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Labovitz School of Business & Economics, University of Minnesota Duluth, 11 E. Superior Street, Suite 210, Duluth, MN 55802

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Linda M. Scott, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

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Barbie Genesis Play, Dress, and Rebellion Among Her First Owners

Linda M. Scott, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

ABSTRACT

The Barbie doll has been widely criticized for its presumed effect upon the gender enculturation of girls. Here, the first generation Barbie experience will be reexamined in social context, particularly in generational and class terms. The play practices will then be traced through rebellious consumer behaviors typical of the teenage and early adult years of the first generation of owners. The question posed is whether the effects of toys can be presumed from the form or from the impression the toy creates in adults, or whether the total social context, including the child's own sense of agency, must be analyzed.

One of the most important bits of historical evidence against the idea that the commercial culture simply forces its oppressive will into the heads of unsuspecting women is the response of millions of little girls all across America to the culture of the 1950s. In spite of the stultifying ideology of their childhood—which Betty Friedan dubbed “The Feminine Mystique” in her feminist classic of 1963--the substantial majority of these children did not become stay-at-home housewives, as they had been “conditioned” to do. Indeed, the educational and economic setbacks suffered by women in the early 1950s were not only recovered but exceeded by

the efforts of this single generation. In terms of degrees acquired, nontraditional jobs entered, honors awarded, and any other measure of secular achievement, the generation weaned on postwar consumer culture contributed more to the advancement of women than any other generation of this century (Friedan 1963; Furchtgott-Roth and Stolba 1999; Towery 1988).

The banner under which these achievements were made was a renaissance of feminism now known as “the Second Wave.” The women’s movement of the 1970s, peopled largely by educated young women born between 1948 and 1954, was far more radical, much more explicitly feminist in orientation, substantially broader-based, and considerably more far-reaching in impact than was the U. S. suffrage movement (the “First Wave”). Indeed, historians of global feminism deem the American Second Wave to have been the most widespread, successful, and effective women’s uprising in world history (Chafetz and Dworkin, 1986).

The “college-girl” feminists were engaged in the third radical movement of the decade. The Civil Rights and antiwar movements, as well as the environmentalist initiative and the Sexual Revolution, were typical of that generation’s breakthrough thinking and lifestyle. In many ways, the daughters of

the Feminine Mystique challenged conventional thinking, subverted accepted ways of living, and upset politics as usual.

So maybe it's time to look again at the childhood experiences that led to such a widespread cultural challenge. We should ask which toys and TV shows in the conservative landscape of the 1950s were used by these little girls to explore the parameters of resistance. But the favorite toy of feminism's most rebellious generation is also its most maligned icon. Introduced in 1959, Barbie was immensely popular among children who would later shake the world. Barbie's success, I argue, was the first appearance of a confrontational strategy this generation would use to progressive ends. To understand how that could be the case—after years of seeing Barbie as a conservative force—we need first to reestablish the intergenerational tension between the Boomer Girls and their mothers.

MOMS OF THE MYSTIQUE

The daughters of the Baby Boom remember their mothers' conservatism when it came to sexuality and femininity. Ruthless in their efforts to quash childhood masturbation, vigilant to ensure little girls always sat with their knees together, these mothers encouraged family-oriented values in their daughters by buying them "appropriate" toys—a never-ending parade of baby dolls and toy kitchens. These, after all, were the women about whom Betty Friedan wrote *The Feminine Mystique*—middle class matrons imprisoned in an ideology that undervalued their brains and overvalued their wombs. Far from being inclined to rebellion themselves, the Feminine Mystique cohort trained their daughters to adhere to the mindset of the fifties (Brienes 1992).

In the manifestos of the early 1970s, young feminists make it clear that the

early experience with 1950s gender role expectations was profoundly negative: the need to escape the lives their mothers led was the most frequent cause they gave for their rebellion. As one famous feminist said: "I am my mother's revenge" (Jenkins 1979, p. 36). Though they acted out of sympathy for their mothers, however, the young radicals were determined not to *be like* the previous generation in any way. So, their politics involved a *rejection of the mother* as well as *retribution on her behalf*.

