls in this study domesticated the Disney tween franchises as part of the moral economy. The focus was on the authoritative voices the parents expressed in relation to their daughters both watching the content and having the paratexts. The conclusion of the previous chapter was that even though there were authoritative voices placing Disney content and paratexts in a less favourable view, the voices that ultimately prevailed were the authoritative voice of caring consumption and the voice of children's autonomy. However ambivalent the parents were, there was room for the Disney tween franchises in the moral economy of the household.

In this chapter I explore different practices the girls in my study reported on involving the paratexts tied to *Hannah Montana* and *High School Musical*. I also examine how the girls in my data made sense of their parent's moral economy in relation to the Disney tween franchises before moving on to their domestication of the paratexts.

The media texts of *Hannah Montana* and *High School Musical* come with an arsenal of paratexts one can buy, and as Disney representative Bjorner told me, "The market strategy is; if we can nail it, if we can get it right, then we will take it as far as we can." In this chapter I focus on the girls in the study and their practices concerning the Disney tween paratexts, including how they enacted the paratexts. All of the girls interviewed had paratexts. However, there was a difference in what type of paratexts they had. This seemed to be related to how much the girls reported on enjoying the content. Here, I examine whether there was a difference between those who adamantly engaged with the media content and those who to a lesser extent spent time with the franchises: Was there a difference in what paratexts they had and how they were appropriated?

The theoretical framework for this chapter is similar to the previous chapters. The main focus is the domestication theory. Within the media studies version of the theory of domestication Silverstone et al. (1992) distinguished between four different phases in

the domestication process. The first phase is appropriation, which is how a new item is brought into the home. The second phase is objectification. This phase can be seen as the way the object is fitted into the space and time structure of the home. The third phase, incorporation, is the everyday usage of the item, which leads to the fourth and last phase; conversion. This is fitting the object to the wider social and cultural surroundings. As discussed in Chapter 2, there are some issues with the concept of phases. Firstly, it is problematic to distinguish between the four phases empirically. Secondly the concept of phases suggests a linear process, while what actually happens may be a back and forth and a circular motion. However, even though the phases are intertwined, they still proved fruitful to employ in the following analysis.

In this chapter I touch on three of these phases: appropriation, objectification, and conversion. What Silverstone et al. (1992) define as the third phase—incorporation, the use—will not be specifically discussed as a phase as it is overarching and run through both the conversion and the objectification phase. In this chapter I inquire: How were the paratexts appropriated, and how did these things find their way into the children's homes? How were the paratexts objectified? The last question revolves around conversion: how were paratexts used as a tool to communicate how users wanted to be perceived by their surroundings?

The reason to focus on paratexts in addition to the media texts in this thesis is due to empirical findings as well as theoretical considerations. Empirically, I witnessed the presence of various paratexts both in the girls' homes and at the after school program, and was informed by Disney producers that they want to saturate the market. Theoretically there has been a call to incorporate more than merely media texts in media studies (Couldry, 2010; Gray, 2010; Hills, 2002). Disney is not only media content. Disney with its plethora of consumer objects embraces so much more. As Gray puts it: "We need an "off-screen studies" to make sense of the wealth of other entities that saturate the media, and that construct film and television" (Gray, 2010:4). Consuming television content is not isolated from the rest of one's life. Neither media use nor consumption can or should be explored in isolation as they are only a part of a various number of factors which are which constitutes the social life of children today

(Rasmussen, 2011). Therefore, in this chapter the domestication of the Disney tween paratexts are in focus.

Drawing on actor-network theory (ANT) and its sociotechnical perspective we can see both human and non-human entities as dynamic and flexible entities that are ontologically enacted in the meeting between the products (or media content) and the users. Embedded in this perspective is that content and paratexts come into meaning in the meeting with the consumers. In addition the use of paratexts is viewed as production, not passive consumption. As O'Sullivan puts it:

Meanings and communication are not consumed as finished products. The consumption of messages therefore is simultaneously an act of production of meanings (O'Sullivan, 1994:244).

According to Goffman (1959) the individual's performance is a communicative role of making, giving off and conveying signs to manage the impression formed by a given audience. Sign vehicles are part of this communication. In this sense having can be equated with being (Baker & Gentry, 1996; Dittmar, 1992; Wærdahl, 2003). Having and doing things linked to the Disney tween franchises can communicate devotion and thus position the individual as being preoccupied with the franchises. In this chapter, I explore the different ways of having. I argue that having does not necessarily imply being as there are different ways of achieving having. I will also make use of the dramaturgical metaphor of front stage and back stage derived from Goffman (1959). How an actor performs depends on the stage, i.e. the context. Front stage, as the word implies, is being in front of someone. Back stage however, is a more private space.

Previously I explored the domestication of Disney as practices in relation to age, gender and biographical narrative, as well as how Disney became embedded within the moral economy of the household through the parents. I will now turn to how the paratexts were domesticated by the girls in this study. I explore how the paratexts were appropriated and incorporated as part of the girls' practices, and their making use of commodities as sign vehicles (Goffman, 1959). Being a fan, or merely enjoy the content, were you expected to own or wish for these products? Did it become part of a standard material package tied to being a tween? What did fans of Disney's tween

outputs *do*, how did they incorporate the media outputs in their everyday practices? What did they *do* with the commodities they own? Before exploring these questions I will introduce some distinctions between different forms of paratexts.

Different paratexts, different practices

As already touched upon, the Disney tween media texts are accompanied by a plethora of commodities tied into the different tween franchises. In Chapter 2, I introduced the term paratext as explored by Gray (2010) when talking about the different Disney commodities that are available. Paratexts are every text/commodity that surrounds television series and films. The films and the television programs are important. However they are not the only texts that influence the popular meanings of the text (Gray, 2010:175). Paratexts are cultural products embedded with meaning that is read adapted and/or altered through use. There is a call to expand our notion of what a television text actually is due to the development of the overflow of paratexts attached to the television text (Caldwell, 2004:51, Gray, 2010).

In today's media culture it seems almost impossible to produce media content without any paratexts along with it. Synergy is the 'norm' (Bryman, 2004; Gray, 2010; Wolf, 1999). The market logic behind the paratexts is according to Bryman that merchandising is hugely profitable. A reason for this is that the production costs of adding logos and images to commodities are low, enabling these commodities to be sold for substantially more money (Bryman, 2004:80). In addition to bringing more profit to the Disney Company, the merchandising also helps the publicity of the company (deCordova, 1994).

There is an overabundance of paratexts surrounding media texts. Gary (2010) does not subcategorize paratexts. However, I distinguish between two forms for paratexts as I found there were differences in the purpose of their use. Firstly, there are the *audio-visual paratexts*, which I define as the DVDs and the CDs derived directly from the media text shown on Disney Channel. Secondly, there are the *visual-functional paratexts*. Visual-functional paratexts are items that have a double function. On the one hand, they can function as sign vehicles symbolizing one's affinity to the franchises. On

the other hand, they are functional for other purposes as well. Examples of visual-functional paratexts are clothes and stationary. I found that there were different practices tied to the different types of paratexts. The domestication of the audio-visual paratexts, as I will show, differed from the domestication of the visual-functional paratexts.

In the previous chapter I explored the different Bakhtinian voices parents employed when they talked about the Disney Tween franchises as part of the moral economy of the household. Hereunder I examine how the girls dealt with their parents' ambiguous moral economy. After this the chapter will investigate how the paratexts were domesticated as part of the practices of the girls in this study.

Making sense of the moral economy of the household

Generally, the girls in this study echoed their parents when discussing different Disney Channel media texts. As such they were ascribing to the ambiguous moral economy of the household. Typically the girls would draw on the same arguments their parents did when discussing television watching as an activity of lesser value than other activities. A "truth" that surfaced was that watching television in itself was a waste of time. This truth when I asked about it was often expressed as derived from the parents.

Ingvild: What do your parents think of *High School Musical* and *Hannah Montana*?

Ida: Mom thinks it's a little stupid sometimes that I, when I get bored I ask if I can put on the movie, I've only done it once, and then she thought it was really stupid.

Ingvild: What does she think is stupid about it?

Ida: That I can't manage to come up with something on my own.

Ingvild: So it's because of the movie but that...

Ida: Yes a little because of the movie as well.

Ingvild: So she thinks the movie is stupid?

Ida: No, but...it's, I think she thinks that it's a little stupid that I like the persons for, almost nothing.

Ingvild: I don't quite understand.

Ida: That I like the persons Zac Efron and Vanessa Hudgens and stuff, I don't know why I like them, I just like them because they're celebrities, and I think that she thinks that that's a little stupid.

Ingvild: What is stupid, or, do you know why she thinks it's stupid?

Ida: Because I don't have any special reason to like it.

Ida started by drawing on the notion of television as being an activity of little value. Watching television in itself was said to be negative. As Ida stated, her mother thought that it was “stupid that I can’t manage to come up with something on my own”. In this, there lies an allegation of a lack of imagination in the act of watching television. Ida’s mother, through Ida’s talk here, was described as being critical of using television as opposed to “coming up with something on my own”. Clearly television watching was not a wanted activity. There was also an issue of the value of the content in this excerpt. Ida used the word “stupid” to describe how her mother felt about Ida wanting to watch *High School Musical* and also about *why* Ida liked the actors in the media text. Ida constructed her mother as disapproving of Ida liking it, since Ida had “no reason” to like the actors from *High School Musical*. Ida thus positioned her mother as voicing the moral economy of the household with regards to defining worthy commitments. Implicitly Ida agreed with her mother when she said she did not know why she liked them. Thus, Ida navigated between her mother’s disapproval of her engagement with *High School Musical* and herself enjoying the content and paratexts.

In general, the girls drew on contradicting arguments, expressing the want for paratexts on one hand, and the “knowledge” and “truth” of paratexts as unnecessary on the other. Paratexts were seen as expensive and of poor quality, echoing the parents’ arguments as seen in Chapter 7. Susan for example made use of this polyphony in situations when talking about wanting and having paratexts. Susan wished for paratexts, but rationalized and negotiated in the interview with references to what it ‘really’ was worth:

- Ingvild: Are there any of the clothes that you would want to buy or wish for?
Susan: Nearly everything. Eirin and Siri have Hannah Montana clothes, they have hair bands and sweaters, or Siri she has a hooded sweater and Eirin has a, I think it’s a t-shirt, I think it’s a hooded t-shirt.
Ingvild: And you wish for that?
Susan: Mhm (nods)
Ingvild: Do you think that you’ll get one?
Susan: Eh, maybe.
Ingvild: Could you buy it yourself?
Susan: Well, it’s pretty expensive.
Ingvild: Oh, how much do these things cost?
Susan: I don’t know, but dad says at least that it’s very expensive and that it

costs more than it's worth.

Ingvild: Okey, what does that mean?

Susan: That it costs, sort of, that it would have cost a lot less if they only took off the Hannah Montana logo.

Ingvild: But that's why you want it?

Susan: I want Hannah Montana on it.

Susan in her own words pointed to her father as the source of authority in the matter. She stated that according to her father the objects cost more than they were worth. As with the previous excerpt featuring Ida, the power of defining truth and knowledge seemed to lie in the hands of the parents. Simultaneously however, Susan also had the power to resist this truth and knowledge by still wanting *Hannah Montana* paratexts. Hence there was an intricate action expressed by Susan. She showed she was aware of the "truth" of the value of these paratexts, while still wanting them. In a sense she was positioning herself in opposition. While drawing on the politically correct notion of not buying things that cost more than they are worth, she still wanted them.

The girls reported on apparently having no reason to like the Disney tween franchises. However, they did watch it, and their parents, while expressing their dissatisfaction with it, let them watch. In addition all of the girls had several paratexts in their home, which their parents also let them have. Therefore, the Disney tween franchises were objects of the moral economy of the household. It was included with restrictions and ambivalence. The ambiguity of having it and watching it, but still being able to perform or reproduce parents' critical stance was found in several of the interviews. Thus, the girls reproduced the parents' arguments of dismay. At the same time however, parents were often the benefactors of these paratexts. And as explored in the previous chapter, the parents expressed a want to make their children happy. While reproducing their parents' critical stance, the girls were also aware that their parents understood their interests in the Disney tween franchises. Hence, there was room for the girls to manoeuvre within the moral economy and to engage with the media texts and the paratexts. Tone served as an example of this as she said this about her parents: "They're not excited about me liking it, but they think it's ok that I like it." Thus the moral economy of the household can therefore be said to be quite ambiguous and not an either or but was rather constructed and negotiated in a dynamic process.

The Disney tween franchises were included in the moral economy of the household. Through the interviews it was clearly indicated that the girls could navigate between parent's arguments and their own interests. Thus there was to a large degree freedom in the domestication of paratexts. This chapter will now turn to focus on what these girls *did* with the different paratexts offered to them by Disney. How were they incorporated and domesticated in everyday practices? Before I examine the objectification and conversion of the paratexts, I explore how the paratexts were brought into the home in the first place, in other words, how the paratexts were appropriated.

The appropriation of paratexts

In order to get an idea of the presence of the Disney tween paratexts in the girls' lives I start by giving an overview of what the girls had. Both the boys and the girls were asked if they had any items linked to the Disney tween content. None of the boys did. It is interesting to note that, as Chapter 6 explored, these boys did to some extent watch and had knowledge of the media content. However, by not having any of the paratexts, they appeared less committed to the content than the girls who had and wished for paratexts. When asked if they had any paratexts, the boys generally drew on two arguments for *not* having any. They reported on the items being too expensive, like Sam said:

Ingvild: Would you like to have any *Hannah Montana* things?

Sam: Haha, no.

Ingvild: Why not?

Sam: I don't know, why would I want something that costs 700 kroner just for a picture on it?

By distancing himself from buying paratexts due to their price Sam was also constructing himself as a critical consumer. In addition Sam was also communicating that he was not that interested in the franchise. The other argument was that the paratexts were considered "girl things":

Ingvild: Do you have any *Hannah Montana* stuff?

Mike: Noooo!! Are you crazy!?!?!?

Ingvild: Would it be... why is it, why would I be crazy if I thought you did?

Mike: Because it's girl stuff!

Ingvild: Why?

Mike: Because it's only Hannah Montana on the things.
Ingvild: And what would happen if a boy had a Hannah Montana thing?
Mike: Then I think it would have been really embarrassing because he bought a girl thing.
Ingvild: Ok, and that's no good?
Mike: No, boys don't have like makeup sets, pearl sets and stuff like that boys usually have stuff like this (he points to his stereo).
Ingvild: Stuff like stereos?
Mike: Yeah
Ingvild: And that's boy things, so girls can't have that?
Mike: Well yes, if they want they can, if girls want boy things then it is ok, but when boys buy girl things, that would not work

Mike distanced himself and boys in general from girls. He seemingly constructed a clear binary between girls and boys and hence engaged in borderwork (Thorne, 1993). At first in the excerpt it seemed impossible for boys to have "girl stuff" suggesting that it might be detrimental for a boy's social status having *Hannah Montana* paratexts. Boys were thus constructed as not being able to engage in what is primarily considered to be "girl things". This sentiment echoes Chapter 5 where in the sitcom humour often derives from boys dressing up or acting in a girly fashion and hence embarrassed. Embarrassment was also what Mike identifies as the consequence of having "girl things". However, this binary is also partly dissolved as there seemed to be room for boys to engage in the content but not the physical paratexts. Boys might watch and in that way attain social currency. However, they did not have paratexts. Mike also opened up for the possibility for girls having "boy things". As such he constituted leeway for girls being able to move within a larger continuum of being girls, as having boy things can also be part of a girl practice. Especially regarding the Disney tween franchises there thus seemed to be an either or when practicing boyhood, while girlhood was constructed as more ambiguous. In effect this rendered boys in danger of losing their gender and girls a broader and ambiguous template.

Having can function as a place and space to invest time and money and commitment. Having can also function as sign vehicles and as identity markers for others to understand who you are and where your affinity lies. Generally paratexts seemed to belong to a girl realm. Even the girls who did not talk of themselves as fans, all still had paratexts. Below is an overview of what paratexts the girls had:

Susan: *Hannah Montana* socks, bag, wallet, three books, CD's and one poster over her bed and some stationary.

Katie: A poster of *The Jonas Brothers* and the *High School Musical 2* CD. She also has a pencil that her younger brother got and that he did not want.