WORKING GIRL FEMINISM

Second Wave rhetoric asserts repeatedly that the role of housewife and mother was the only one offered to girls of the early 1960s. This memory, however, reflects the class origins of the movement. In fact, "career gals" or "working girls," as they were then known, were a prominent part of the cultural landscape, even in the 1950s. Indeed, the "working girl" was a popular image, famed for her independence, her love of fashion, and her unconventional sexuality. Easily discernible as a character in popular artifacts (the flapper, Betty Boop, comic strip heroines like Fritzi Ritz), the sexy working girl had been the nemesis of middle class housewives through most of the century (Banner 1983; Meyerowitz 1988; Peiss, 1986; Raushenbush, 1931; Ryan 1975). And while it is true that the housewife of the 1950s was often deified, the purveyors of popular culture sometimes cast the traditional housewife as a stupid stay-at-home loser, compared to her worldly and sophisticated alter-ego, the single career woman. The subtext was often a threatening: the housewife, no matter how moral, maternal, and respectable, could always lose her man to the "pretty, lascivious and undignified" working girl (Mitford 1966, pp. 92-3).

The cultural competition reached its apotheosis in 1962's scandalous bestseller, *Sex and the Single Girl* by Helen Gurley Brown. This controversial book was essentially a "how to" guide for the working girl, a road map to "having it all" without falling into the indignity and parasitism of housewifery. Brown candidly admitted that American working girls *have sex*, emphasized that they should have sex, and said that married men were fair game. She was also consistently contemptuous of the American housewife. So Brown has always drawn fire from those who protect the interests of middle class matrons ("Bad Girl" 1996).

Within a year, *Sex and the Single Girl* had earned Brown \$2 million in today's dollars. The book "went paperback" with a first run of a million copies and a huge advertising budget, then gleaned the largest amount ever paid for the film rights to a nonfiction book, she was again in the public eye ("Sex," 1965).

In 1965, Brown made news again when she was hired to rescue the circulation of *Cosmopolitan*. Brown repositioned the magazine as a monthly version of her book. The new *Cosmo* threatened the status quo in its unabashed libertinism and its flagrant disrespect for the middle class married woman, but it also devoted considerable space to telling working girls how to build their careers. And, though she encouraged women to go after men aggressively, her avowed purpose was *not* to help girls get married, but to teach them "how to stay single in superlative style." (Sex," 1965). The response was dramatic: circulation increased 16% in the first three years and the advertising revenue more than doubled (Dienstfrey, 1983).

Brown and her followers are important to our topic for several reasons. First, the overwhelming success of her book and magazine are testimony to the size and power of a large group of women with a

sense of its own social identity, who saw sex and work as the key components of empowerment, even in the early 60s. Second, the reaction of the Feminine Mystique Moms (and their champions) is proof of their sensed vulnerability to the specter of an attractive, sexually-liberated working girl. Third, the professional women who would eventually form NOW in the mid-1960s were more like Brown (who was solidly identified with that wing of the movement) than like the Boomer girls' moms. And, as a frequent commentator on feminism in the national press, Brown was prominent among the first ranks of the Second Wave. The new feminist movement, however, also gave Brown a sense of permission to be even more aggressive in her attacks on housewives (Brown 1971, p. 27).

Finally, just as Brown's earliest followers were challenging the comfort of the Mystique Moms, the Boomer girls were introduced to an avatar of successful single working girls. She was called "Barbie."

TROJAN TOY BOX

Barbie was the first fashion doll made available to the mass of American children. Wealthy children have long had dolls with exquisite wardrobes, but before mass production the dolls owned by ordinary children were home-made, crude in design, and often of indeterminate sex. The first mass-produced dolls were baby dolls, which reinforced traditional roles by encouraging the child to "play mother." In the early 20th century, "little girl" dolls with chubby faces, flat chests, and stocky legs also became popular. Both types were thought to be "healthy" and "correct" toys because they encouraged mothering as play. By the mid-20th century, adult dolls had disappeared (Fraser, 1973; Formanek-Brunell, 1993; Singleton, 1927).

Therefore, as an adult doll with an extensive, up-to-date, and beautifully-crafted wardrobe, Barbie presented a possibility for play new to Americans of her time. The brainchild of Ruth Handler, founder and chief executive officer of Mattel Toys, was inspired by the hours of play Handler saw her daughter devote to paper dolls. She wanted to produce a three-dimensional doll that could wear stylish outfits, but engineers at Mattel insisted that such a doll could not be made. On a 1957 trip to Europe, Handler saw an adult doll modeled on a “naughty” German cartoon character. Handler brought it back to show the doubters in engineering. Barbie was a replica of that German doll (Lord, 1994).

The shape of the Barbie doll is attributable to the erotic nature of that cartoon, but also to practical limitations posed by her clothes. The original clothes were miniatures of outfits that a grown woman would love to have as her own. Made of the same fabrics as life-size prototypes, the clothes were sewn in exquisite detail: finished seams, linings, buttons, buttonholes, and real zippers. The designs were in the current style, with narrow waists and either straight or wide, circular skirts. Because the fabrics were the same as in the adult-sized versions of the clothes, Barbie’s waist had to be extra small to allow for the gathering at the base of the bodice (Lord, 1994). The clothes often had special trims, like ribbons or fur, and intricate work, like fine pleating or tiny appliqués. Outfits came accessorized with the shoes, bag, hat, and other props to complete the appearance of a girl engaged in many activities.

Barbie and her wardrobe have always suggested a range of imaginative situations, but initially many of the scenarios were fashion work-related. Barbie had the clothes and props to be a fashion designer (“Fashion Designer” 1960-61, “Busy Gal” 1960-61), a dress shop owner (“Barbie Fashion Shop” 1960-

61), a fashion editor (“Fashion Editor” 1965), and a fashion photographer (“Photo Fashion” 1965).

A group of young women recruited from fashion design worked on producing Barbie’s wardrobe. The team was led by Charlotte Johnson, who had worked in the garment industry since she was seventeen. Johnson, tall and blonde, bore an uncanny resemblance to Barbie herself. She was also single, sexually aggressive, a perfectionist, and a tough negotiator. She not only designed the first clothes for Barbie, she supervised their production in Japan--no small achievement for a woman in the late 1950s. Johnson was assisted by a textile consultant, Lawanna Adams. Another woman, Hiroe Okubo-Wolf, designed Barbie’s makeup, while Jean Ann Burger styled Barbie’s hair (Lord 1994). The women who produced and marketed Barbie--*all* successful professionals--groomed, dressed, and packaged their doll as a miniature version of themselves.

Since the Industrial Revolution began with the opening of the first textile factories, fashion in America has been a big business and it has *always* hired large numbers of young female workers. Workers in factories that produced shoes, notions, and millinery, were also mostly teen-age girls, as were the garment industry workers in the late 1800s. The designers of the early New York fashion scene, which exploded in the success of clothing manufacture, were often female, powerful, and rich. Department store clerks were also female—and the market expertise they developed became one of the surest routes to the top for American women. Employees of the fashion magazines that emerged to advise American women as consumers of the new goods—art directors, editors, publicists—were also female.

The movement of young women from the rural farmlands to the urban centers to work in some aspect of fashion was a major cultural phenomena of the 19th and early 20th century. Concerns of the middle class over the sexual morality of working girls (presumed to be weak at best) is a predominant theme that provided the impetus for many Progressive Movement initiatives such as the YWCA (Cott, 1977; Meyerowitz 1988; Peiss, 1986).

By the 1950s, however, an elite among the women in the fashion industry had emerged: famous designers (Pauline Trigère, Hattie Carnegie), powerful fashion editors (Carmel Snow, Edna Woolman Chase), wealthy cosmetics manufacturers (Elizabeth Arden, Helena Rubinstein), influential publicists (Muriel Fox and Helen Nash) and important advertising professionals (Helen Resor, Ruth Waldo). Barbie was clearly designed with this elite in mind.

Though Barbie was outfitted with the clothes and accoutrements to be a designer or editor, it is notable that she was sold with the explicit description, “teen-age fashion model.” In the 50s, modeling was only just emerging from disrepute. Like chorus girls, models had been stereotyped as the illicit playmates of prosperous married men. Even successful models did not use their real names for fear of bringing shame on their families. But by the end of the 50s, this status was beginning to change, but the new respectability was still fresh and the stigma still applied in the eyes of middle class matrons (Gross, 1995). The old model’s immorality probably clung to Barbie in the eyes of the Mystique Moms.

In Mattel’s consumer testing, Handler found out what the Barbie generation soon learned: kids loved Barbie, but mothers absolutely *hated* her. In “Mom’s” eyes, Barbie was too sexy, too grown-up, too

flamboyant. Mothers wanted dolls that were either babies or little girls, not adults. This prudish reaction, symptomatic of the typical discomfort mothers feel about their own daughters’ sexuality, is usually overlooked in the many critical essays that have been written about Barbie. Right from the first, however, Ruth Handler was advised that little girls might see owning a Barbie as a way of rebelling against their mothers (Lord, pp. 38-40).

Retailers also did not accept Barbie. Sears, one of Mattel’s biggest customers, refused to stock Barbie because she was too sexy. Most of the trade followed Sears’ lead. When the ad campaign broke in March, 1959, Barbie dolls stood on toystore shelves collecting dust. Then summer came and, without apparent reason, those dolls seemed to walk out the door. Within months, sales exploded and an unprecedented phenomenon was upon the scene (Lord 1994). My theory: it took about three months for little girls to wear down their mothers’ resistance. I base this hypothesis on personal experience.