Ida: 1 *Hannah Montana* CD and also a Miley Cyrus CD. *High School Musical 1* and *2* on DVD, a 3D puzzle with pictures of Troy and Gabriella on it and she tells me that she has many posters but hasn't gotten to hang them up on her wall yet. She has stationary items in form of a folder where she keeps stickers of everything *Hannah Montana*. And a *Hannah Montana* lunch box

Cathy: *High School Musical* CD's (1, 2 and 3). The DVD's (1 and 2). Different stationary, lip gloss and a *High School Musical* book. She had no *Hannah Montana* paratexts.

Nina: *High School Musical*; earrings, bracelet, necklace, streamer, all the DVDs and CDs, microphone, a towel and various stationary

Kari: *High School Musical*; a key chain, pink T-shirt, all the DVDs and CDs, a bag, pyjamas, jacket, pants, towel, various stationary, bracelet, posters, CD player. She said she had more as did Nina but it was hard to think of everything at once.

Mary: *High School Musical 1, 2* and *3* CDs, the DVD for the second movie and the *High School Musical Concert* DVD, various stationary and a *High School Musical* water bottle.

Tone: DVDs to *High School Musical 1* and *2*, *High School Musical* books, and was prepared to start buying *Camp Rock* things which she had started by getting a book. She also has some stationary. *Hannah Montana* books

Kristin: DVDs to the *High School Musical 1* and *2* movies. Her mother informs me that she also has a WOW sweater with *Hannah Montana*

In my interviews I found that having is not the same as being or doing fandom. In addition there is a difference in the different ways in which the paratexts became appropriated. If one were to only look at what the girls in this study had, a conclusion could easily be that these girls were very preoccupied with the Disney tween content. However, through the interviews it became clear that this was not the case. Grant it, all the girls had at least one audio-visual paratext, but *how* they got it and whether they wished for it or not does not show in a mere quantitative survey.

Stationary items fit into the subcategory of visual-functional paratexts. According to Disney representative Heegaard, stationary items are a large part of the Disney tween franchise. Interestingly, all of the girls except Kristin reported having various stationary such as notebooks, pencils, and pencil sharpeners. Stationary items are something every child needs, especially in the beginning of the school year. They are inexpensive, small, and easily picked up as small gifts from adults or friends. Stationary items also seemed to be in the possession of the girls, often by default. Both the girl and the parent interviews showed that the girls usually just received these stationary items from their own parents or other adults as they were seen to be a necessity, so why not have them with the Disney tween brands on them?

Through my interviews I found that in most cases it was parents, grandparents, and other adults who were the main benefactors of the girls' paratexts. Thus, adults for the most part appropriated the paratexts. This does not correspond well with popular science books on children and consumption positioning children as victims of commodified culture where children become "tricked" into wanting more and more and nagging their parents to attain commodities (Linn, 2005).

Ingvild: I see you have *Hannah Montana* books as well
Tone: Yes, but I didn't buy them, my mom did.
Ingvild: Oh, why didn't you buy them?
Tone: I didn't want to.
Ingvild: You're not a big *Hannah Montana* fan?
Tone: No, but I like to watch it on TV

In this segment it was Tone's mother who was the provider and Tone merely the recipient of the paratexts, which Tone actually claimed not to have wanted. If we were to look into Tone's bedroom and saw these books, a quick conclusion would be that she is a *Hannah Montana* fan. Tone however, was a *High School Musical* fan and reported that she wanted, wished for, and bought *High School Musical* books and other paratexts. With respect to *Hannah Montana* she was a recipient of commodities. Thus, to achieve a more thorough understanding of paratexts and their meanings and enactments, we need to explore how these paratexts are domesticated. All the girls had paratexts. However not all of them were fans. *How* then were these paratexts made part of their daily practices?

Before examining the objectification and the conversion of the paratexts I will shortly describe the categories of the interviewed girls based on how engaged they were with the Disney tween franchises. Consumption seems to be a common reference when fans define their fandom (Sandvoss, 2005:7). This was also true for my interviewees. Consumption could be the consumption of content, as in watching movies and television series several times as a fan practice, or of paratexts. By continuously consuming content or commodities tied to the content, fans showed a commitment to the object of their admiration. Thus, two categories of involvement with the Disney tween franchises emerged; the *self-proclaimed fan and collector* and the *enjoyable watcher and recipient consumer*. Tone inhabited both these categories. While she was a self-proclaimed fan in relation to *High School Musical* she was a recipient consumer when it came to *Hannah Montana*. Those who positioned themselves as huge fans, and actually used the word fan, tend to fall into the first category. Nina, Kari, Susan, and Tone belonged to this category. These four girls all reported saving their money to buy Disney tween paratexts. In general, it seemed that the more preoccupied the girls were with the content, the more committed they were to consuming the products attached to the content. The other category—recipients of commodities and enjoyable watchers—all had audio-visual paratexts and some also visual-functional paratexts. However, they differed from the active group since they received the commodities as gifts.

After having looked at the appropriation of the paratexts, the rest of this chapter will explore how the paratexts were enacted. The focus will be on the objectification and conversion of the paratexts. Focusing on the conversion of the visual-functional paratexts, I ask how paratexts were used as communicating to the surrounding contexts. Did the girls report on using the paratexts as sign vehicles? First however, I examine the audio-visual paratexts and their objectification. How were the paratexts objectified?

The objectification of the audio-visual paratexts

As stated in the beginning of this chapter I differentiate between two types of paratexts. The reason for doing this is that I found the paratexts to be put to use in different ways, serving different purposes, which I will elaborate on. I first look at how the audio-visual

paratexts were domesticated and incorporated as daily practices, the audio-visual paratexts being the CDs and DVDs. As one can read from the above overview of what the girls in this study owned, all had audio-visual paratexts. Even those who did not describe themselves as fans of the franchises all had CDs and/or DVDs. This of course, as argued, does not give any information about the relationship and practice. Rather, it merely informs us that paratexts were appropriated. Tone, who was a self-proclaimed *High School Musical* fan explained to me that “everybody” had audio-visual paratexts:

Ingvild: Is it like, everyone watches the movies, but not everyone collects things then?

Tone: Well, there are some, or there are a lot who watch the movies, but they don't buy the things, they only buy the CD's and the movies because they think that the songs and the movies are cool.

In this excerpt Tone made a distinction between “things” and the CDs and the movies. Here, CDs and movies were not part of ‘buying the things’. Things were rather thought of as other types of paratexts, while the CDs and movies just seemed like an extended way of watching the movies and series on television. Such quotes emphasise the benefits of differentiating between the paratexts. As we learnt, having CDs and DVDs becomes part of a standard material package for those girls who enjoyed watching the shows and listening to the songs. Tone further suggested that everyone watched the movies, even though they might not like them. This shows the strong presence of the media texts in the daily lives of the interviewees (see also Chapter 6). Katie, in her first interview, told me in a slightly dramatic way when I asked if she had any *Hannah Montana* things:

Katie: No! I have nothing of her stuff, and that really surprises me!

Ingvild: Why does it surprise you?

Katie: Because I like *Hannah Montana* better than *High School Musical* so I don't understand why I don't have any of her things.

Having audio-visual paratexts seemed to be a prolongation of liking the media texts. The logic seemed to be: if you enjoy the media text, you will have audio-visual paratexts appropriating them by either buying them or receiving them as gifts. We now know that having paratexts does not necessarily mean that you are a fan. Further, having

audio-visual paratexts seemed to be part of the standard material package of the interviewed girls. This raises the question: how were these audio-visual paratexts enacted?

In my interviews, I often asked “Do you do *High School Musical* or *Hannah Montana* stuff?” It is worth noting that in Norwegian “holder du på med” sounds more organic. When I asked what Kristin did with *High School Musical*, which she reported to like, she answered:

Kristin: I think it is fun to watch, and then sometimes I sing along sort of, and then, and then I like just to watch it. I don't do anything else with it. Just sometimes I sing karaoke and then I find pictures on the Internet and stuff, sometimes.

Kristin, who did not fall in the category of self-proclaimed fan but rather an enjoyed watcher, had two DVDs of *High School Musical*. She stated that she liked to watch the content and sing along. Watching movies and television shows repeatedly is perceived as typical for this age group (Lury, 2002). Kristin was not the only one who reported watching the content over and over again. Several of the girls talked about repeatedly watching the movies while singing and dancing. For the most part, they said they did it in solitude, but sometimes they also did it with friends. The doing Kristin talked about; singing, watching, and searching online, was through her talk somewhat downplayed. It was not talked about as extraordinary. On the contrary, it merely seemed to be part of an everyday practice. Also, at the end of the above quote, she stated that she did these things not necessarily on a daily basis, but just sometimes. These practices were thus portrayed as being present, unessential, and merely a part of mundane life. Moreover, the objectification of these paratexts seemed to be restricted to the homes and homes of friends. Hence, the audio-visual paratexts were enacted primarily, in Goffman's (1959) terminology, in a back stage area.

Most DVDs do not only contain the media content as seen on Disney Channel, they also include bonus material. By including bonus material in the DVDs, the user is given the option to attain an intimacy and immediacy to the text (the movies) and to the actors playing in the text. This can further fuel a one-way emotional relationship, a parasocial

relationship (Werner, 1994), which the audience might develop with the text and paratexts. As Gray states: “A particular strong paratext has been the DVD, complete with bonus materials ranging from making-of-documentaries to commentary tracks and deleted or alternate scenes” (Gray, 2010:88). When asked if Ida ever thought or daydreamed about *High School Musical* she told me about the bonus material on the DVD:

Ingvild: Does it ever happen that you daydream about High School Musical?

Ida: Yes.

Ingvild: Would you like to tell me about it?

Ida: Uhm, I usually think about all that happens there and I think mostly about the blunders that they’ve done.

Ingvild: What blunders?

Ida: When they can’t look at each other without laughing, and when they are supposed to be serious but only start laughing and stuff.

Ida used the content of the bonus material as entertainment. Incorporating paratexts into daydreams could definitely be defined as a back stage practice. This type of bonus material also has the potential to help bring the audience closer, the feeling of transparent immediacy forming parasocial relationships with the actors as they appear disarming in such settings. The content on DVDs differs from the media texts as presented on Disney Channel. In addition, the DVDs are detached from Disney as a public provider of entertainment. The DVDs become part of the private domain as the audience can watch them when and wherever they like. The DVDs are thus characterized by flexibility, as watching them can be fitted into the time structure of the home. Thus the DVDs open for a more private back stage practice. While the DVDs can be used at any time, Disney Channel promotes movie premieres on their channel. Several of the girls, like Mary, Katie, and Kristin, told me about planned parties when a movie from the trilogy, or a sing-a-long of the trilogy would premiere on Disney Channel. Hence the objectification of the audio-visual paratext differed from the objectification of Disney Channel as a content provider.

As Ida showed in her talk of daydreaming about the blunders, the domestication of the audio-visual paratexts did not have to involve the actual physical paratexts. Rather the paratexts could be enacted based on the attained knowledge of what happens in the

trilogy and sitcom and the actors private life. Tone gave me a good example of this when asked what she did with *High School Musical*:

Tone: We play that we are in their private life, like my one friend is Zack, that's Troy, then another one is Gabriella, or Vanessa, and then we pretend, the rest are small kids, their younger brothers and sister, and then we pretend, we go around teasing them and stuff. The first time we read a book that we really liked, then we made a play about it. And we made a fun game that's called the actor-game. It's like two and two, and then we find a movie, a series or a book that you've read and then you're supposed to be a person, and say what's in the book or movie, we did that with the movies first, and it was so much fun.

Ingvild: So you still play *High School Musical*?

Tone: Yeah, and then we play that Eirin, she's Sharpay, and I'm Gabriella and then we pretend that we've made a movie by ourselves, we go camping or go to town and that they're really good friends. But they're not in the movies.

Tone and her friend were making Sharpay and Gabriella best friends, which they are not in the movies. What we see here is users who talk back to the text and alter it. Tone did not only talk of singing the songs or dancing the dances, but also of acting out fictional scenes. Audio-visual paratexts could thus serve as a starting point for activity, which did not necessarily involve the paratexts themselves. When it comes to children and popular culture there is fear that popular cultural items limit the possibilities of variations of enactment. This fear is grounded in a deterministic perspective, rendering the child (consumer) passive and powerless. People are generally afraid of children becoming too narrow and less divergent in their appropriation. Like Linn claims: "Increasingly, we are depriving children of the invaluable challenge of populating their own fantasy worlds with characters of their own creation" (Linn, 2005:72). However, as we can see, Tone and her friends made up their own storylines. Although obviously inspired by the Disney content, the outcomes of the acting game Tone talked about were not blueprints of the Disney content. Thus, in line with a perspective of ontological enactment, children in my study did not merely repeat, they also actively took part in a co-construction of meaning.

The girls also talked about online practices. They would tell me about how they searched YouTube or the official Disney website, or Googled actors and actresses:

Susan: I go to Disney Channel, and there are some games with Miley.
Ingvild: Right, where you can go into her closet and stuff?
Susan: Well no, those are the old games, you can't do that anymore, there are new ones now, I can decorate her room, and put make-up on her and Lily.
Ingvild: Wow, I haven't seen that.
Susan: And I can make clothes for Lola and Hannah.
Ingvild: Cool!
Susan: I've printed out some of the pictures (she goes to get them). Here is what I made for Lola.
Ingvild: Wow that's really cool!

The paratextual activity that Susan and other girls reported on was done at home, usually using the family's computer in the living room or kitchen. This type of activity can be seen as a back stage practice. This was something Susan did by herself. However, this practice was also observed in the two after school programs when the children were allowed to use the computers. The girls would sit either alone or accompanied by one or two girls dressing up the main characters and playing games tied to the franchises. Even though this happened in the public space of the after school program, they would huddle around the computer engaging in this as private practice.

The reach of these types of paratexts encompassed more than the actual listening or watching. The daily practices did not have to involve the physical paratexts. The practices could involve narratives taken directly from the content or invented ones, the characters and songs, or the actual actors. When focusing solely on the audio-visual paratexts, what we see from the interviews is how these paratexts were enacted in the back stage area. The audio-visual paratexts were not reported on as being part on the front stage. They were not reported on being used as what could be considered sign vehicles, or used in a conversion phase of domestication. These paratexts were talked about as a private practice. The girls would go to each other's houses to sing or watch. However, for the most part the practices involving the audio-visual paratexts were private.

Regarding how the girls described their doings and practices related to the audio-visual paratexts, there was no difference between the two categories of girls. There was however a difference when talking about the visual-functional paratexts. I now turn to

examine how these paratexts were domesticated. By incorporating the visual-functional paratexts, how did the girls want to be perceived? How did they use the paratexts as sign vehicles for their surroundings?

The conversion of the visual-functional paratexts

As Tone communicated to me, everybody watched and had CDs and/or DVDs, but not everybody bought what Tone called “things”. In this part of the chapter I will deal with what Tone called things, and what I have termed visual-functional paratexts. While the audio-visual paratexts were mostly put to use for in the back stage arena, the visual-functional paratexts seemed to reside on the front stage. Visual-functional paratexts such as clothes, accessories, and stationary are all consumer items, which function as what Goffman (1959) term sign vehicles. You can stage who you are through the visual-functional paratexts in a quite different way than with the audio-visual paratexts. This then becomes part of the conversion phase. How did the girls converse with their social surroundings through the use of paratexts?

The girls in this study who referred to themselves as fans had appropriated an array of visual-functional paratexts in addition to the audio-visual paratexts. Thus, based on my interviews it seemed like those who were fans on the media texts owned more paratexts than those who just enjoyed watching the media texts. In addition, those who were fans also owned a more varied amount of paratexts, for as Tone claimed, those who liked the content more than the others, bought things. This was a fairly simple, yet accurate assumption when looking at my data:

Ingvild: Is it important for you to have *High School Musical* things?

Kari: Yes, we’re very much fans of it, so it’s fun to have them.

Nina: We’re very much fans, we’re probably the most fans in our class really. Everyone says so, everyone says: you guys have everything *High School Musical*.

Kari: Very many come with Diddle things and stuff, we come with *High School Musical*.

Nina: There are many fans at school, fans of *High School Musical* but if you have a hair band and a t-shirt and pants and everything then they look a bit weird at us, but you don’t do that though.

Nina and Kari explained that a reason for having paratexts tied to *High School Musical* was based on the same logic Tone suggested: “If you are a fan, it’s fun to have it.” Furthermore, in the quote above, having visual-functional paratexts functioned as sign vehicles. In this sense, these paratexts were taken through the conversion phase of domestication. Who Nina and Kari were perceived to be socially, seemed to be based on what they had, and how “everyone” at school responded to this. Nina and Kari communicated social norms and restrictions tied to the possible conversion through paratexts. In the quote, it was clear that one cannot carelessly throw sign vehicles around. There seemed to be unspoken social norms regarding how much one can portray one’s affinity with the franchises. In effect, Nina and Kari had to use social skills regarding how much visual-functional paratexts they could display in given circumstances.