A FIRST GENERATION MEMOIR

As my mother repeatedly informed me, Barbie was “not the kind of woman that nice little girls grew up to be.” The old doll did not have the wide-eyed, puff-brained innocence of today’s Barbie. She had slitty, slanty eyes that never met your gaze. She wore heavy eyeliner, lascivious shoes, and dangling earrings. And her breasts--well, I had to beg for a Barbie from my Southern Baptist family because of those boobs. My sister and I didn’t know the word for it, but we could tell from the reaction of our parents that Barbie was a slut. Nobody ever told me I “had to look like Barbie,” as feminists often claim. Instead, the message came through loud and clear that I was never to show up *anywhere* looking like Barbie. I remember the arguments with my mother. Aunts, grandmothers--all of them closed ranks on us. We dug in our heels. We

won. I can *still* feel the triumph. I don't remember how long it took, but three months sounds about right.

"Playing Barbies" was like a grand adventure you made up yourself, usually in spontaneous collaboration with a small group of playmates. Each girl provided the voice for her doll, moved her about in response to the action, and helped spin the narrative as the group went along. Each owner controls the character of her Barbie, but it is not necessarily true that the child "is" the doll nor that she wants to "be like" the doll. You can play your Barbie as a witch, a starlet, a mermaid, a criminal, or a wicked stepsister. As another early owner remembers: "Barbie was her own woman. She could invent herself with a costume change: sing a solo in the spotlight one minute, pilot a starship the next" (p. 9). The claims of today's feminists that girls of the early 60s were indoctrinated to *be* Barbie underestimates the imaginative range of doll-play and the rebelliousness of the Boomer girls.

There was considerable pressure, as you might imagine, to turn Barbie into a wife and mother by providing her the appropriate clothes and props (Boy, 1987). Ruth Handler resisted. That's why Barbie had sisters, but no children, and why she was begrudgingly given a boyfriend and a wedding dress, but no clothes for the PTA meeting. It is particularly interesting that Ken, reluctantly introduced by the Barbie ladies in 1961, has never been a very successful doll (Lord 1994). My own recollection—and I have confirmed this with several first-generation owners among my current friends—is that Ken was not considered particularly desirable as either a man or a toy. In the social world of "playing Barbies," the fashion doll's boyfriend was little more than another accessory. In this attitude toward men, the Barbie ethos was much like Helen Gurley Brown's—they were nice to have, but they were not the main show. Yet for the Feminine Mystique crowd, the

necessity of being married was unquestionable.

First generation Barbie owners experienced vicariously the discomfort a teen-age girl's appearance could cause their own mothers, as well as the upset that could be produced by their own playful practices. Importantly, the catalyst *was a toy made in the image of a single working woman*, a concept that was anathema to the postwar ethic of middle class motherhood. As Boomer girls were learning this lesson, real working girls in fashion were waging another revolution, a vehicle the younger generation would eventually ride to their own rebellion.

OUR MOTHERS' SKIRTS

As in other domains of culture during the 1950s, trends in the fashion world had been rather conservative. In the pages of Vogue and Bazaar, socialites modeled ballgowns for the cameras of famous photographers. Society tastes were inclined toward mature women with dignified, worldly-wise beauty. The prevailing tastes in clothes and makeup were understated. The big "stars" were two socialites, Babe Paley and Gloria Guinness, both in their fifties. Their thoughts on fashion, as well as their photographs, were the gold of the fashion pages. When Jacqueline Kennedy became First Lady in 1960, she commanded *some* of the attention away from Paley and Guinness. Magazine articles also frequently featured Jackie's older sister, Princess Stanislaus Radziwill ("The Face of the Hour," 1967, p. 155; also, Bender. 1967: Lobenthal, 1990; Milbank 1989; Tapert and Edkins, 1994).

In contrast, the emergent fashion trends of the 1960s reflected the class loyalties of a new generation of designers, as well as the early influence of the "youthquake." Conventional wisdom gives credit for the first blow to British designer Mary Quant, who invented the miniskirt and

popularized the Sassoon haircut. “What was wrong with that stage was that fashion only came through one route, which was designed for a way of life which was very much that of a minority,” remembered Quant, “I came in wanting to create for people like me and for a life that was very real: women who had a job and a fantasy life that took that job into account.” (1990, p. 9). A group of British designers followed, all inspired by young working class dress and insistent on creating clothing affordable by that group. In Paris, similar forces were discernible in the work of Emmanuelle Khanh, Christianne Bailly, Michele Rosier, and Sonia Rykiel (Bender, 193). British and French designers contracted with American ready-to-wear manufacturers to make their clothes available and affordable. Thus, Penney’s, Macy’s, and other well-known retailers came to carry the revolutionary new fashions very early.