Nina and Kari were not the only self-proclaimed fans who implied restrictions in their conversion. Tone also gave me an example of how the surrounding context outside the home reacted when her conversion of the tween franchises was deemed “too much”:

Ingvild: Here’s a question that might seem weird, but what does *High School Musical* mean for you?

Tone: Hmm, not much really, but it’s really fun to see the movies!

Ingvild: So not much really, can you tell me more about that?

Tone: It means a bit to me, because they... Actually I don’t really care a lot about what the other girls in my class say. They say I have to stop liking [*High School Musical*] because they think I spend too much time on it. When I stand humming to a *High School Musical* song, then they say: “Oh my God, Tone.” Then they start laughing. And then I laugh because it’s sort of funny.

A difference between the two quotes is that where Tone spoke from experience telling how the other girls expressed their rejection of Tone spending “too much time on it”. Nina and Kari were talking hypothetical as they informed me of taken for granted norms. What is interesting is that within Tone’s quote there was room for resisting the normative pressure by using humour. Tone was externally labelled by “the other girls” as engaging “too much” with *High School Musical*. Tone, through talking to me, communicated that her peers defined and labelled her as spending “too much time on

it". However, she also articulated that she actively disregarded and resisted this classification as being derogatory. She defused the possible shame of behaving incorrectly according to her peers social norms, by telling me that she laughed with them. Tone expressed very clearly that the other girls "say I have to stop liking it". Thus, this is not merely a self-governing and internalized issue, but rather an expressed normative rule put forth by her immediate peer group. She was openly told by her peers that her behaviour is not desirable, and she continued with this behaviour, deemed inappropriate by her peers. Making use of humour Tone was able to defuse potential conflict while simultaneously continue with her practices. She thus aligned herself with her peers while also continuing to enjoy *High School Musical*. This is an example of how complex social relationships can be and what strategies might be put in motion.

In addition to functioning as sign vehicles of one's engagement with the franchise, paratexts were also used as markers of distinction. As Sandvoss claims: "There is substantial evidence in support of an understanding of fan tastes as yet another segment of the process of distinction through consumption" (Sandvoss, 2005:35). Susan answered this when asked if *Hannah Montana* had changed her:

Susan: It's sort of changed my life the last two years. She's [*Hannah Montana*] gotten me to want to collect things. And I feel more special, more different because I like her, because there are not that many others who like her. And I like to be a bit different, and I get that with her. Different from the others.

This quote suggests that Susan had formed an attachment to *Hannah Montana*. *Hannah Montana* was here given credit for making Susan want to collect things. The way Susan referred to Hannah was on a personal level. "She's gotten me to" do certain things, Susan claimed. Hannah could here be seen as aiding Susan in her pursuit of uniqueness and enjoyment. Susan reported on the others in her class liking *High School Musical*, which she did not like. Thus by engaging with *Hannah Montana* she was able to distinguish herself from her peers. The paratexts thus functioned both on the front stage, setting her apart from others. However, the paratexts were also used in a back stage area as she collected these items in a locker at home, as well as the parasocial relationship Susan expressed she had with Hannah.

From my interviews with Susan, Tone, Kari, and Nina it seemed that having paratexts was a part of their fan practice. Paratexts were used on the front stage, as a conversion to one's social context, and on the back stage, as private enjoyment. Kari expressed the seemingly normative notion of having to have in order to be a fan:

Kari: I was a fan of it before (*Hannah Montana*) but I didn't have time to buy anything before I stopped being a fan.

Ingvild: You didn't have time to buy anything?

Kari: No, not until I wasn't such a big fan anymore.

Ingvild: Is it important to buy things that you're a fan of?

Kari: No, but it's sort of fun to have. It's sort of like a symbol that you're a fan.

For Kari, being a fan equalled having paratexts. There was a double function of having; for personal gratification and social communication or conversion. On the one hand, it was deemed fun to have and offered personal gratification. On the other hand, using paratexts as sign vehicles, paratexts were a symbol of devotion. Thus in the last sentence Kari included both the front and the back stage as reasons to appropriate paratexts.

Consumerism can be viewed as a necessary tool in late modernity or postmodern times of young people to carry out the reflexive 'projects of the self' as several researchers have found (Johansson, 2003; Phoenix, 2005; Rysst, 2010a; Sarup & Raja, 1996; Wærdahl, 2003). For the self-proclaimed fans and collectors there were also discussions around what to buy and what not to buy in a fairly strategic manner:

Nina: But, *High School Musical*, I try not to buy too much *High School Musical 2* things now, because it's right before *High School Musical 3* comes out so I try to not buy too much *High School Musical 2*.

Kari: I take everything that's red. Since it's not *High School Musical 1* or *High School Musical 2* or *High School Musical 3*, but here there was sort of *High School Musical On Ice* even though it didn't say so on it, it just said *High School Musical*

Nina and Kari were aware of the fact that a third movie was coming that might render their paratexts outdated. In this aspect, Disney, by turning out several movies within one brand with its own product line, encouraged girls to "keep up with the Joneses". Nina and Kari wanted the newest paratexts in order to show their devotion and to maintain

their collection. Consequently there was no need to stay loyal to one line of products as they could plan to buy the next line. Kari had an economic, pragmatic perspective as she mostly bought 'un-branded'-brand material, that is, any paratext with just the *High School Musical* emblem on it, making it more timeless.

Conclusion: Different Disney paratexts differently enacted

In this chapter I explored how the girls I interviewed dealt with the moral economy of the household as well as how they domesticated the paratexts through the lens of appropriating, objectification, and conversion. Regarding the moral economy of the household, the girls in this study were aware of their parent's ambiguous domestication of the Disney tween franchises. On the one hand the girls would reproduce arguments based on a view that television in itself is an activity of lesser value and that the paratexts are not worth the money one spends on them. This echoes the authoritative voice of education and the culture critical voice explored in the previous chapter. On the other hand the girls simultaneously produced arguments for engaging with the Disney tween franchises. This was based on the right to one's own interests as well as reporting that their parents did indeed understand their engagement. These arguments thus echoed the authoritative voice of autonomy. Thus, the girls reported on having leeway in navigating between their parents' views and their own wants. As such, the girls appeared to have a broad understanding of their restrictions and possibilities when it came to their engagement in the Disney tween franchises.

I have argued that in order to understand the practices and domestication of the paratexts, there is a need to go beyond merely what tweens have, since having is not the same as being or doing fandom. If one were to only look at what the girls in this study owned a conclusion could easily be that they were preoccupied with the Disney tween content. However, through the interviews it became clear that this was not the case. Even though all the girls owned at least one paratext, it differed *how* it was appropriated and whether they wished for it or not.

Drawing on Akrich (1992) the paratexts come equipped with a script and a framework of action. It was in the meeting with the users that the paratexts became enacted

(Akrich, 1992; Woolgar, 2012). The visual-functional paratexts were designed and inscribed with uses that differed from audio-visual paratexts. The audio-visual paratexts were scripted to be used through watching, reading, and listening. If we make use of Goffman's (1959) dramaturgy metaphor, inscribed in the audio-visual paratexts was a private, back stage practice. As these products were for the most part used in the privacy of the home, the audio-visual paratexts became mainly objectified. The visual-functional paratexts on the other hand were inscribed with other types of use, like clothes for wearing, pencils for writing, and beach towels. These paratexts functioned more as sign vehicles as well as serving the function the items have. The visual-functional paratexts were in this sense reaching the conversion phase. Thus, they were inscribed with a front stage practice.

Initially in this chapter, I posed the question of whether or not the Disney tween paratexts became part of a standard material package of being a tween. Both for the enjoying watcher and recipient consumer, and for the self-proclaimed fan and collector, this did indeed seem to be the case. However, the audio-visual paratexts did not necessarily signify the girls' devotion to the content, since there was a logic residing in the girls' interviews that if you liked the content, you owned audio-visual paratexts. In addition, the girls belonging to the category of recipient consumers reported on adults being the main benefactors regarding the audio-visual paratexts. In my data the audio-visual paratexts were not something the girls would talk about as being symbols for others. The audio-visual paratexts were rather a prolongation of enjoying the content, and was reported on being used in a back stage area.

Those who liked the content had audio-visual paratexts, while those who were fans were also expected to have visual-functional paratexts. The conversion of the visual-functional paratexts showed this. However, often the self-proclaimed fans also reported on making use of paratexts in a back stage area. Sometimes they were accompanied by friends who shared the same enjoyment. However, for the most part they talked about daydreaming, reading and singing by themselves. Thus, it did not seem to be imperative to have paratexts in order to be a fan. Being a fan did not necessarily imply having, as the girls made use of the content outside of the paratextual realm by daydreaming, singing and putting up scenes based on the media texts. The girls who defined

themselves as fans would report on having and making use of visual-functional paratexts as sign vehicles in a front stage area, yet the paratexts were also put to use in the back stage area.

Thus far I have explored how the tweenage group were inscribed and configured as an audience group and as consumers by the media texts and by the two Disney representatives. I have also examined how the children in this study talked about the media texts and how these texts were domesticated within the praxis, learning, and meaning dimensions. The previous chapter looked at the girls' parents' negotiations with the media texts and paratexts making them objects in the moral economy of the household. In this chapter I have explored how the girls in this study made use of the different paratexts in a front stage and a back stage region. As tweens are a target group for Disney, and after having analysed how Disney as media text and producers configure this age group, the last empirical chapter will explore how the boys and the girls in my data made sense of and configured the age group considered to be in between children and youth.

Chapter 9: Assembling the Tweens category

The previous chapter focused on the domestication of the Disney tween paratexts. And while there is a need to move media studies beyond the screen as Gray suggests (2010) we also need to give account for what traditionally within cultural studies has been labelled lived cultures. Thus, not only do we need to look beyond the screen to understand media use, but we need to incorporate daily practices in media studies as well. Theoretically, there have been voices calling for a more encompassing media studies approach, traditionally stemming from the cultural studies tradition. According to Couldry (2010) the basic assumption of media studies is that what an audience does is: “a distinctive set of practices rather than an artificially chosen “slice” through daily life that cuts across how they actually understand the practices in which they are engaged” (Couldry, 2010:121). This suggests that we need to open up the field of media studies to incorporate daily practices rather than merely focusing on the consumption of media content. This is what I will do in this chapter. I ask: how did the interviewed children talk about and perform the age category that marketers, and to some extent academics and the general public, define as tweens?

After having focused on Disney as text and producer, and on parents and users of Disney, I will here explore the seemingly ambiguous and flexible stage that these children in the tween ages are seen to inhabit. Hence, this chapter will partly correspond to the chapters focusing on how tweens as an age group were configured by Disney as media texts and Disney as a producer. In brief, Chapter 4 focused on how two Disney representatives configured their target audience, the tweens. Heegaard configured tweens mainly as becoming teenagers from a consumer products perspective. Bjorner, coming from a television perspective, on the other hand, configured tweens as being able to regress to childhood and moving towards youth simultaneously. Thus, tweens were configured in an ambiguous way.

In Chapter 5 the focus was on the media texts of *Hannah Montana* and *High School Musical* and how these provided scripts for tweens in relation to age and gender. In the trilogy, a main theme could be seen as an expression of the theory of individualization (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), where the individual was seen to be the primary architect of her or his own identity (Côté, 2002; Giddens, 1991). I observed a paradox of individuation versus obligations to others (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) in the trilogy. Through the media texts tweens were implicitly inscribed as becoming teenagers as all the media texts revolved around teenagers and not younger children as the target group. However, typical teenager topics such as sex and drugs/alcohol were notably absent. The media texts described a world still grounded in the innocence of childhood.

In summary the media texts and the producers configured tweens as being in between children and teenagers yet still firmly grounded in childhood. Thus the question I pursue in this chapter is: How did the children in this study reflect on their age group and their place in life?

Enacting and performing age

The analysis in this chapter is inspired by the actor-network theory (ANT), which includes non-humans as actors. This perspective makes the social world that I study more flexible and open. As a tool to avoid discussing children and age in an essentialist and reductionist way, a strategy is to incorporate the inscriptions and configurations of users through artefacts and producers. This has been done in previous chapters. Humans and non-humans are within an ANT approach both seen as being ontologically enacted. Perceiving non-humans as actors does not entail that they act with intentions, it merely helps us elucidate that non-humans presence *does* something with the network or assemblage.

The world is a web of relations. Continuous, discontinuous, configured, ragged. And those relations have no status, no shape, no reality, outside their continued production. This means that the concern is with process. It is with how particular realities get made and remade (Law, 2004:2).

When I discussed age with the children, different actors came into play. These actors were both human and non-human, for example: Disney, make-up, clothes, and friends. Drawing on Latour (2005) together these actors may be seen to form assemblages with a varying degree of stability.

The theoretical perspective I adopt implies that age it is not a biological or natural given. Rather age is *done* in heterogeneous networks by individuals and in relation to other actors, both human and non-human, in varying social contexts. This facilitates operating with different age performances in different assemblages. This means that I do not perceive the children in the age group considered to be tweens to be defined outside of the contexts in which they perform. Doing age is a social practice facilitated by the objects used and not used to perform age. Doing age can thus be seen as a strategy, as Frønes (1995) puts it; “To be older is not just a biological fact, it is, for children, a social strategy” (Frønes, 1995:190). To do age is, according to Andersson, Kvist, Nilsson, and Närvänen (2011), performing age in relation to “a normative imperative or normative cultural understandings of what is accepted behavior or accepted activities in certain age groups” (Andersson et al., 2011:32). And as Goffman in his *Frame Analysis* suggests, those in a situation ordinarily do not create the definition of the situation, rather they need to “assess correctly what the situation ought to be for them and then act accordingly” (Goffman, 1974:1-2). Thus there are limits to and restrictions for one’s age performance in given situations. How did the children I interviewed explain the possible different age-doings in different contexts?

When it comes to the category of tweens, merely the name indicates that we are dealing with people who are thought to be in-between something. The name also suggests that being in-between is the main characteristic for children in this category. Tweens is configured both by Disney (as we saw in Chapters 4 and 5) and in research as an ambivalent category where children are thought of as moving up while simultaneously looking back. Generally in these writings there is a tug-of-war between aspiring to be older while simultaneously wanting to regress back to childhood (see for example: Davies, Buckingham, & Kelley, 2000; Johansson, 2005; Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2005; Wærdahl, 2003). Children are thought to struggle between the mandate to grow up and the wish not to as Adler and Adler (1998:200) suggest.

While some researchers peg tweens as struggling between categories, others theorize tweens as being without a category. Cody and Lawlor (Cody, 2012; Cody & Lawlor, 2011) for example use the framework of liminality when researching tweens. Cody (2012), through the liminal perspective, suggests that the characteristics of the tween category are that they are no longer young children, but are not yet teenagers. Recent Danish findings suggest that children aged 10-12 in Denmark are oriented towards becoming adults:

Characteristically the Danish 10-12 year old does not define itself as “tweens” hence they are not in possession of the “target group identity” that the media and marketing industry calculates, rather they are seeking children/young people who in their orientation towards becoming an adult uses different tools including consumption and media (Tufte, 2011:51).

With the ambiguous constructions of the tween category in mind, I here explore what this age group or phase means, and how it is done by my interviewees. Was there an inherent tug-of-war with the children in this data? Were they struggling in this perceived in-between and liminal phase?

In this chapter I focus on age rather than the Disney tween franchises, and this chapter is based on the interviews with both the boys and the girls. I first start by looking at whether or not the children I interviewed used the word tweens. Had tweens as a concept become part of the lingo of my interviewees? After this I explore how age was done. As this age group is seen to be flexible in its age doings, I will examine whether this was the case with my interviewees. In addition to being seen as a flexible stage, there is also the ambivalent notion of both regressing and progressing in this age group. Thus, the question becomes; how did my interviewees perceive past, present, and future in relation to age doings?

After this, I explore how my interviewees discussed what was typical for their age. I do this by looking at two specific examples of how age was done, focusing on the assemblage of clothes and make-up. Here the focal point will be how both human and non-human actors change within different assemblages. As this thesis mainly revolves around Disney and tweens, I also examine how Disney is enacted within the daily practices. I have already established that Disney was indeed part of the everyday

practices (see Chapter 6). However, the question here is how stable the Disney assemblage was in relation to other assemblages.