Even in couture, however, new designers took their cues from the young and employed. André Courrèges, Emmanuel Ungaro, and Paco Rabanne objected to the elitism of the couture system, with its concentration on older women, which they saw as emblematic of its inherent snobbery and sexism. They expressed their disdain by designing outrageous eveningwear, made of styrofoam or chain mail. Courrèges early collections broke stride by emphasizing pants, miniskirts, white glacé boots, and Mary Jane flats (Lobenthal 1990). *New York Times* Fashion Critic Marilyn Bender wrote about the Courrèges look: “The woman who adopted it, becoming or not, served notice that she had cut her ties with the past” (1967, p. 55).

The revolution continued at retail. Biba in London and Paraphernalia in New York were both central to “Pop Fashion.” These stores promoted clothes in surroundings designed to stimulate the spirit of playing “dress-up.” Customers were encouraged to spend hours playing

with the clothes and accessories. This playtime atmosphere became typical of boutiques everywhere—even those that were installed within department stores by the end of the decade (Lobenthal).

At Paraphernalia, a kind of improvisational, use-whatever’s-in-the-box-today playfulness also prevailed. Designer Elisa Stone recalls of her dresses : “I thought of them as toys” (Lobenthal, 1990, p. 92). One group of Stone’s dresses were made of soft brown paper, decorated with strips of construction paper that dangled like giant bugle beads. Betsey Johnson, perhaps the most famous Paraphernalia designer, produced a do-it-yourself dress: a shell of clear plastic with a small kit of adhesive numbers, letters, and squiggles that the consumer could arrange and attach as she pleased. In their laughing, imaginative way, these designers were determined to break every convention of fashion (“We were all protesting one way or the other”) (Lobenthal, 1990, p. 80).

The new fashions were closely associated with music and models. Following the introduction of the Beatles in America in 1964, British working-class youth culture became the hottest thing there, in fashion as well as music. A model named Jean Shrimpton, who had long hair, large eyes, and a strong romantic appeal, epitomized the “Young London Look” (or the “Carnaby Street Look” or “the Mod Look”). Patti Boyd, a model who was romantically connected to George Harrison and, later, Eric Clapton, had round blue eyes, blonde hair, chubby cheeks, and wore her straight hair long with deep bangs that reached her eyelids. Though other English models were more boyish in their short Sassoon haircuts, long, heavy bangs like Boyd’s typified the London look. Everywhere, the new fashion was also associated a new kind of dance club, the discothèque. Cheetah, the quintessential 1960s discothèque, even included a boutique of discowear on the

premises. People came in, bought new clothes, changed into them, and went dancing (Lobenthal 1990).

When the toybox attitudes toward dress that were to characterize the 1960s began to appear within the dignified, formal, mature aesthetic of the Mystique Moms, the reigning socialites surmised that the influence was the younger generation. Gloria Guinness wrote an article for *Bazaar* in 1964: “You asked me to report to you on the new super world of the young. Well, I have bad news. We are being licked. They are invading our territories, stealing our pleasures and destroying our illusions” (p. 120-121).

MAKING FACES

Leslie Hornby was only fifteen when she arrived in the U. S. as “Twiggy.” Crowds of young girls swarmed in for her appearances, as they had for the Beatles. *Newsweek* called Twiggy “the first child star in the history of high fashion, crowned queen of the mod by the same adolescent army of teen-spenders that has already seized and conquered pop music” (“Twiggy,” 1967, pp. 62-66).

In the glare of Twiggy’s popularity among very young girls, Mattel quickly introduced a Twiggy doll and a new friend for Barbie, named Casey. Both dolls were shorter and flatter so that they could wear the new Mod clothes. The connection back to play from fashion was thus made almost immediately—and it still had its rebellious element: “‘Mod’ was not arbitrary, but a systematic effort to throw off the codified fashions of the 1950s--fashions that had made Barbie’s name.” (Lord, pp. 62-3).

For Twiggy’s young fans, a distinguishing aspect of their idol’s appearance was her makeup (Twiggy 1968, pp 23-24). The face of the Mod emphasized the eyes. For this look, you wore very light-colored lipstick, which minimized the lips in the

face. The skin was matte, but eyelids were elaborately painted. Usually different colors were used, the darkest in the crease of the lid and sometimes arched higher than its natural line in order to achieve the illusion of roundness. Twiggy’s eyes big and circular according to the preference of the look, but she devised a more emphatic way of painting them. Using the same basic strategy I have just described, she painted a dark line in the lid with eyeliner, short lines under the lower lids, and added two pair of false eyelashes on her upper lids and one on her lower lids. Her eyes looked enormous. Other teenage girls around the world were soon gluing eyelashes on, too.