Concluding this chapter I ask if we can look at this stage being a liminal phase. Are these children merely in-between? Were the children I interviewed, as Tufte put it, “in possession of the 'target group identity'?” But first, was the concept of tweens present in my interviews?

Are they Tweens? Assembling the group

Tweens is a concept that has moved out of the marketing realm and now figures in newspapers and parenting books as well as academic writings. At the end of each interview, I asked the children about the word tweens, if they heard about it, and what it was. The reason for asking this question was to see if the market term had made its way into the vocabulary of the children. Only Ida (10 years old) and Katie (9 years old) had heard of the term.

Ingvild: And I wonder, have you heard about tweens?

Katie: Yes, it's like children who are soon teenagers.

Ingvild: What does that mean?

Katie: Like, people from 9-12 sort of.

Ingvild: Ok, would you say that you're a tween?

Katie: Yes, would you?

Ingvild: I don't know, I'm asking you.

Katie: Mom would say that I'm one anyway, and I would too. I sort of think that I'm a child, and then I'll be a teenager, but then I think that the person I am, if I'm a tween or a child now, the person I am is Katie

Katie here defined tweens as “soon to be teenagers” in effect drawing on a liminal definition. Katie thus defined tweens as a transitional phase, mirroring Cody and Lawlor (Cody, 2012; Cody & Lawlor, 2011). Even though Katie knew the term, she seemed reluctant to describe herself as one in the excerpt above. At the end she stated that she was a child. Later in the interview she defined herself as being in the same category as her younger brother who is three years old; “we are both children” she said. As tweens were here seen as liminal, this might be a reason to not commit to this category. Katie gave no impression of being in a liminal stage as she described herself as child, and

always Katie, thus never liminal. She stated that she was a child, or a tween, and she would become a teenager. Thus, she implied that being a teenager was distanced from being both a child and a tween. As such, she included tween as part of childhood. Being a teenager did not seem to be included in childhood as she *is* a child and will *become* a teenager, she was not both at the same time. However, she was both child and tween at the same time. Tweens for Katie thus appeared to be a subcategory under the universal category of children. This mirrors how Bjorner from Disney Channel Scandinavia defined the tween category in Chapter 4. Even though tweens according to Bjorner were defined as becoming teenagers and moving forward, tweens were grounded in childhood.

For Katie, in this excerpt, it was not the label child, tween, or teenager that seemed to be of importance as Katie articulated the notion that one goes through life as the same person, being as well as becoming, but always being. Thus implicitly the ambiguity of being and becoming was present. As Johansson claims: “Being a tween is not necessarily the same as being a becoming-teenager. Children eight to 12 are, just as individuals of all ages, sometimes beings and sometimes becoming” (Johansson, 2007:147). Katie was resisting being essentialised as a person within a category, as she rather focused on herself as an individual. While social categories might change, it was her as an individual, which was expressed as being stable. This evokes the individualization thesis derived from Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002). And that one is responsible for designing, executing and being perceived as whom one constructs one’s self to be.

Ida also knew the term tweens. Like with Katie, Ida did not take ownership of the term, nor did she seem to connect with it. Both Ida and Katie self-defined as children. Ida told me that tweens merely meant age. Neither Ida nor Katie said that they used this label when talking to friends, for as Ida told me, “my friends already know how old I am.” Therefore, to use the term tweens would be superfluous. When asked where Katie and Ida had heard the term, Ida had heard it from her father and Katie had heard it from her mother. This could imply that they were reluctant to use it as they had not been introduced to the term by peers. Rather it seemed as a somewhat forced category that others living outside the category, in this case parents, used to define the girls.

None of the other children in my study knew the word tweens, and the two who did, did not use it. Hence, the term tweens had not made its way into or been internalized by the children in this study. However, even though only two of the girls knew the word tweens, the rest of the children often used the words big children or between-children (mellombarn) to describe themselves. By doing so they actively differentiated themselves from small children, usually aged 3-7, and pointed out that they were not teenagers, they were still children. Eddie served as an example of this:

Ingvild: A question on your age, because if I were to ask you what you are, like a child, a youth, a grown up...or whatever...what would you say?

Eddie: Right in between children and youth.

Ingvild: What does that mean?

Eddie: That you're not like a childish kid anymore, but you've not gotten to puberty and starting to get old, just in between.

Thus, the children perceived themselves as different from those older and younger. Having established this tendency, I now focus on what it *meant* to these children to be between those older and those younger. Did the children in this study think of themselves as moving back and forth between age performances as especially Bjorner suggested in Chapter 4? How did the children in my data make sense of this perceived in-between phase in childhood? How was in-between or right-in-the-middle-childhood done?

Assembling age performances when residing in an ambiguous category

Children do age. This is performed partly by what is expected in a given situation and partly defined by what the individual brings in to the situation (Goffman, 1959, 1974).

Ida worded the flexibility and ambiguity of being a tween:

Ida: In school we're like teenagers at home we're more like, we go out to play in the snow and stuff

This quote shows how Ida engaged in what I call age shifting—doing age differed according to where she was. Ida here described how she shifted and drew on different

age performances depending on the social, relational, and contextual surroundings. This age shifting did not seem to be problematic. The different contexts limited Ida's age shifting as there were predefined notions of how age can be done within the different contexts (Andersson et al., 2011; Goffman, 1974). She did not suggest that she was free to "play in the snow and stuff" at school. As such, following the thought of ANT, the school is constituted as an actor that consisted of several actors. Hence, the school is also a network or an assemblage. However, the way in which Ida talked about the school in the quote above, the school is discussed as an actor. The quote mirrors Adler and Alder: "Individuals juggle different and often conflicting images of self between the childish self shown to their families and the maturing self shown to their peers" (Adler & Adler, 1998:198). According to Latour (2005) assemblage work is how to manage controversies and conflict between different expectations. However, although seemingly drawing on two different age performances here, Ida did not portray this as conflicting, it merely was a description. At school Ida obviously felt that in that context she was 'more like youth'. She did not say act or pretend—she *was* more like youth. This opens for a multiplicity of age identities as an individual and as a member of this cohort. Ida and her peers did not, in Ida's words, become different people. Rather they had a plethora of repertoires of which they emphasized different attributes within different networks. Ida did not use "I" but rather "we", when talking about how she (and others) did age in the contexts of home and school. Ida expressed that doing age was contextual and relational, and something that everybody did.

Shifting between acting like children and acting like teenagers can thus be looked at as a group identification trait. This is what I perceive as age shifting. Age shifting can be seen as a focal point in being in this age category. The doings vary, but the category is fixed in-between small children and youth. The age shifting thus depended on the networks one moves in. Ida's reflection on drawing on different sets of identity in different contexts corresponds with Miles et al. (1998) who claim that young people's experience of contemporary society is characterized by shifting identities. The way in which Ida talked about doing also echoes Goffman (1959) and his concept of performing identity where the strategies and performances differ from the context one finds one's self in. Ida thus offered the definition of tweens that marketers and scholars

have and have concluded with: Tweens are both children and youth with one foot in each place (Gjødesen, 2011; Rysst, 2005; Tufte, 2011).

In addition to engaging in age shifting in social and relations contexts, age shifting was also reported on being done in situations where one was alone. Without an audience, one's age performance cannot be about reading what is expected socially by other actors such as the home or the school. In what Goffman (1959) labels as back stage, where there is no audience, age shifting depends not on other actors, but rather on the individual. Back stage the individual is free to shift one's age performance not based on what is expected but rather depending on one's mood. Sandy explained this when talking about what she liked to watch on television:

Ingvild: Does one outgrow Disney Channel?

Sandy: Well, it's sort of only for periods. Sometimes you want to be a little cool, and then you watch The Voice or MTV, and sometimes sort of childish and then watch Disney.

Although Sandy was here "free" from doing age based on external expectations, her age performance shifted as she suggests that she sometimes felt more "childish" thus ascribing to a general constructed notion of age appropriate behaviour. Thus, there is a shift, a difference between childish and cool. Being cool seemed to belong to the age performance of youth. Thus, age shifting can be said to be done back stage as well, and not only due to limits restrictions and predefined notions of age performances of different contexts or networks front stage. The shifting age performance Sandy portrayed here was also described by other interviewees and came out very clearly throughout the interviews. This can be seen as the double identity tweens can have by having a foot in both childhood and teenhood (Tufte, 2011).

It would be easy to write that one is free to move in different categories, and to a certain extent that might be true. However, different contexts also have different expectations of one's age performance (Andersson et al., 2011). Doing age was not only social and relational limited and restricted, it also had physical restrictions. Pirbadet (the local swimming pool) was used by several of the interviewees as a symbol of maturity and personal freedom. Susan, Mary, and Tone all incorporated the act of being able to go

without adults to Pirbadet as something they enjoyed. The development of the body as criterion for coming into one's 'tween-ness' was evident in Tone's interview:

Tone: I can do more this year than last.

Ingvild: For example?

Tone: I can....no wait, I can't.

Ingvild: What can you not do?

Tone: Go to....I mean I can, but they don't believe me, the people there, because I'm so small. At Pirbadet they think, they don't think I'm 11 years, or 10 years.

Ingvild: You have to be 10 years? I don't understand.

Tone: You have to be 10 to be there by yourself, and they don't think I'm, Dad had to come in with me to say that I'm 11 or 10.

Ingvild: Oh, they think you're younger?

Tone: Yes, because I look so young.

Whether Tone was an older or a younger child was contextual and relationally dependent. Tone was restrained to "act her age" in her meeting those working at Pirbadet. Tone was a petit girl and needed her father to define her as being older than 10 years old. Hence Tone was restrained physically from being perceived as the 11 year old she actually was. Where Ida talked about doing youth and doing childhood as social strategies, Tone was, in the case of going to Pirbadet, limited in her age doings.

In addition to shifting from one age performance to another, there was also the possibility of being both simultaneously without this being in conflict, actually not even being seen as being both at the same time. Susan when she talked about her friend's "style" described it as; "Her style is Pokémon and Lady Gaga." We might look at this as being in-between childhood and youth as Lady Gaga can be seen to represent youth culture and Pokémon to represent childhood. However, for Susan, this was a complete and whole style, not a fragmented one. Susan gave no impression that Pokémon and Lady Gaga are two different "styles" or two different age performances. Rather, they were *a* style. Susan and her friend made and reassembled things apparently not belonging to the same age performance. Using consumer products, or commercial symbols such as Lady Gaga and Pokémon, can thus figure as an example of the interpretive and improvisational power that children may have (Gabriel and Lang, 2006). There was here a co-construction of Lady Gaga and Pokemon making symbols by re-definitions and reassembly. As Cook (2004: 148) puts it, children 'creatively

appropriate culture, including consumer culture, rather than having it imposed on them?. So while I as an adult might view Lady Gaga as a more mature popular cultural phenomenon than Pokémon, and hence never would categorize them together, Susan obviously saw this differently.

As age shifting seemed to be what my interviewees engaged in, both with restrictions and possibilities, the chapter now moves to examine whether there was a tug-of-war between growing older and staying younger. How was the past, future, and present perceived?

Standing in the middle, looking back and looking forward

In the *High School Musical* trilogy a theme was regressing, or rather longing for childhood, a time when presumably life was easier. Earlier research has shown that while some in their tween ages are eager to get older, reaching out for the teenage life, there is also evidence of tweens wanting to stay “children” a bit longer (Frønes, 2003; Johansson, 2003; Wærdahl, 2003). Nostalgia was also a theme in some of the interviews, looking back at one’s own childhood. Future nostalgia was also an issue in my interview with Sandy and Elisabeth as Sandy feared that growing older would prompt her not to love her teddy bear anymore:

Ingvild: Are you looking forward to becoming teenagers?

Elisabeth: Yes.

Sandy: I don’t really know....

Ingvild: Why are you looking forward to it? Or what is it you’re looking forward to, you think? (To Elisabeth)

Elisabeth: I think I’m looking forward to it because then you can sort of do more things that I get to decide my self

Ingvild: Mhm, how about you Sandy, you don’t know if you’re looking forward to it?

Sandy: I’m looking forward to a lot of things, but I’m a bit scared that I’ll stop caring about my teddy bear.

Ingvild: Does one stop caring about one’s teddy bear when one gets older?

Sandy: It can happen.

Elisabeth: Maybe one thinks it’s childish and stuff.

Sandy: Yeah, but I don’t want to think that.

Ingvild: But do you think that you’ll think so if you don’t want to?

Sandy: It might change when I get older, but I hope that it doesn’t.

Through this segment Sandy rationalized that if, and when, she reached a time where she did not care about her teddy bear anymore, she would have developed in such a way that she would not care. Thus, not caring would not be an issue as it is of no concern to someone who does not care. Sandy at nine years old however did care and was afraid of not caring. One could also read the fear of developing into this. Sandy did not want to change radically from whom she was at nine years, and part of who she is a teddy bear loving child. The teddy is thus also enacted as a symbol of childhood.

Tone was one of the girls I followed from 2007 till 2011. I first observed her at the after school program at Southside. She took part in one of the focus groups there. After this, we had two interviews in her home and I conducted one interview with her parents. In addition we kept in contact using MSN messenger. Tone was a short girl for her age and claimed to like acting childish and playing. When she was 11 she told me something happened over the summer to make everyone in her class “act cool”, something that she did not like. Throughout the years I’ve known her she consistently told me that she did not want to be any older than she already was, and that where one is age-wise is always the best place/age to be:

Tone: It’s great to be eight years old.

Alma: Yeah, I wanna be eight forever!

Ingvild: What’s so great about being eight?

Tone: When you’re eight you get to go to school and SFO.

Ingvild: Well, are you looking forward to begin nine, 10, and 13?

Girls : nooooo.

(One of the reasons also is that they get many more presents for Christmas and birthdays than adults do.)

Tone: I get like 20 presents and mom and dad only get like 10!

Tone and her friends here echoed other researchers who have also found that children do not necessarily look forward to being older (Bjerke, 2011; Butler et al., 2009; Frønes, 2003; Johansson, 2005; Wærdahl, 2003). The girls were not looking forward to be a little bit older as this was seen as the fast track to adulthood, where you have to pay bills and you don’t get enough presents at Christmas. When I came to Tone’s house I had the opportunity to ask her about being eight when she was 11:

Ingvild: I remember when you were eight I remember once I talked to you and you said you wanted to be eight forever, and now you're older than 8. Looking at it now, do you think it's better to be 11 or eight?
Tone: 11 really.
Ingvild: Why?
Tone: Because I'm older, but I don't want to be older than 19.
Ingvild: Why not?
Tone: Because then I don't have to pay house bills.
Ingvild: Ok, so when you're older than 19 you have to pay house bills?
Tone: Yes, then I have to move out and pay house bills, and cook, and I'm no good at cooking.
Ingvild: And you can decide over yourself.
Tone: Yes, but that's no fun.
Ingvild: No fun? So you like to be younger?
Tone: Small, not tiny small, but not big either. Right in-between. Don't want to be bigger than that.
Ingvild: What's so great about being in-between then?
Tone: Hmmmm....you can do what you did when you were younger, and you can do more when you're older than when your little, and you can be more things than when you're an adult. I can still give mom and dad a hug, I can still have a children's birthday party and I can still be small.

Tone was fast in asserting that she did not want to be older than 19, even before I asked about becoming older. It was good to be older than eight, but not older than 19. Again the bills came into play. The way Tone explained why it was great to be in-between bears resemblance to what Johansson (2005) calls the free-zone. According to Johansson (2005) tweens seemed to experience that being in-between children and teens were the best place to be. Tone said in the end of the excerpt, "I can still be small." Thus implicitly she communicated to me that you can still be small at age 11, doing for example things an eight-year old could do, while simultaneously doing things an eight year old could *not* do. Tone seemed to be aware of her place in an age category where she could do older *and* younger things. She could, in other words, engage in age shifting. Drawing on different age performances, or age shifting was thus still a possibility for her, and a characteristic of her age group which it seemed like she enjoyed. I was able to ask Tone online about this issue yet again, two months before her 13th birthday,

Ingvild Kvale Sørenssen says:
Before you said to me that you thought that 11 years was the best age to be....do you still think so?

Tone ❤️ 3 says:

Noooooooooooooi!! 😊 It's probably like you think its' best when you get older

Ingvild Kvale Sørenssen says:

What's better by being almost 13 and 11 then you think?

Tone ❤️ 3 says:

That you're the oldest at school I think 😊

Ingvild Kvale Sørenssen

How come you're not looking forward to becoming a teenager then?

Tone ❤️ 3 says:

I don't know really, it just doesn't sound nice ^^

Ingvild Kvale Sørenssen says:

What?