Twiggy was the same age as girls who had been eight when Barbie was introduced. Now in their early teens, they extended their play years by emulating her—and an affordably-priced line of “Twiggy” designs was quickly introduced to help them do it. Girls wrote to Twiggy with practical questions (“When you put on and take off mascara every day don’t your eyelashes fall out?”) and declarations of admiration (Twiggy, 1968, p. 146). Twiggy’s followers had yet to reach a point where womanly curves were either a blessing or a problem. Like many her age, Twiggy’s metabolism allowed her to eat massive amounts of fat, sugar, starch, and “all the rubbish in the world” without getting heavier (Twiggy, 1968; De Caro, 1988).

Twiggy has been chastised endlessly for setting a beauty standard that most women had to starve to achieve. If older women did starve themselves to look like Twiggy, they *chose* her from among recognized mature beauties and so were not “forced” into it. The fashion press, as late as 1967, still provided many images of mature women, beautifully coifed and dressed, accompanied by columns of lavish praise.

Newsweek described Twiggy’s body in explicitly child-like terms: “Her figure

belongs to the youngest of Venus's handmaidens, not to Venus herself; four straight limbs in search of a woman's body, a mini-bosom trapped in perpetual puberty, the frail torso of the teen-age choirboy." ("Twiggy," 62). An *Elle* editor delivered the kind of back-hand that was often used to describe Twiggy and her fans: "With that underdeveloped, boyish figure, she is an idol to the 14- and 15- year-old kids. She makes a virtue of all the terrible things of gawky, miserable adolescence."

In response to such insults, Twiggy, like many of the young at that time, was bluntly patronizing in her rejection of age for youth: "Sometimes I cry at those old films on telly on Sunday afternoon, with stars like Ava Gardner or Greta Garbo. They were so beautiful weren't they, and now they're old. Attractive, I s'pose, but older. I think that's sad" (Twiggy, 1968, p. 140).

With that kind of flat declaration, the war between the Boomer Girls and their Moms was officially on. Two competing aesthetics clashed. On one side was a waistless, breastless silhouette and a very short skirt. On the other side were big skirts and small waists. One face had big eyes and disappearing lips; the other had bright red lips and unremarkable eyes. One wore spiked heels; the other flat, childlike boots or Mary Janes. One swept her hair back and up from her face; the other peeked out from long, shiny bangs. Mothers' reactions to the long bangs typical of the Mod Look is now a shared memory among those who were young girls at the time. Diane Ackerman recalls: "I know so many women whose mothers would greet them--sometimes before even saying hello--by pushing their hair straight back and exclaiming, 'You'd look so much better with the hair off your face,' and it's always accompanied by yanking the hair back severely, as if it should be held by an Ace bandage" (Ackerman

1994, p. 192). The female children of the Baby Boom were well-known long before they went to college for rubbing their mother's noses in a rebellious aesthetic.

DRESS POLITICS

Frequent dances held in the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco provided throngs of hippies with an occasion to dress up. But their "dress up clothes" were more like those worn by children at play than adults out for an evening: "They came as if there might never be anything like it again. They were in Mod clothes, Victorian suits, and granny gowns, Old West outfits, pirate costumes, free-form costumes" (Lobenthal 109). In the culture of the Haight, dressing was for fun and self-expression, but also for subversion. The community that symbolized both the promise and alienation of the younger generation was full of runaways and improvised communal living arrangements. So, the dress ethic of also created new identities for daily life: "Haight-Ashbury's orgiastic and egalitarian utopia asked its participants to sever old loyalties and prior identities. New clothes were essential to this rite of passage." (Lobenthal 109).

Famed for its free sexual attitudes, casual drug culture, "acid rock," "psychedelic" graphics, and pleasure ethic, this colorful, defiant neighborhood was the mecca for the hippie culture of the late sixties, distilling as it did the attitudes of the young across America toward the morals and dress codes of their elders. Hippie dress was only a signpost for a network of threatening behaviors.

The "counterculture" was also tied to the emergent "New Left." Street theater tactics adopted by the Left were formally similar to the sensual expressions of the Aquarian Age—it was hard to distinguish "Love-Ins" and "Happenings" from "Sit-Ins" and protest rallies. The dress, music,

and, often, the participants were the same. By 1970, however, things were beginning to turn sour within the Left. Violent actions of groups like the Weathermen were shocking even to those within the movement—and the sexism of the men in the SDS and the Black Panthers was causing growing discontent among the women (Cohen 1988; Brownmiller, 1999).