Tone ❤️ 3 says:

That you're almost an adult.....

Ingvild Kvale Sørenssen says:

How come you don't want to be an adult?

Tone ❤️ 3 says:

Then I can't act childish when I want to, I have to get a job and so on

Ingvild Kvale Sørenssen says:

Would you like to be younger? 😊

Tone ❤️ 3 says:

Sometimes I just want to be in daycare, so much easier, no pressure and a lot more fun! 😊

Ingvild Kvale Sørenssen says:

Heh, so you think that daycare age is the best age to be then?

Tone ❤️ 3 says:

Sometimes. When you're small you just want to be older, but when you're older you just want to be small 😊

Regarding Tone and the segments above from three different years within the duration of four years and the same girl, Tone seemed to believe that where one was at the moment was the best place to be, she also said this explicitly in the MSN conversation. In all the interviews and MSN chats we have had she did not want to be any older than what she was at the moment. Her reasons when she was 11 and almost 13 why that age was better than the previous one, was because she was older. Paradoxically however, older is not something that she wanted to be. In other words, what she saw as positive in regards to her age at the moment was what she also saw as negative for her age later on. It might be that no matter what age you are, as that is where your life and reality lies right now, is always the 'right age'. Tone did not want to be older than eight, 11 and the last time I communicated with her at age 13. Who's to say she won't want to be 14, 17, and 25 forever as well? In addition Tone also expressed that especially being 11 she was able to be both small and old simultaneously, being able to engage in age shifting and thus mirroring Ida earlier in this chapter drawing on child and youth performances depending on the context.

After having looked at how age is perceived and executed I now turn to look at examples of how age can be done by making use of non-human items such as make-up and clothes before exploring how Disney can be used in doing age.

Assemblages of make-up and clothes

Clothes and make-up are both actors that do something to those making use of them. Here I explore different practices involving make-up and clothes. Both make-up and clothes surfaced as tools for doing age in the interviews. When I asked my interviewees about what was typical for their age, make-up (for girls) and interest in clothes (for both) often came up. By employing an actor-network theory inspired approach to scrutinize the data, I am able to perceive make-up and clothes as actors as well as the children talking about them. The ontological status of make-up and clothes as objects must not be taken for granted within actor-network theory. Rather, there is a focus that "seeks to identify how relations and entities come into being together" (Murdoch, 2001:111). The make-up, clothes and the children together form a network where they all come into being. I will first look at make-up before exploring clothes.

I found that make-up as an actor within a network operated with an ambivalent status, shifting its doing in different assemblages. Make-up was a theme in most interviews with the girls, both the individual interviews as well as the focus groups. My data shows that there was a proper and non-proper way to make use of make-up, depending on context. Culturally, make-up seemed to belong to the domain of an older age group than the tween girls. Hence, make-up on tweens can be said to challenge cultural understandings on how children at this age should look. How the girls talked about make-up points to culturally acceptable girl as well as age practices within different assemblages. It is also about the aesthetics, what is an acceptable look for tweens? What is suitable and not suitable make-up usage for tween girls?

Tone told me that she would possibly start wearing make-up soon when discussing teen magazines with me:

Tone: It's [the magazines] mostly about make-up and hobbies, I don't really care about make-up, but just in case I'm going to start using make-up soon.

Ingvild: Oh, do you think that you'll start using make-up soon?

Tone: Yes, at birthdays and stuff, mom and dad said that I'm big enough to wear a little make-up at birthdays. Mom has to teach me first. Some of the girls in my class look horrible when they use make-up.

Ingvild: Girls in your class wear make-up?

Tone: Yeah, my friend Enid had so much mascara on at school, and a boy bumped into her, and she was really hurt and started to cry, and the mascara ran all over her face, it was not pretty.

Ingvild: What do you think about them using make-up?

Tone: It's stupid.

Ingvild: Why?

Tone: I don't understand why their parents let them.

Ingvild: Why not?

Tone: Because we're not big enough to start wearing make-up.

Tone communicated that it was not appropriate for girls her age to use it yet, echoing previous research findings (Johansson, 2007; Rysst, 2010b). Make-up became part of an assemblage where age and maturity were central elements. Tone was, through the talk of make-up setting limits and possibilities for doing their age in a proper way. The girls who wore make-up too soon were thus constructed in this talk as not achieving the proper way to do girl. Tone identified age as a reason for not wearing make-up. And as Sandy told me, "It's not fitting for nine year olds." As such, it was not deemed proper.

This was heard in several interviews where the girls I talked to told me stories of other girls performing age and girlhood “wrong”.

In addition to being too young to wear make-up, make-up as an actor in this segment also shifted in relation to different assemblages. It shifted between the assemblage of school and the assemblage of birthday parties. Make-up thus came to mean and do different things. Tone stated that her parents thought her old enough to wear make-up at birthday parties. Tone also stated that she would possibly start wearing make-up soon. Thus she constructed herself as becoming older and more mature. However, in the school setting she claimed that it was “stupid” to wear make-up. Tone also explained that “we’re not big enough to start wearing make-up”. What Tone was doing in relation to me in the interview setting can be seen as performing age competence. In addition to merely age, there here seemed to be a need to achieve a competence in how to wear make-up. First learn then wear.

Make-up can do different things in different assemblages. At school it seemed to be assumed as out of place, while at birthday parties, which several of the girls told me, it was part of the accepted assemblage. Within the category of make-up I found a subcategory of what can be perceived as children’s make-up. Some of the girls talked about items with the dog Snoopy on it, like pocket mirrors, strawberry perfume, and lip-gloss. These items, unlike the lipstick and mascara, were described as being part of an accepted assemblage. Lip-gloss for example was something that Sandy told me about.

Elisabeth: I have some lipstick, well not lipstick but like..

Sandy: Chap stick.

Elisabeth: Yeah, chap stick, and those who glitter.

Sandy: Lip-gloss.

Ingvild: Lip-gloss, is that make-up?

Sandy: No, it’s like lipstick only more for children, it’s a mixture of lipstick and chap stick, a lot of nine year olds have it.

This is an example of commodities made for the tween group where make-up is inscribed differently to allow the tweens to act like children while at the same time trying out youth or even adulthood. Invoking a sociotechnical perspective we can see that the material objects play a part in the girls’ enactment of being tweens, or rather in-

between. Tween is thus a sociotechnical construction. The girls were here making use of a commodity that let them try, yet not wholeheartedly commit, to the make-up discourse where make-up is seen as something that older girls do. As Thorne claims: “At these ages there is still ambiguity about whether the use of cosmetics is ‘pretend’ or ‘real’” (Thorne, 1993:149). Lipstick came to mean something different than lip-gloss. Visually, lipstick has the capacity to not be as indiscrete as lip-gloss. Lip-gloss has less colour. Lipstick however could also be acceptable for these girls if used in a proper fashion, in the right contexts to parties, and when playing dress up.

Clothing was also a theme that surfaced in my interviews. Several of the children nominated clothes as something they had recently become interested in. As Tim answered when I asked generally about how he was at 10 years old different from when he was eight:

Ingvild: Do you feel that you are very different today and two years ago?

Tim: Yes, now I care about fashion, before I really didn't care

Caring for clothes was evident in my interviews with those perceived to belong to the tween group. This echoes previous research on tweens (Johansson, 2007; Rysst, 2005; Wærdahl, 2005). In my data the children, both boys and girls nominated brands of clothes which they would prefer, like Volcom, DC, Burton, H&M and for the girls the specified tween brand WOW.

George: I think about clothes and stuff, like my DC shoes, I told my mom, “oh, DC shoes, a lot of kids at school have it, I want those.” Them mom said, “ok, you have to save then.”

Ingvild: Is it important that kids in school have them?

George: Half of the school has them, it's really popular. It's sort of important to have, they think you're sort of cool and they'll say, “oh, you have DC shoes.”

George stated that having shoes with what could be considered to be the “right” brand was important. It also seemed imperative to have what the majority had. Having the right brand of shoes here also seemed like an opening for social relations. The children I talked to also reported on caring more for different types of clothes, what was perceived as cool and what was not.

In addition to similar findings as Rysst and Johansson suggested (Johansson, 2007; Rysst, 2005), I also found alternative practices regarding clothes. Being occupied with clothes did not necessarily mean having them as status symbols. Clothes could become a part of a type of play as well, or a part of pretending and playing at being teens. There were ways to engage in youth culture without committing to it, playing with teen culture as Mitchell and Reid-Walsh (2005) call it.

Ingvild: So what are you?

Ida: I'm still a child, or what people call tween.

Ingvild: What's special about tweens? How are they different than say eight year olds?

Ida: Older, and we like more like clothes.

Ingvild: Clothes? Are you into clothes?

Ida: Yes.

Ingvild: Why?

Ida: I don't know, it's like collecting things.

Ingvild: You collect clothes?

Ida: Yes, on GoSupermodel

This segment is interesting as it addresses that clothes are thought of as something one 'grows into' as (Johansson, 2007) also found in her study. Ida however was not talking about actual clothes, but virtual clothes. GoSupermodel is an online site where you create an avatar and play games earning virtual money, which you then can use to buy virtual clothes. In addition, you can also buy virtual money with real money in order to buy virtual clothes. In a sense, engaging with GoSupermodel to buy virtual clothes can be seen as a distanced 'playing at youth' (Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2005) or even 'practicing' youth. Ida did age through a mediated sphere—the Internet. GoSupermodel could be looked at as a type of play as well (Andersen et al., 2007; Willett, 2008). Another practice involving clothes, yet not purchasing or committing was something Mary told me about:

Ingvild: So you go to clothing stores and not buy clothes?

Mary: Well yes, but we usually take youth-clothes, clothes from the youth department and take it into the changing room and do a photo-shoot. It's really fun.

Mary and her friends thus, at a safe distance, tried out and played at teens. Using a camera to take pictures of them in youth clothes allowed Mary and her friends to play at

being teenagers without committing to becoming teenagers by actually wearing and buying the clothes. The camera as a medium facilitated this distance.

Disney assembling and reassembling everyday life

As this thesis revolves mainly around Disney and its tween franchises it is interesting to see how Disney becomes not only a part of the children's daily practices, but together with other actors constitutes children's assemblages. In Chapter 6 I argued that Disney was a part of the children's everyday practices. Following the ANT approach, the next question is: What did Disney as an actor do within the assemblages?

Latour (2005) critiques what he calls the social studies of the social, as he claims that it does not pay enough attention to the non-human entities and their effect on the social. Within ANT the notion is that it is not the social that glues us together, but rather that non-human entities can act as glue in assemblages. As Latour states: "'social' is not some glue that could fix everything including what the other glues cannot fix; it is *what* is glued together by many *other* types of connectors" (Latour, 2005:5). In my data I find that Disney, as a non-human actor, can be viewed as the glue in different types of assemblages. As such, Disney as an actor *does* something within the assemblages. I here explore what Disney did in the assemblages the interviewees talked about.

"The Disney effect"

In this part of the chapter I focus on the reported "effects" Disney had on the interviewees. In the interviews I asked both the girls and the boys if Disney Channel and *Hannah Montana* and *High School Musical* had given anything to them, if they felt that it has changed them in any way. The answers I received were for the most part about entertainment. "It's given me a good time" and "it's given me something to do and watch" are examples which both the girls and the boys reported.

Ingvild: Does *High School Musical* or *Hannah Montana* mean anything to you?

George: Not really

Ingvild: Is it important in your life?

George: No, but when I think about what I want to watch on TV. Then it's usually *Hannah Montana* I watch her quite a lot.

As we can see from this quote, which was characteristic for my data, Disney can be said to part of an entertainment assemblage. As was explored in Chapter 6, Disney Channel was considered to be catering specifically to the children interviewed and thus often was watched more or less intentionally for entertainment. However, in addition to merely being entertainment the Disney media content can also be said to *do* something to the other actors involved such as Susan, who was quoted in Chapter 8 as saying that *Hannah Montana* made her want to collect *Hannah Montana* things as well as making her feel different. Disney as an actor within an assemblage thus had agency. Another interesting aspect was how Susan expressed that she liked to be different from others. *Hannah Montana* can therefore be seen as an actor enabling Susan to be different. Thus, another effect of *Hannah Montana* was that Susan felt special. Susan was hence evoking the notion of individualization, which I will explore further in the next part of this chapter. Generally, Susan through her interviews, seemed to place herself as being different, not wanting to be the same as others. Ida also served as an example of what Disney *did* in assemblages:

Ingvild: What does *High School Musical* mean to you?

Ida: Hmm...what does it mean to me....it's like, if it didn't exist then I had been really bored lately, because then I couldn't sit and read about it in magazines, then it would only be about celebrities like Paris Hilton and stuff that would have been in the magazines that I like and then I wouldn't like those magazines

Ingvild: Why not?

Ida: Well because it says every teensy weensy thing about Paris Hilton for example, it says for example that Mary Kate Olsen likes cafe latte and that she drinks five portions every day or something like that...

Ingvild: And that's not as cool as to read about *High School Musical*?

Ida: No

Ingvild: What is cooler about reading about *High School Musical*?

Ida: Maybe because Paris Hilton and the Christina something or other, they are in their I don't quite know how old they are, 20, 30 years, I at least know that he he...now I forgot his name....Justin Timberlake, he's in his 30s. I think it's really boring to read about grownups.

As we saw in Chapter 6, Ida claimed that *High School Musical* had aided her in her age performance as she stated if it had not been for *High School Musical* she would have "been more like a smaller child than what I really am". In the passage above *High School Musical* was given credit for catering specifically to Ida and her age group.

Disney Channel was thus enabling Ida and her wants for reading about something she found interesting and not having to read about adult celebrities such as Paris Hilton, Christina (Aguilera I presume), and Justin Timberlake. *High School Musical* can thus, following Latour (2005), be said to be an actor that changes other actors' actions. Thus, Disney is an actor that "saved" Ida from having to engage in an age performance that she clearly identified as for older people. In Chapter 6 Ida claimed that thanks to the trilogy she did not read Tom and Jerry but rather the girl magazine *Girls*. As such, the trilogy was aiding Ida's age performance moving her up from a more child-like age performance. Disney and *High School Musical* was hence not only being bestowed meaning by Ida, but it could also be perceived as an actor within this assemblage containing Ida, age-performance and Disney.

Ingvild: What does *High School Musical* mean to you?

Mary: It means friends are everything in a way

Ingvild: Friends are everything, ok. Would you say *High School Musical* is part of you?

Mary: Well, when it comes to friends is everything, because I think friendship is very important, and they think so in *High School Musical* as well, so maybe it is a part of me. [...] But I think that people would be less addicted to Disney Channel if there had been no *High School Musical*. Because *High School Musical* is a very big part of Disney Channel

We see in this quote, mirroring Ida's quote, that Disney, and specifically Disney Channel *did* something to both Ida and Mary. Mary used the word addictive when talking about Disney Channel. As such, the trilogy as an actor did something to the assemblage consisting of Mary, Disney Channel and *High School Musical*. In effect, the trilogy, according to Mary, made her watch Disney Channel more than she would if there had been no *High School Musical*. In addition, Mary stated that friendship was important to her, and this was according to Mary a large part of the trilogy. The Disney representatives in Chapter 4 and the parents in Chapter 7 also discussed friendship as a vital part of the media texts. What Mary reported on drawing from the media text was how it increased her already strong feelings about friendship. Thus, the trilogy as an actor had an effect on her by enhancing her devotion to friendship.

Another "effect" the Disney tween media texts had on the children interviewed was the use of the content (or merely the knowledge of the content) as social currency (see

Chapter 6) and being a constantly present cultural reference. Cathy expressed this as benefit of watching *High School Musical*, in addition to the fact that she reported on enjoying the content:

Cathy: It's fun when they talk about it at school and be able to know about it so that I can talk about it
Ingvild: They talk about it at school?
Cathy: Yes, well not all the time, but when they talk about it then it's fun that I know something about it as well, know about the movies and stuff, so that I can join and talk in the group

Another way to make use of the Disney media texts as social currency was to be the first to see movies and then be able to inform others about it:

Nina: It's fun to be the first to see it, sort of before everyone else get to see it a lot
Ingvild: Why?
Nina: Well, you can tell others about what it's about and stuff

Having the social currency that not many yet have, as in being one of (if not the) first to see the new movie, could thus be of assistance in defining, asserting, and placing one's self socially. As I argued in Chapter 6 having knowledge about the different Disney tween media texts became part of a social currency. The Disney tween content seemed to have found its way into the cultural references by both the girls and boys I observed in the after school programs and also in my interviews. This is also an effect of the Disney tween content, being able to become a taken for granted part of everyday lives.