The ranks of the “New Feminists,” as they were called by the press, were composed of recent college graduates who were motivated to start a feminist movement by the shabby treatment they received from male leaders of the Left. Many brought those tactics and philosophies to the movement, which meant that feminism, which had been fairly “ladylike” up to that time, would suddenly be the force behind all kinds of subversive acts and outrageous dress (Cohen 1988; Brownmiller, 1999).

The New Feminists’ everyday appearance identified them with other political radicals. They either wore their hair cut very short or let it go long, straight, and free. They wore blue jeans and T-shirts most of the time and often did not wear bras. Sturdy shoes rather than spiked heels were required and hand-made, imported clothing not contaminated by capitalist machinery was preferred. Though the look was supposed to be a fist in the face of “the Establishment,” by 1970 it had come to be a stereotype of its own (Marks, 1971). Since both men and women of the youth movement dressed this way, you could say the ensemble was gender-neutral. However, it was not in the least socially neutral, but instead was the sign of a particular age group, as well as a college education and leftist politics.

The earliest statements of the New Feminist aesthetic were actually ritual acts. The first, held at the Miss America pageant in 1968, involved tossing grooming products and clothing into a “Freedom Trashcan.” The act was designed to signify that this group of

feminists rejected traditional grooming methods and the project of “looking pretty,” as symbolic of their oppression (Cohen 1988). However, it is instructive to note that the specific articles destroyed—girdles, long-line bras, eyelash curlers, falsies—were no longer used by young women, but were synecdochal of their mothers’ aesthetic.

Written works emerging from the young radicals consistently advocated that women cut their hair, stop shaving their legs, stop wearing makeup, and refrain from having sex with the enemy. The free sensuality and exuberant experimentation of the 1960s quickly faded as the radicals attempted to force this aesthetic on their sisters (Cohen 1988; Brownmiller, 1999).

COUNTERCULTURE BARBIE

In the breach between the well-groomed professionalism of NOW and the grim neo-Puritanism of the New Feminists appeared a new leader observers called “the thinking man’s Jean Shrimpton, “Goldie Hawn with brains,” and, significantly, “a counterculture Barbie doll” (Cohen 1988, p. 223). When Gloria Steinem (a long-time member of “the Beautiful People” and a well-established player in the Radical Chic circles) discovered feminism, the American press was starry-eyed. Steinem had experienced her conversion to feminism while covering a meeting of Redstockings for trendy *New_York* magazine in 1968 (“Gloria Steinem,” 1971). In her first article, Steinem thus bestowed the ultimate honor upon the feminist movement: she declared it hip and young and radical. But from the start, she also positioned the movement as an explicit opposition between an older generation of married women and the husband-free banner-carriers for the Sexual Revolution who were their daughters (Cohen 1988, p. 226).

Between 1971 and 1974, Steinem appeared on the covers of *People*, *McCall's*, *Newsweek*, *Redbook*, and *New Woman*, representing the movement. "In hip-hugging raspberry Levis, two-inch wedgies and tight poor-boy T-shirt, her long, blond-streaked hair falling just so above each breast and her cheerleader-pretty face made wiser by the addition of blue-tinted glass, she is a chic apotheosis of with-it cool," observed *Newsweek* of Gloria Steinem in 1971, "Her cheekbones are broad and high, her teeth white and even; the fingernails on her tapered hands are as long and carefully tended as a tong chef's" ("Gloria," 1971, p. 51). Observed Tom Wolfe: "At certain times the press is really looking for people to embody a trend the way fashion magazines look for women who actually wear the clothes they put out. And the press would rather have Gloria be Women's Liberation than the other trolls working under the bridge" (Levitt, 1971, p. 87).

Gloria Steinem was bright, she was hip, she was attractive, she was firm in her convictions, she was funny, and she was very, very popular. Soon she was travelling the country, speaking at colleges and in town halls. She was so in demand that her agency said it could book her twice a day, every day (Levitt, 1971). University students pinned her photographs to their bulletin boards (my own college scrapbook contains her picture, now yellow and fragile, from the student newspaper). Young women all over America began to sport the distinctive Steinem "look"--long, straight, streaked hair, parted in the middle and held to the temples with aviator glasses (Figure 1). She came to stand for the movement as an attractive icon, a cult figure.

Gloria had grown up in poverty, but by the mid-1960s she was earning thirty thousand dollars a year as a writer, then an

impressive income. As a beauty editor of *Glamour* in the early 1960s, Gloria had also appeared as a fashion model. She was the *Glamour* girl for February 1964 and was photographed having her hair cut by Sassoon. Magazines ran stories on the decoration of her apartment, the way she entertained, and her beauty regimen. She evaluated new fashions like textured stockings for the *New York Times* and covered new designers. Though a talented writer, Steinem's place in *The Beautiful People* was also a function of personal beauty, distinctive dress, and media instinct. Gloria, like other working women of the 1960s, had discovered that looks and a knowledge of fashion could be used to gain an entrée into the nation's elite circles (Bender, p. 40). She appeared at the right parties, wearing the latest fashions and in the company of people like Jackie Kennedy, Norman Mailer, and Andy Warhol (Steinem, 1967). Gloria was also "clearly a man's woman" (Smith 1972, p. 70). By the late 60s, she had been linked to Mike Nichols, Paul Desmond, Herb Sargent, Rafer Johnson, and Ted Sorenson--all of them, as they say, "very eligible." It was well known that these men, confirmed bachelors, were inevitably anxious to tie the knot with Steinem, who, just as inevitably, refused every one (Cohen 1988). Such suitors were living proof that Gloria was not joining feminism because she was hard up for dates. The apparent abandon with which she went from one to another implied her own confidence in her ability to attract and hold whomever she chose.

Steinem's habit of hopping from man to a man was probably threatening in the old working-girl way for middle class housewives, as was her rhetoric. Her promise of the benefits to men of the "Women's Liberation" Movement was: "Fewer boring women, childlike wives; no more unearned alimony (think of the votes for that issue): no more responsibility for the identity of a semi-adult human being; fewer lady parasites attached to rich and

gifted men. . . “(Steinem, 1970 p. 53). When asked why she didn’t marry, she could sometimes be a little harsh: “. . . the role of ‘wife’ is so inhuman and unattractive to men.” (Boe, 1972).

Gloria Steinem in the early days of the Second Wave was very much like Barbie. She was long-legged and (then) blonde. She was the height of fashion in her style and dress. She had been a model and a fashion writer. She was a single woman who made a good salary, and was hostile to stay-at-home housewives. Men loved her, but she seemed to treat them like accessories. She was associated with rebellion against traditional notions of femininity and sexuality—and she appealed immensely to a generation of women who had long since learned to see radical potential in her appearance.

CONCLUSION

Feminist orthodoxy thus developed as antifashion, often anti-sex, and always anti-Barbie. Had this generation in fact been held hostage to Barbie and the commercial culture she represented, the giant cohort of little girls coming of age during the late 1960s should have brought with them the end of feminism. But that is not what happened.

Indeed, the very techniques of the New Feminists—rebellious through dress and in imaginative acts of political invention—were similar to the ways they had made cultural challenges all along, whether the vehicle was Barbie, Twiggy, or a trashcan of bras.

Still, Barbie remains the symbol against which feminism sets its anchor. It has not been enough for Barbie to be a doctor, a lawyer, a pilot, or an executive. It has not been enough that she has remained single and childless all these years. It has not been enough that she is now available in every hair color, skin tone, and ethnic dress imaginable. For decades now,

feminist critics have been telling us that “playing Barbies” is damaging. Barbie, they tell us, is “unrealistic” and thus encourages girls to create fantasy worlds when they play. Aside from being an odd criticism to make of a toy, this attitude overlooks the very important role that “unrealistic” expectations from the oppressive culture of the first owners’ childhood, coupled with the ability to imagine themselves in alternative lives, may have played in the genesis of the Second Wave.

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See more of Monique RenÃ©e - Rebellion Barbie Cosplay on Facebook. Log In. or. Create New Account. See more of Monique RenÃ©e - Rebellion Barbie Cosplay on Facebook. Log In. Forgot account?Â This is a Rebellion, isn't it? I rebel. My Jyn Erso costume from Rogue One is finally complete!! I still have a few adjustments to make, but I'm at the point that it's all very minor now. I'm so excited, this has been a labor of love, which is just mindblowing to me since I don't even know Jyn Erso yet, but I feel like I already love her. Woman after my own heart <3. I'm the face behind this costume, but I have a whole lot of people who have helped me get here. Released in 1992 on Sega Genesis (Mega Drive). Barbie Mattel Toy.Â Barbie Super Model is an Action game, developed by Tahoe Software and published by Hi Tech Expressions, which was released in 1992. You may also be interested to play with. play. Barbie Vacation Adventure. Barbie Mattel Toy. play. Sonic. Sonic Platform Sega.