In addition, the paratexts resided in the social realm seemingly invisible at times and highly noticeable at other times. They were invisible, or taken for granted, when the paratexts would figure in the pencil-cases, in backpacks, or as clothes. Simultaneously they were also visible when girls complimented each other or showed their new paratexts, often clothes, or when they discussed who had different paratexts and who collected what which I observed at the two after school programs. Thus, the Disney paratexts became part of the assemblages by seamlessly finding its way into the everyday life and everyday view of the children as well as being used as sign vehicles.

Even though the girls reported on having, using, and talking about the paratexts, the

Disney tween media texts were also a part of the boys' assemblages. The boys in this study all knew about the different Disney tween media texts even though some refuted it. Disney as an actor thus appeared as a constant presence in social relations.

Disney gluing the social- assembling yourself and assembling friendships

As explored in Chapter 5, the media texts were highly focused on the paradoxical relationship between individuation and autonomy combined with social responsibility. Being true to one's self is a well-known idiom and is one of the themes in *High School Musical* and *Hannah Montana*. This was echoed in my interviews as I found traces of the notion of individualization as described by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002). This was particularly evident through the notion of "being yourself". The value of "being yourself" was expressed in several of the interviews implicitly conveying individuation.

When discussing age and life in general with my girl interviewees Disney was occasionally used as examples to make sense of the social world. As such the Disney tween media texts became part of a reflection assemblage. Ida for example, when talking about the second instalment of the trilogy evoked the notion of being yourself:

Ingvild: Can you tell me about *High School Musical 2*?

Ida: Well...I don't remember that much about 2, it's usually about, for the most part, about Troy losing himself,

Ingvild: He loses himself?

Ida: Yes, that's something he talks about.

Ingvild: How...what do you mean by losing one's self?

Ida: Well he becomes different than he actually is because he tries to get money for university or something like that.

Here, Troy was thought to not be himself. He lost himself and becomes a person who is not true to himself. As we saw, Ida suggested that external issues can corrupt your ability to "be yourself". The reason for Troy to become someone who he is not is, as Ida said, "because he tries to get money for university or something like that." It is not just a contributive reason for his change; it is the sole reason. Troy's task can thus be said to be true to the "real" Troy and assert his individuality. This is the conflict in the movie (see Chapter 5), and Ida talked about Troy becoming different than what he "actually is". Thus, there was a clear sense of negativity towards changing. The animosity

towards changing yourself, becoming someone who you perceivably are not was here present. The reason behind the changing personality was here depicted as being money, which Ida saw as a superficial motivation for change. It was about status and role, and not the inner-true self. Mary also highlighted being yourself, or being able to stand up for yourself as something that *High School Musical* had contributed to in her life:

Ingvild: Is there anything that *High School Musical* has given you?

Mary: It's given me more confidence that you're supposed to stand up for yourself, and it's given me song-inspiration.

Mary here worded how the trilogy facilitated being and standing up for yourself. She credited the trilogy for supposedly giving her more confidence to be herself. Thus, within an assembly of what can be considered "Mary" Disney played a part.

Much like the paradox described by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) of individuation versus obligations to others (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), the notion of being yourself was countered by social obligations to others in my interviews. As such, the Disney tween media texts were part of assembling both a more intimate "yourself" assemblage, as well as being reassembled to take part in friendship assemblages as I will demonstrate. Disney tween media texts appeared as an actor facilitating engaging in social obligations. Generally, when speaking about who the children were and what was important to them, the theme of friendship surfaced. More accurately, the act and doings of friendship came up in several interviews. As McKinley found in the study on Beverly Hills 90210 audience in the 1990s, my interviewees too operated simultaneously with "the language of individualism and the desire for community" (McKinley, 1997:55). The social obligations to others as discussed by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) was also prominent in others interviews. Cathy for example stated that she liked the Disney tween television show *Wizards of Waverly Place* more than *Hannah Montana*, which was what the rest of her friends liked best:

Ingvild: Is it ok to like something that not everybody else likes?

Cathy: It's sort of stupid, I like *Wizards of Waverly Place* and if one likes that the most, and then the others don't, then you might feel a bit better, because if everybody else thinks that *Wizards of Waverly Place* is boring, then you might feel a bit left out, and then you can say "I like *Hannah Montana* better" even if...

Ingvild: ...it's not true?

Cathy: Yes, because it's worse if you say: "But I like it" or, you could say your own opinion too, saying that *Wizards of Waverly Place* is best, but like, you're allowed to say that you like *Hannah Montana* better if you don't want to be left out.

Saying that you like *Hannah Montana* was perceived as lying, and Cathy defended this lying as a social strategy for not being left out. Thus, Cathy downplayed what was perceived as being different. Cathy can be said to be engaging in impression management (Goffman, 1959) by actively managing the impressions those around her had about her. Cathy rationalized and defended her choice of "lying" to her friends, or as she put it, "your own opinion". Using a phrase as "your own opinion" clearly depicts that liking *Hannah Montana* best was not her opinion, but again, she downplayed the differences she had with her friends. Cathy expressed that it was of importance to manage one's self socially. Yet she still left room for resistance, as she continued to engage in activities which those in the peer group defined as undesirable. While Cathy suggested not saying what you like and don't like if it goes against the general trend, she also described a complex understanding of social norms.

Thus, even though there were clear and direct statements of "being yourself", social obligations to others was a prominent theme in my data. And these obligations could be fulfilled by making use of Disney. Disney hence became part of a friendship assemblage. Susan for example gave me an example of this in one of her interviews. Susan, who was a sworn *Hannah Montana* fan and denied liking *High School Musical*, told me that she saw the third movie at the cinema:

Ingvild: So, did you want to see it then?

Susan: I went with a friend, just to be nice, and to see if it was any better than the other two. But it wasn't. I didn't expect it to be really good or anything, because I had seen the trailers, it didn't really look like it was funny.

Ingvild: Did your friend like it?

Susan: Yes, she loves *High School Musical*.

Susan claimed to be doing this as an act of friendship. Admittedly she was also curious to see if the third movie was better than the first two. However, Susan pointed out that she did this "just to be nice". An interesting aspect here was how Susan reassembled

High School Musical. *High School Musical* was here reassembled from being an actor that gave Susan negative feelings to an actor that contributed to a friendship assemblage and facilitated Susan in doing friendship. Susan reported on disliking the trilogy adamantly and distanced herself from it in the interviews; however, the distaste for the trilogy was not a stable assemblage. What on the other hand proved to be a stable assemblage was “being a good friend”. In both Cathy and Susan’s quote we can see that the assemblage with friends outranked the assemblage including Disney. Either the reassembling was a strategy to avoid being left out or to “do” friendship. Disney, in both Cathy and Susan’s quotes, works as an actor that helps stabilize the friendship assemblage. As such Disney can be said to figure as the glue which facilitates friendship. Thus, Disney as an actor does something to the assemblage. In Susan’s case it became a tool to enable doing friendship.

It is interesting that several of the interviewees in this study talked about doing things to make their friends happy. Being a good friend or doing friendship was a value that the children would tell me about. Susan and Cathy talked about doing things for friends, implicitly expressing that this is a part of doing friendship. I did not perceive the children to be ambiguous as it is seen as a positive thing to set aside one’s interests (such as liking *Wizards of Waverly Place* as opposed to *Hannah Montana*) in order to perform friendship. The friendship assemblage was thus more stable than the Disney assemblage, however, Disney was used in the assembly of friendship.

Although it was more prominent with the girls I interviewed, the Disney tween media texts were also a part of the boys’ friendship assemblage, albeit in a different way. The Disney tween media texts were used as social currency for the boys, often in order to distance themselves from the content, describing it as a being for girls. There were however reports of boys enjoying the sitcom:

Eddie: I know of some boys in my class who like *Hannah Montana*.

Ingvild: And that’s ok?

Eddie: It’s ok, but I don’t like it.

Ingvild: So it’s not embarrassing if a boy likes *Hannah Montana*?

Eddie: No, I’m friends with boys who do, it doesn’t matter. It’s just that I don’t like it.

Ingvild: Do you ever have visitors who want to watch *Hannah Montana*?

And then you don't want to see it?

Eddie: Yes.

Ingvild: What do you do?

Eddie: I try to suggest something else that they might want to do, and try to get them to do that.

Although Eddie did not enjoy *Hannah Montana*, he admitted to having watched parts of it. What is interesting here is that *Hannah Montana* was part of Eddie's friendship assemblage. Like Susan over, Eddie also subjected himself to the content of something he did not like in order to perform friendship. Based on my data and in line with the ANT perspective, Disney tween media texts can be said to glue the social together.

Conclusion: Engaging in age shifting and assembling friendship

In this chapter I have examined how age was performed differently within different contexts and how drawing on different age repertoires was facilitated by human and non-human actors. As I have showed in this chapter non-human actors such as make-up, clothes, and Disney were central in the children's daily lives. In addition, these actors facilitated and constrained the possibility to engage in age shifting. Make-up served as an example of limits of age performances moving forward, as the girls explained what make-up was or wasn't appropriate. This had to do with the inherent qualities of the makeup (where lip-gloss is light while lipstick is colour dense), but it was also depended on the relational context—lipstick could be used at parties and not school, while lip-gloss could be used at both.

Disney can, paraphrasing Latour (2005:5), be seen as the glue that holds the social together. Disney, as I have shown in this thesis, was a part on the children's daily lives. In this chapter I argued that Disney seemed to be prominent in three different assemblages, namely friendship, entertainment, and social currency. Disney could be working as social currency in order to join conversations and take part in social relations. Disney was also an actor used in order to perform friendship, where both girls and boys would subject themselves to watching things that they did not like in order to perform the part of a good friend. In addition Disney was part of an entertainment assemblage. In this case Disney was not used for any other purpose than for wanting to

be entertained in a back stage area. Thus, not only was Disney part of the biographical narratives and belonging to a back stage practice, Disney was through its figuration in the friendship and social currency assemblages, being used in social relations and on the front stage. The assemblages of friendship, entertainment and social currency were all facilitated by Disney.

Cody and Lawlor (Cody, 2012; Cody & Lawlor, 2011) use liminality theory, depicting the tween stage as merely a threshold. I disagree with theorizing children in this age group as being in a liminal phase or stage. I strongly sensed that the children I interviewed were not simply undergoing a transition, they were not only moving from childhood to youth. They were right in the middle of something. Of course they were on their way, but then we all are. In the beginning of this chapter I quoted Tufte (2011) who claimed that Danish tweens were not in possession of the target group identity of tweens. Echoing Tufte's (2011) finding, the children I talked to did not use the term tweens. Katie and Ida were the only ones who knew the word, but they did not use it. However, even though the children in my data did not use the term tweens, I would argue that they were very much in the possession of the target group identity, because the children described themselves as being different to older and younger children. The children in my study were all in agreement what being a big-child, as most of them called the age group that they inhabited, meant.

I found that the children interviewed engaged in what I call age shifting differing age performances drawing on childlike and youth like repertoires. Age shifting was facilitated and limited in different assemblages, such as Ida talking about being more like youth in school. In a back stage area there were fewer restrictions to age shifting as Sandy expressed by telling me how she would watch MTV or Disney channel depending on her "cool" or "child-like" mood. The age shifting closely mirrors how the Disney representatives in Chapter 4 talked about tweens and also how age was inscribed in the Disney tween media texts in Chapter 5. Tweens were configured and inscribed by Disney as being engaged in a process of becoming-teenager as well as being grounded in childhood, being able to draw on both youth and more childlike age repertoires.

Reading about tweens in market literature (e.g., Lindstrom & Seybold, 2004; Siegel et al., 2004) and in academic literature (e.g., Andersen et al., 2007; Gjødesen, 2011; Tufte, 2011; Tufte & Rasmussen, 2005 and to a certain extent Rysst, 2005, 2010b; Wærdahl, 2003) the picture painted of tweens is KGOY (Kids Growing Older Younger). We are exposed to a “wannabe teen” persona who is aspiring to and anticipating being older. In my study this was not the case. Some of the children told me they were looking forward to being older. However, most of my interviewees, like Tone suggested, enjoyed the fact that they could be both small and big at the same time. I learnt from the children how appealing it is to be able to engage in age shifting. The metaphorical feet that straddle childhood and youth, which Bjørner talked about in Chapter 4 and as researchers (Rysst, 2005; Tufte, 2011) have suggested, did not seem to throw the children off. Susan for example talked about Lady Gaga and Pokémon belonging together as a style, and Ida talked about being different ages in different places. There did not seem to be any contradictions within the flexibility of doing tween it was merely contextually and relationally dependent.

Age shifting was not only a part of the age category. I argue that this category, whether we call it tweens or not, is a category where age shifting is a main feature and an assemblage in itself. Thus, being a tween entails taking part in an age shift assemblage. Being in-between, big children or middle-children, which were the terms the children used to describe themselves, meant being able to be small and big in different assemblages. The notion of age shifting allows us to view age as both a social strategy (Frønes, 1995) but also as flexible and contextually and relationally dependent. It is not a free zone where one can draw on different age doings at will as there are limits and restrictions operating in different networks in relation to available age performances. Ida, for example could not perform child at school the same way she could at home. The age shifting is flexible, one does not commit to being a tween, or youth and only that.

I found that Disney served as a stable overarching actor operating within different assemblages. Regarding age shifting Disney Channel offered its users to spend time with programs intended for a younger audience. In addition, as the media texts aimed at tweens dealt with teen issues at a safe distance (such as the lack of physical romance) as well as a theme in the media texts I analysed was the regression to childhood Disney

could also be said to facilitate age shifting. Thus Disney can be said to enable children in their tween years to both aspire to be older while simultaneously providing a childlike space for them.

Chapter 10: Configuring tweens

The aim of this thesis has been to explore how the category tweens was configured by following a diverse set of actors. In Chapter 3 I described my journey leading me to my research questions and to my data. While originally going into the field to analyse tweens and consumption, I found consumption to be too wide a concept to grasp. In an attempt to focus the lens I looked for reappearing references in my observations. It was striking how often I observed references to Disney and especially *High School Musical* and *Hannah Montana* in the two after school programs. The references would come up in different settings, such as computer time, when we were on a trip in the forest, at the colouring table, when playing with play dough, and outside in the playground. As Disney was such a pervasive actor in the field, I felt that this should be explored further. I was curious, what did the children *do* with these media texts and paratexts? How were they incorporated in their everyday lives?

As the field guided me to focus specifically on Disney, the research questions focused on how the assemblage of Disney, tweens, and parents co-constructed this age group. Hence, I chose to follow three sets of actors and set out to explore three configurations of tweens; Disney as text and producer, parents, and most importantly those considered to inhabit the tween-stage. Disney was chosen as it was an omnipresent actor in the two after school programs. Parents are important as they are the ones with the possibility to limit the tweens in relation to media use and consumption of paratexts. In addition, parents are thought to play a part in children's socialization, including consumer socialization (Clark, 2012; Johansson, 2010). And lastly I followed children considered to be tweens in order to explore how they configured this age category.

This thesis has drawn on different theories however these theories are not incompatible or redundant. Rather, they all help illuminate the research agenda from different and compatible perspectives. Initially this thesis was based on a childhood studies perspective, seeing childhood not as a natural given, but rather a constructed category differing in time and place. Drawing on childhood studies I also perceive children

through a particular understanding of the active child. In addition, seeing the child in relation to adulthood is said to be a main feature within childhood studies (Woodhead, 2008). Thus, exploring how the parents of the girls dealt with the Disney tween franchises gave an account of the child-adult relationship. Childhood studies as such figures in this thesis as a backdrop for perceptions of children and childhood. This thesis was also inspired by the circuit of culture, however, as stated in Chapter 2, I did not follow the perceived circular movement. The circuit of culture rather guided me in which stakeholder to focus on avoiding becoming reductionist and merely focusing on users *or* products.

Although this work draws on several theories, the main framework guiding my analysis has been the two versions of domestication theory. Domestication theory has a strong focus on users in relation to media and technology. I have implemented analytical tools from both the STS and the media studies versions of domestication theory. In Chapter 6 I looked at how the children I interviewed talked about Disney through the lens of the STS version examining how the Disney tween media texts were domesticated. The STS version enabled me to study how Disney became part of a praxis dimension, where I found Disney Channel to figure in the prominent position of being “their channel”. I examined the meaning dimension where I found that the children gendered both the content and the audience. The learning dimension was accounted for by looking at how the children used Disney as part of a biographical narrative and life trajectory.

In Chapter 7, the concept of moral economy of the household from the media studies version of domestication theory, as well as Bakhtin’s concept of authoritative voices supported me in analysing how Disney was domesticated, albeit ambiguously, in the context of the homes in which the girls reside. The media studies version was also used when analysing the paratext aspect of the Disney tween franchises which was the focus in Chapter 8. By applying the analytical tool of phases I was able to examine how paratexts came into the home (appropriation phase), how the paratexts became part of daily practices (objection phase) and how the paratexts were used as what Goffman (1959) calls sign vehicles (the conversion phase).

While this thesis had mainly dealt with children and parents in relation to Disney, in order to look beyond the screen and beyond perceiving children as merely consumers or audiences, I draw on actor-network theory. As Sørensen (2006) suggests, pairing domestication theory with ANT is beneficial. Combining domestication theory and ANT enriches the theoretical resources one has at one's disposal. The basic assumption of co-construction or what we may call a sociotechnical perspective is found through both these theoretical lenses. As I set out to examine the assemblage of Disney, children, and parents, these theoretical resources guided me in terms of which actors to examine and provided me with a sociotechnical perspective. As I stated in Chapter 2, one of the assets of ANT is the sociotechnical perspective, allowing us to include both the material and the social as being mutually enacted or co-constructed. By perceiving meaning as being mutually enacted, drawing on ANT, domestication theory, and the circuit of culture, the classic structure versus agency dichotomy can be avoided as the focus is rather on the interplay between the sets of actors followed. In addition to the sociotechnical perspective, ANT has guided me in being action oriented. I have examined what the children did with Disney tween media texts and paratexts.

As domestication theory mainly focuses on the user, I employed ANT's concept of scripts and configuration to aid my investigation of how tweens are depicted and constructed by Disney as media text and as producer in chapters 4 and 5. In these two chapters I explored how tweens were configured and inscribed in relation to the topics of age, gender, and values.

The last aspect I drew on from ANT is that of making assemblages. The concept of assemblages broadens the sociotechnical perspective as it facilitated seeing agency not as inherent within actors but rather something that is exercised in specific situations and within specific assemblages. Human and non-human entities work together as actors in assemblages. Chapter 9 employed the concept of assemblages when exploring how age was done in different assemblages with the aid of different human and non-human actors.

By employing a framework based on domestication theory we can explore how tweens both shape and are shaped by their domestication of Disney media texts and paratexts as

well as how the Disney media texts and paratexts both shape and are shaped by their users. Essential for the theoretical framework is thus a co-constructivist perspective that provides tools for exploring values, use, and meaning as dynamic and as a process.

Some researchers claim that Disney does something to children, and this something is usually negative. Giroux and Pollock (2010) suggest that Disney disrupts imagination through its media output. This notion echoes Linn (2005) who claims that popular culture and media takes away children's seemingly inherent imagination. Other researchers, like Ward suggests that Disney shapes children's notions of right and wrong and that Disney films are "a significant force in children's moral education" (Ward, 2002:3). However, coming into this study I was more interested in what children did *with* Disney, not what Disney potentially did to the children. Through my readings in the field of childhood studies I was prone to seeing children as both competent and with agency. What fuelled this notion further were the general responses I would receive when telling people what I did. When I mentioned Disney and children the responses were either "It's so important that Disney is exposed for how it is influencing children" or I was asked: "So you are looking at in what way Disney affects the children?" I came into this work with an almost allergic reaction to the word affect. I deemed the concept of effect to belong to a positivistic perspective thinking that children's voice would not and could not be heard or taken seriously if one were to speak of effect. For how would you be able to include children's voices and regard children as having agency if you bring in the word effect?

However, as I showed in Chapter 9 the children I talked to did indeed report on being affected by Disney. This was done by stating that Disney made them want to watch more Disney, or that Disney catered to their age group specifically. Drawing on actor-network theory and domestication theory allowed me to incorporate affects without positivistic media and technology determinist notions. When engaging in research concerning children and popular culture, a way to avoid the at times rigid constellation of structure versus agency and power relations can be to employ a sociotechnical perspective, which allows us to focus on effects while simultaneously considering how popular cultural entities are enacted by the users. Thus, the sociotechnical perspective of

perceiving entities as mutually enacted in the meeting between them allows for a more balanced and symmetrical approach.

Concluding this thesis I explore three questions in order to broaden the understanding of the children in this study and their domestication of the Disney tween franchises. Firstly, as Disney was a highly present actor in the daily lives of the children in this study: What was the outcome of the children's domestication of the Disney tween media texts and paratexts? Secondly, as I have looked at three configurations of tweens in this thesis, namely Disney, parents and children a question to be answered, and summing up findings presented so far, is what these configurations were. How did the actors followed configure tweens? The last question I consider is to what extent the domestication of Disney was influenced by the three configurations. In other words, how did these configurations work in relation to how the children in this study domesticated the Disney tween media texts and paratexts?

Children's domestication of Disney

Throughout this thesis I have argued that Disney was highly present in the daily lives and activities of the children in this study. In Chapters 6 and 8 I explored how Disney media texts and paratexts were domesticated by the children I talked to in regards to a front stage practice, as conversion and as sign vehicles. I also found a back stage practice where the children would talk about being entertained and spending time with Disney media texts and paratexts. I found in Chapter 9 that Disney served as a tool used in different social situations either as social currency or as a means to do friendship. In these three empirical chapters I found different assemblages in which Disney was domesticated.

There are of course almost endless potential assemblages that Disney can be domesticated as part of. However, it was very clear in my data that Disney was prominent in the making of four assemblages. The outcome of the domestication of Disney tween franchises can therefore, for the sake of clarity, be reduced to four assemblages where Disney can be said to be domesticated and takes the place of an actor.

The first assemblage I call the entertainment assemblage. This assemblage consists of tweens, the relational and situational context and the artefacts (media texts) by which to be entertained. Disney was often referred to as being part of an entertainment assemblage. By this I mean that Disney Channel was described by the children as being their channel and as providing ample entertainment catering specifically to them. In Chapter 9 George for example explained that he would want to watch *Hannah Montana*. Or as Kristin suggested in Chapter 6, there were around 600 channels for adults and very few for children her age.

Another assemblage where Disney was a noticeable actor was the age shift assemblage. This assemblage can be said to consist of tweens, the relational context and objects by which to age shift. Disney provided artefacts to engage in age shifting. Disney Channel provided media texts catering specifically to this age group through *Hannah Montana* and *High School Musical*. However, within these media texts age was ambiguously inscribed. The characters were teenagers but behaved in what traditionally may be seen as a more childlike conduct. In addition Disney Channel aired shows such as *Winnie the Pooh*, which facilitated the children's drawing on different age repertoires. As I suggested in Chapter 9, age shifting was a main feature of residing in the tween age, and Disney was part of, and facilitated, this age shift assemblage.

The third assemblage I call the social currency assemblage, which consists of tweens, the relational context, and artefacts employed as social currency. Disney figured as social currency needed in order to partake in phatic speech. One did not need to have seen all the episodes or movies, but it was socially beneficial to be able to refer to actors, characters, or scenarios from the media texts.

The last and possibly most prominent assemblage I found in my interview material I call the friendship assemblage. Within this assemblage we find tweens, peers, and artefacts facilitating doing friendship. I consider this the most important as it was highly stable. Mary was quoted in Chapter 9 as claiming that friends meant everything to her, which was an extreme but suggestive phrase. Also, as I argued in Chapter 9 one's devotion to different Disney franchises were put on the backburner if it came in conflict with performing friendship. In the same chapter we saw how Eddie would watch

Hannah Montana with friends even though he did not like it. Susan also gave such an example where she watched the third *High School Musical* movie to be nice to her friend. The friendship assemblage therefore figured as a stable assemblage.

The three configurations

Regarding the second question posed here; what influences the children in this study when it came to how Disney media texts and paratexts were domesticated, I followed three sets of actors who provided me with three configurations of tweens. Drawing on Woolgar (1997), configuring implies defining, enabling, and constraining actors' potential action. The three configurations of tweens I have analysed here has been Disney as text and producer, parents, and children in the tween ages.

The main focus in this thesis has been on the children's voices. I interviewed the children asking what they did in relation to Disney. While the interviews were conducted individually implicitly they presented me with knowledge about their relationships with other children. In other words, I indirectly attained an understanding for how tweens both were configured by their peers and also how they themselves made sense of and configured this age group. This was thus the third configuration I explored. Tweens were by tweens configured as residing between younger children and adolescence. This configuration mirrored the configuration the Disney media texts and the two Disney representatives offered me. However, the children I talked to also mapped out a complex understanding of how to perform in different relational and contextual settings. This was obvious when they explained to me when and where it was appropriate to wear make-up, limiting themselves regarding how much paratexts they could put on display, and also when and where one could draw on different age performances.

The second configuration considered in this thesis was the girls' parents' configuration. I interviewed parents of the girls as parents are thought to play a part in the socialization of children. In addition parents generally set the standards for the moral economy of the household, which contextualises children's lives. In Chapter 7, where parents' voices were represented, I mapped out an ambiguous and shifting moral economy. The moral

economy of the household both enables and constrains the possible actions of the children. In this chapter it was clear that Disney was indeed an object within the moral economy of the household albeit an ambiguous object. I found five authoritative voices that parents drew on. First there was the authoritative voice of education where parents would want their children to learn through entertainment (edutainment). The second voice was the voice of children's autonomy, where children were seen as having the right to their own cultural expressions. Thirdly there was the voice of Disney as wholesome, drawing on both nostalgic feelings towards Disney and also depicting Disney as a provider of safe and "good" media. The fourth voice was that of caring consumption, where parents could portray their affections for their daughters by buying, or letting others buy their children paratexts. The fifth voice was the cultural critical voice. This voice collided with the wholesome voice, the autonomy voice and the caring consumption voice as the cultural critical voice was in opposition to typical "American values" and conspicuous consumption. The voices of children's autonomy and caring consumption moderated the authoritative voice of education and the cultural critical voice. I also found that merely voicing the critical culture voice could be sufficient; one did not need to follow this voice by banning the American influence. Being aware and protesting it verbally seemed to be enough. Thus, through the moral economy of the household the parents configured the tweens, albeit ambiguously.

The third configuration I explored was how Disney as producer and media texts configured tweens. According to the two Disney representatives, tweens were considered a lucrative yet elusive group. In Chapter 4 the Disney representatives presented me with a configuration of tweens as being grounded in childhood while simultaneously being in transition as becoming teenagers. Tweens were considered to move back and forth age wise. As such, it was important for Disney to cater to tweens as becoming teenagers as well as still being children. Thus, Disney Channel provided television programs aimed at younger children as well as typical tween content like *Hannah Montana* and *High School Musical*. The notion that tweens move back and forth age wise was echoed in the media texts where the protagonists were both progressing and regressing in relation to how old they were and that they longed for younger childhood where life was perceived to be easier. In addition the media content

dealt with themes that might be regarded as belonging to a teenage practice rather than belonging to an 8-12 year old practice, for example romance. Regarding romantic relationships this was dealt with at a safe distance in order to make it more “child-friendly”. For example, as I stated in Chapter 5 in *Hannah Montana* there was a physical distance between Oliver and Lilly in their romantic relationship, as Oliver goes on tour. And in the trilogy, although Gabriella and Troy are romantically involved, there is no physical intimacy. Also, I found that individualization could be seen as a main theme in the trilogy and in the sitcom, providing the tween audience with the notion of being yourself as an important and valuable character trait. Heegaard suggested that children in their tweens moved from being family oriented towards being more peer-oriented. In both media contents for the protagonists this is the case. The media texts and the Disney representatives provided an ambiguous configuration of tweens, focusing on emancipation from parents, individuation and emphasizing friends as being important for tweens. As I suggested in Chapters 4 and 5, between the Disney representatives and the two different media texts, Disney can be said to make use of a pincer movement in its configuration of the audience, providing and offering the tweens a well-rounded all-encompassing identity-making tool.

Domesticating Disney

The last question I posed in this chapter was to what extent the domestication of Disney media texts and paratexts was influenced by the three configurations. As I am operating with a sociotechnical perspective of mutual enactedness, the influence is not perceived as unidirectional but rather bidirectional. Thus, I here discuss the three configurations in light of how these related to limiting and facilitating the children’s domestication of Disney. In addition, I discuss how the children incorporated, reinterpreted, and dismissed the configurations in relation to their domestication of the Disney tween franchises.

I found that the peer configuration was important and served as normative in guiding and defining what age performances tweens could engage in. In the contexts of peers in a front stage arena it seemed that there was only room to age shift forwards and upwards

in age, not regress. We can use Ida and her statement from Chapter 9 as an example, as she told me that she and her peers were more like youth at school and more like children at home. Thus, the school setting dominated by peers served as a strong guidance in how to perform age. The possibility to engage in age shifting downwards was less prominent within a front stage peer context. The children I talked to expressed that they would incorporate the norms and behave accordingly in a front stage peer setting. However in a back stage setting they would dismiss these rigid norms and also draw on a younger age repertoire.

Regarding the peer configuration and Disney paratexts Tone, Kari, and Nina in Chapter 8 illustrated how peers configured right and wrong ways of doing tween. All three explained how peers would police their fan activity if it was executed the “wrong” way. In Tone’s case this was expressed as spending “too much time on it” [*High School Musical*]. Or Nina and Kari who told me they limited themselves in relation to how many visual-functional paratexts they would wear at the same time. Tone however reported on a dismissal of this configuration as she laughed with her peers while simultaneously continuing to watch, talk about, and enjoy *High School Musical*.

Peers were considered important, both as a constitutive actor regarding norms and as friends. Engaging in doing friendship or friendship as an assemblage surfaced as an important aspect in my data. Doing friendship was considered more important than one’s affinity to the Disney tween franchises. The peer configuration was evident for example in the friendship assemblage when the girls would report on pretending to like something in order to take part in the social realm.

Regarding the configuration presented by the parents, this was a configuration that gave tweens room to navigate within the moral economy of the household. Parents framed the girls’ potential influence on the moral economy of the household and also their possibility to engage with the Disney tween franchises. I found that the moral economy was a versatile one. The parents’ configuration was strongly rooted in the authoritative voice of children’s autonomy. However, the cultural critical voice was also prominent in the interviews with the parents. Hence, while the configuration was a generous one, it also guided the girls in relation to how to talk about Disney and its paratexts. As we saw

with the girls in Chapter 8, they had a tendency to repeat and reproduce their parents' cultural critical voice. Simultaneously however, the girls could engage with both media texts and paratexts. Being critical could be seen as important for the moral economy and was echoed in the interview with the children. However, by both being able to reproduce and echo their parents' arguments as well as still having paratexts, the girls dismissed and partly reinterpreted their parents' configuration. In addition, in the home setting, children had more room in relation to their age performances. Thus, this configuration was a more malleable one than the peer configuration.

A third configuration I have mapped out in this thesis is the Disney configuration. I found that this configuration was not the most leading of the three—doing friendship was considered more important than Disney content. However, Disney was a stable part of the children's daily lives. Even though Disney Channel uses the word tween on its website, which all the girls in this study reported having visited with varying degrees of frequency, the children had not incorporated the term tweens. Thus, the attempt to configure the children as someone who would respond to the term tweens was not successful. However, as I argued in the previous chapter although the children I talked to might not have made use of the term tweens, they did identify their age group as different from those older and younger. Also, as I have argued Disney served as an actor catering specifically to this age group my interviews often referred to as “mellombarn” (between-children).

In relation to the Disney configuration of tweens, both the media texts and the two Disney representatives emphasized friends as well as individualization as important for tweens. Both the girls and the boys would emphasize the importance of friends and of being a good friend. Mary for example (in Chapter 9) stated that for her friendship was very important and that this was also the case with *High School Musical*. Regarding individualization, Mary was the only one who stated explicitly that Disney had aided her in both standing up for herself and given her more confidence; this was not typical for my interviewees. Nevertheless, she expressed coherence between how Disney configured tweens and her own person, which is an interesting if not dominant phenomenon.

As I have suggested, the tweens I talked to took part in age shifting and the Disney media texts presented the tween user with tools for engaging in age shifting. One might say that Disney Channel facilitates age shifting by offering a form for multiplicity in doing age through both the content of the tween media texts and also through airing both *High School Musical* and *Winnie The Pooh*. Thus, Disney Channel can be seen to facilitate doing tween. As Ida reported on in Chapter 9 and in Chapter 6, had it not been for Disney Channel, she would have had to read about older stars such as Paris Hilton, which she identified as belonging to an older age group. She also expressed that without Disney Channel she would have had to watch Tom and Jerry cartoons, which she sees as belonging to a younger age category. In addition, by gaining a place in the biographical narratives of the children and as a tool in their life trajectory Disney facilitated age shifting. As Tone suggested in Chapter 6 she was able to regress to a younger childhood by engaging with the keepsakes of her early childhood, including the line of Disney princesses.

Based on my work we can see the benefits of a sociotechnical perspective taking in account both those who are seen to be configured as well as those who take part in configuring them. As Latour states: “Looking at the mechanism alone is like watching half the court during a tennis game” (Latour, 1992:247). As I perceive there to be symmetry between the actors in assemblages the outcome of the configurations are unpredictable. The configurations bring with them a frame, however, the tweens being configured and how they domesticate the Disney tween franchises cannot be understood or predicted without examining meaning making and the practices the tweens engage in. Therefore we need to account for the configurations, how the configurations worked, and how the configurations influenced the domestication.

Formatting and autonomy enabling age shifting

Through their configurations, Disney, parents, and peers provides a format for how to be a tween. Processes of formatting provide affordances and directions with regard to

action and thus represent what could be considered as a soft shaping force (Latour 2005: 205). Peers configured tweens as becoming teenagers with little room to age shift downwards. Tweens were also formatted by their peers as engaging with Disney tween franchises. Regarding the parents in this study, they attempted to format their daughters through an ambiguous moral economy where being critical, moderate consumers learning from entertainment were prominent notions. However, the voices of Disney as wholesome and children's autonomy intercepted with the more critical aspects leaving room for their daughters to engage with the media texts and also the paratexts.

Disney attempted to format those considered to be tweens through what they offered tweens in light of the media texts and the paratexts aimed at this group. Disney provided the means to age shift by delivering media texts aimed at both older and younger children. Also, within how Disney portrayed age in their media texts aimed specifically at tweens there was ambivalence in relation to how to perform age. This was done by focusing on both growing older and longing for childhood. Hence, Disney constructed tweens as age shifters. Above all, since Disney is a business, Disney offers a formatting of tweens as persons who engage with Disney media texts and paratexts, attempting to become as Bjorner was quoted in Chapter 4 saying "relevant in their lives".

Despite the constructions of Disney, parents, and peers the children I interviewed were in possession of their own autonomy. As I have argued in this chapter the children both reinterpreted and resisted how they were formatted by the different stakeholders, depending on the situational and relational context. Although, as I have suggested, the peer configuration was strong and guiding, it could be dismissed and resisted through different strategies. These strategies, as we saw in Chapters 8 and 9, included laughing at one's self with peers, or age shifting downwards in a back stage setting.

The girls were also able to, and indeed would, recite the critical voices their parents employed. However, there was considerable space for influencing the moral economy of the household and its effects on the children through negotiation. I perceived the girls' autonomy to be so strong in relation to their parents that they did not even need to negotiate but rather merely resist the constructs from their parents. As we saw with Ida in Chapter 8 who claimed she had no reason to like *High School Musical* but she still

did, or Susan in the same chapter who claimed that the paratexts cost more than they were worth, but she still wanted them.

In relation to the Disney construct of tweens there were different outcomes. Most of the girls I talked to would make use of what Disney offered them, media texts and paratext. Others, both boys and girls reported watching some of the media without actively engaging with the franchises, and again others resisted them. Although everyone I talked to knew about the media texts and the various paratexts, many resisted this formatting attempt. This was especially the case with the boys, but also some of the girls who would only like either *Hannah Montana* or *High School Musical*. Thus, even though Disney might have succeeded in becoming “relevant in their lives” as Bjorner was quoted saying, and being a part of an everyday practice, not all of the children had the type of relationship with the Disney tween franchises as the Disney representatives said they would have liked.

What Disney did facilitate however, were artefacts as paratexts and media texts by which to age shift. Age shifting, as I have argued, was a central element for doing tween in my study. It is important to note that age shifting was not only facilitated by Disney, it was also facilitated by other non-human entities such as make-up, lip-gloss, *Tom and Jerry*, and MTV. However, in this thesis I have mainly focused on how tweens were enacted in the meeting between Disney, parents, and those considered to be tweens. Age shifting, employed as an analytical tool, is aided by a sociotechnical perspective. If we only focus on the social we cannot account for the means with which to engage in age shifting, and if we were only to look at the technical, we would miss the use and meaning dimension.

In this study I observed interplay between children’s autonomy, different construction strategies, and age shifting. The children in this study did not relate to the term tweens. Drawing on childhood studies, listening to children’s voices, we should therefore question whether to call this age group tweens or something else. However, no matter what we call it, the children in my study clearly identified that they belong to a category that differed from those older and those younger. And within this category age shifting was seen as being a main feature. I will end this thesis by repeating a quote from Tone,

which was earlier presented in Chapter 9. This quote perfectly illustrates that being in-between and age shifting are enriching rather than signs of incompleteness or liminality.

Ingvild: What's so great about being in-between then?

Tone: Hmm...you can do what you did when you were younger, and you can do more when you're older than when you're little, and you can be more things than when you're an adult. I can still give mom and dad a hug, I can still have a children's birthday party and I can still be small.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview guide for the girls

1. Demographic mapping: Family background; siblings, age and gender of siblings, parental situation
2. Knowledge and experience with *Hannah Montana* (HM) and *High School Musical* (HSM)
 - Viewing context
 - Do you have access to Disney Channel- have you seen HSM3 in the movies?
3. "Quality" / Content questions
 - What do you think of HSM, 1 2 and 3?
 - Can you tell me more about HSM 1,2 and 3?
 - What do you think of HM?
 - Can you tell me more about HM?
4. Expectations
 - What was it like to see HSM3?
 - Was it what you expected?
 - Are you disappointed over anything?
 - Are you surprised over anything?
 - Can you tell me about when you saw it? (many other people, how old, what it was like to see it in the movies)
5. The commercial aspect
 - Do you have any HSM/HM things?
 - What?
 - Can you tell me about them?
 - How did you get them
 - Do you collect HSM/HM things?
 - Are there HSM/ HM things you like better than others?
 - Are there any HSM/HM things you want/need/wish for?
 - Can you tell me about it? (how strongly do you want it, how important is it to get it, how do you think you will get it)

6. Potential target group
 - Who do you think HSM is made for? (gender,age). Can you tell me more about that?
 - Who do you think HM is made for? (gender, age). Can you tell me more about that?
 - How do you think that the people who make these things view their audience?

7. Children's perspective of their parents views on HSM/HM
 - What do your parents think of HSM/HM?
 - Can you tell me more about that?
 - Do you know of your parents watched Disney Channel and stuff when they were your age?

8. The symbolic meaning (doing and being)
 - Do you ever do HSM stuff? (watch the movies, play, role-playing, use the HSM stuff, sing the songs
 - Does it happen that you daydream about HSM? Can you tell me about it?
 - If you went to East High, who would you like to be?
 - What does HSM mean to you is a part of who you are?
 - Do you ever do HM stuff? (watch the tv series, play, role playing, use the HM things sing the songs)
 - Does it happen that you daydream about HM? Can you tell me about it?
 - If you lived in the world of HM, who would you like to be?
 - What does HM mean to you is it a part of who you are?
 - Do you like the HSM /HM songs? Can you tell me about the songs, are they different than other songs? What are the songs about?
 - Are HSM/HM alike in any way?

Is there anything else that you would want to tell me about HSM/HM Disney Channel?

Appendix 2: Second interview guide for the girls

Computer and TV:

- Do you have a computer/TV in your room? Why and how?/Why not?
- Do you go online? What do you do online?
- Do you play games online or on your computer?
- Do you read magazines? Which ones?
- If you go online do you mostly do it alone or together with someone? Can you tell me about this?
- Are there things you are not allowed to do online?
- What about TV, what do you usually watch? (channels and programs)
- What is your favorite show? What makes it your favorite show? Do your friends like the show?
- Do you usually watch TV alone or together with someone?
- Are there things you would want to watch but are not allowed to?
- What do you think your parents think about you watching TV or going online? Do you ever talk to your parents about it?

Money:

- Do you have your own money? If so, where do you get it from?
- Do you buy things yourself? What?
- If there is something you really want, what do you do?
- Are there things you are not allowed to buy?
- Does it ever happen that you buy things you might be allowed to buy?
- What do you do with the money you get? Spend it, save it or what?

Tweens own construction of tweens

- What are you, youth, teenager, child---?
- Can you tell me what you think is typical for your age group?
- Does one usually have things in common with people the same age?
- What do children your age like to do? What do they like, TV, music, computers..
- What do they not like
- How do the children your age usually dress, what type of clothes, brands?
- Is there a difference between being 8 and 10 years old? What about 10 and 12? Can you tell me about that?
- What makes you you?
- Have you heard about tweens? Can you tell me about it?

Appendix 3: Parent interview guide

Background questions

- Work/education
- Many children

Tweens

- How would you categorize your child's age group?
- Is there any difference you think from what she was interested in 2 years ago and today?
- What do her and her friends you think like to spend their time on?
- How do you think she thinks about herself and her age group?

Your child's media use

- Can you tell me about your child's media use, TV, internet
- What do you think of your child's media use?
- Do you have any regulations concerning TV and internet?
- Are there any programs that she is not allowed to watch?
- Are there programs that you don't like that she watches?
- Are there programs that you like that she watches?
- Are there programs that you watch together?
- Does your child have TV/computer in her room? Is there any reason why/why not?
 - o Has this been a discussion at home?

Your child's consumption habits

- Does your child have her own money? Where does this come from?
- Are there things that she spends money on that you don't like?
- Are there things that you would like her to spend money on?
- Is there anything that you know she wants but that you are reluctant to get her? Why? Can you tell me about the negotiation process?

Activities

- What activities does your child take part in?
- How much time does this take? (when and how often)

Knowledge of Disney, “quality” and content

- Do you have Disney Channel?
- Do you know anything about *High School Musical* (HSM)?
 - o In which case; can you tell me what you know about HSM?
 - o What do you think of HSM?
 - o What do you like/dislike about it? Why...
- Do you know anything about *Hannah Montana* (HM)?
 - o In which case; can you tell me what you know about HM?
 - o What do you think of HM?
 - o What do you like/dislike about it? Why?

Do you think your child knows how you feel about HSM/HM?

The commercial aspect

Does your child have any HSM/HM things?

How do you feel about that?

Have you bought anything for your child with HSM/HM?

Do you have any thoughts on all the products that are available with these brands?

Meaning

Does HSM/HM seem to be important for your child?

How so?

If not, did it used to be important?

General Disney

How do you feel about Disney?

Would you rather that your child watched something else than Disney?

Would you rather that your child did something else with her time than watch TV?

Appendix 4: Topics for interview with Casper Bjørner

First of all I would like to thank you for taking time to be a part of this study concerning tweens. I have quite a few topics, as there are many aspects of Disney and its relationship with tweens that I find very interesting. My main focus is on the tweens own perception of their relationship with High School Musical and Hannah Montana and therefore it is the Norwegian context that I am most interested in seeing that this is a global phenomenon. Hereunder are the topics for the interview. For each topic there are some sub questions to supplement, but I am still working on these so I hope it is ok that you have the topics so that you can prepare yourself for the interview.

1. Background information about Disney Channel Scandinavia
2. Target groups for Disney Channel and for High School Musical and Hannah Montana.
3. Disney's definition of tweens, and how Disney tries to reach them
4. Lindstrom in his book BRANDChild has some theories based on research about how tweens as a group are, what are Disney's take on these.
5. Morals, ideals and themes in Disney Channels movies and TV-series.
6. Disney Channels Original Movies (DCOM)
From 1999-2006 there has been made 5-12 DCOM's per year, but the last two years only 3 and 4, any reason for this decline? How many DCOM per year is expected in the future?
7. High School Musical's success. Why and how. What are your thoughts about it?
How long can it last, how many more movies? Can you tell me about the success of HSM? Did it come as a surprise? Has Camp Rock been as successful as you wanted?
8. Disney Channel's marketing strategy.
9. The commercial aspect, Disney Consumer Products in relation to High School Musical and Hannah Montana
10. Tweens relationship with Disney Channel and especially High School Musical and Hannah Montana
11. Globalization. Have the concepts in any way been adapted to local markets?

Appendix 5: Topics for interview with Disney consumer products

Nordic

1. Background information about Disney Consumer Products
2. Target groups for merchandise with High School Musical, Camp Rock and Hannah Montana.
3. Disney's definition of tweens, and how Disney tries to reach them
4. The commercial aspect, Disney Consumer Products in relation to High School Musical, Hannah Montana and Camp Rock- range of products.
5. Tweens relationship with Disney Consumer Products especially High School Musical, Camp Rock and Hannah Montana
6. The Wizards of Waverly place, as popular as Hannah Montana?
7. Globalization. Have the concepts in any way been adapted to local markets? Different products for different places?
8. How does Disney Consumer Products keep quality control?
9. How does Disney Consumer Products ensure the integrity of the Disney brand, are there any kinds of merchandise that you would NOT consider doing?

Appendix 6: Parental consent



Informasjonsskriv til foreldre/foresatte

For å få en bedre forståelse av barn og deres liv i forbrukssamfunnet, ønsker jeg å snakke mer med deres barn. Det er viktig at barns stemme blir hørt i saker som angår barn og deres posisjon i samfunnet.

Doktorgradsarbeidet mitt er fokusert rundt Disney's High School Musical, Hannah Montana og Camp Rock. Disney Channel sine TV-serier og filmer er meget populære hos aldersgruppen 8–12år. Jeg vil se nærmere på hvilken betydning dette fenomenet har.

All deltakelse er selvfølgelig frivillig og om man ikke lenger ønsker å være en del av prosjektet står man fritt til å avslutte når man selv ønsker. Det er veldig viktig for forskningen at barns stemme blir hørt slik at vi får lære mer om barns forhold til forbruk. All deltakelse blir satt stor pris på.

Jeg vil understreke igjen at all innsamling, behandling og presentasjon av datamaterialet bygger på de sentrale etiske kriterier som ligger til grunn for samfunnsvitenskapelig forskning. Det innebærer blant annet at det legges stor vekt på konfidensialitet, anonymitet samt sikker lagring av datamaterialet både i bearbeidingsfasen og i endelig presentasjon av forskningsresultater. Om dere skulle ha noen spørsmål angående prosjektet ta gjerne kontakt!

Samtykke sendes tilbake i den frankerte konvolutten.

Med vennlig hilsen Stipendiat Ingvild Kvale Sørensen

Ingvild.sorensen@svt.ntnu.no

73596367/48141048

Prosjektets webside: <http://www.svt.ntnu.no/noseb/Consuming>

Samtykke fra foreldre/foresatte:

Jeg _____ gir herved samtykke til at _____ er informant i prosjektet *Consuming Children*

Barnas e-post/MSN: _____

Foreldre/foresattes e-post: _____

Telefonnummer: _____

Adresse: _____

Signatur og dato: _____

Appendix 7: Approval from NSD

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES



Harald Hårfages gate 29
N-5007 Bergen
Norway
Tel: +47-55 58 21 17
Fax: +47-55 58 96 50
nsd@nsd.uib.no
www.nsd.uib.no
Org.nr. 985 321 884

Ingvild Kvale Sørenssen
Norsk senter for barneforskning
NTNU
Dragvoll
7491 TRONDHEIM

Vår dato: 26.03.2007

Vår ref: 16410/KS

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

KVITTERING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 19.02.2007. All nødvendig informasjon om prosjektet forelå i sin helhet 26.03.2007. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

16410	<i>The construction and socialization of the tween consumer</i>
Behandlingsansvarlig	NTNU, ved institusjonens øverste leder
Daglig ansvarlig	Ingvild Kvale Sørenssen

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger er meldepliktig i henhold til personopplysningsloven § 31. Behandlingen tilfredsstiller kravene i personopplysningsloven.

Personvernombudets vurdering forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i melde skjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, eventuelle kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven/-helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/endringskjema>. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/database/>

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 01.10.2009 rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Vigdis Namtvedt Kvalheim

Katrine Utaaker Segadal

Kontaktperson: Katrine Utaaker Segadal tlf: 55 58 35 42

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Avdelingskontorer / District Offices:
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TRONDHEIM: NSD, Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 7491 Trondheim. Tel: +47-73 59 19 07. kyrr.svarva@svt.ntnu.no
TROMSØ: NSD, SVF, Universitetet i Tromsø, 9037 Tromsø. Tel: +47-77 64 43 36. nsdmaa@sv.uit.no