Finding the “Lost Generation”: Redefining Canadian youth as consumer-citizens

by Emily Truman

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Abstract

This work examines how teenage notions of citizenship are shifting due to this group's historical relationship with consumer culture. Despite widespread cultural reports of a crisis of youth citizenship, I argue that teenagers are embracing the role of the consumer-citizen. Specifically, the thesis explores how Ontario high school students engage in anti-corporate activism as a form of civic participation. It addresses how these practices remain invisible in adult discussions of youth citizenship because they fall outside of the framework of the traditional civic republican model. This model views low voter turnout rates as the central indicator of the problem of youth citizenship, and employs educational reform as a solution. The differing ideological frameworks which produce the contrasting teenage and adult conceptions of citizenship are highlighted. Finally, the thesis emphasizes the dynamic nature of teenage conceptions of citizenship, which demonstrate a complex understanding of Western democracy in the twenty-first century.

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*For my mother and my father,
who support me in every endeavour*

Chapter 1: Introduction - Talking about Youth and the “crisis” of Citizenship

Mike Cameron could have become the stuff of urban legend, but in this media saturated world there were too many witnesses to the “crime” that had him suspended from Greenbrier High School, in Evans, Georgia. More than simply an occurrence which generated media attention in 1998, Mike’s “Coke Day” prank has been elevated to pop culture folklore, appearing as evidence for pop culture critics and media watchdogs, such as Naomi Klein¹ and Adbusters² magazine, that some sort of shift is occurring in the collective consciousness of the Western world. When Mike made the choice to reveal a Pepsi shirt on his school’s sponsored “Coke Day” during a large group photo, he was recognizing (along with the fact that it would make a great joke which would antagonize school officials) that corporate sponsorship was invading the public space of his high school. When asked to explain his behaviour, Cameron responded: “That’s my personality,...I don’t like to follow the trend of everyone else” (“Coke day prank”, 1998). Regardless of motive, Cameron’s actions illustrate a certain understanding of the complexities facing modern teenagers today: in an increasingly corporatised and commercialized world, where is the space to explore the right to personal freedom and expression?

The answer to this question can be found in the social space where the conceptual terms of the teenager, consumerism, and citizenship meet and overlap. The aim of this thesis is to provide a framework for recognizing the shift that Mike Cameron represents, a

¹ See *No Logo: Taking aim at the brand bullies*, p. 95.

² See *Adbusters*, Summer 1998, p. 56.

world in which notions of citizenship are changing for North American teenagers. The challenge in identifying this shift stems from the social constructions which are involved in its definition. These constructions must be pulled apart and examined in order to understand the way in which they merge with each other to create new meaning.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an introduction to the central topic of this thesis: the relationship between teenagers and the concept of citizenship. The “language” and “problem(s) of youth” sections, which follow immediately, are designed to illustrate the ideological terrain in which the topic of the thesis operates. The chapter then moves on to examine the source of the perceived problem of youth as it relates to citizenship – low voter turn-out rates, as well as the adult-led solutions to solve this problem – educational reform. The following section addresses the theoretical implications of addressing the “problem” and “solution” in this way, suggesting that consumerism has become an agent of political socialization for today’s teens. This is the proposed space in which an alternative approach to youth’s understanding of citizenship is visible, the origins and components of which will be explored in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

The language: How we talk about teens in the media

Since the tragic events of the Columbine massacre which took place in Littleton, Colorado, on April 20, 1999, North American media have seemed intent on keeping youth in the spotlight. Inspired by the tragedy in Littleton, Colorado, Michael Moore’s *Bowling for Columbine* (2002) was one of many recent media texts to question youth and

its relationship with destructive culture. With widespread theatrical release and an Oscar win for best documentary, it has become part of a mainstream cultural dialogue about the trouble with teenagers. Whether the teenager is portrayed as “victim” of society or “threat” to society, the message is clear that as a culture we should be worried about our youth. Simply take a look at a sampling of Oprah Winfrey’s talk show topics from the last year: “Children left home alone”, “Is your child living a double life?”, “Suburban Teens: the new prostitutes”, “Secret thoughts of Children”, “Is there a child molester in your neighbourhood?”, “Shocking Teen Girls Hazing Incident”, “Controversy over young girls modelling online”, “Teen Dating Abuse”, and “Should your child be doing that?”.³

The year 2003 also saw the release of popular culture books concerned with similar issues, such as *Branded: The Buying and Selling of Teenagers*, by Alissa Quart, which examines the threat advertising and consumer culture poses to North American youth. At the same time, pop psychology books, such as *Rage, Rebellion and Rudeness: Parenting Teenagers in the New Millennium* written by Scott Wooding, teach parents how to tame the threat of their unruly teenage children. Echoing this sentiment, *Maclean’s* October 2003 edition carried the cover story “Kicking the Habit”, about the dangers associated with the increase in smoking rates among teenage girls.⁴ And in January of 2004, the Canadian edition of *Time* magazine led with the concerned cover

³ Access to a full list of show topics for the 2003 and 2004 seasons is available through “The Oprah Show Archive” at http://www.oprah.com/tows/pastshows/tows_past_main.jhtml

⁴ See *Maclean’s*, October 27, 2003.

story “Medicating young minds: are we giving kids too many drugs?”.⁵

The “problem(s) of youth”⁶: Why adults are concerned about teens

Given the high level of media interest in “the problem(s) of youth”, the following section seeks a cause for the existence of this social phenomenon. Generally speaking, the answer can be found in a distinct cultural behavioural pattern, in which adult culture often projects feelings of fear and uncertainty regarding a perplexing social, political, or cultural issue onto children. Designing solutions to protect children from “present dangers” provides adult culture with some measure of perceived control over the larger problem. Key issues of debate which centre around the welfare of youth are often smaller versions of debates taking place in society at large. As Thomas Hine, author of *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager* (1999), explains, the very creation of the “teenager” is proof of that fact: “The American teenager as we know it today is the product of adult uncertainty about what the world would become” (Hine 1999, p. 53).

While the above is true, some adults are nonetheless better positioned to talk about youth’s experiences on behalf of teenagers. In the context of the argument that I wish to make here, educational theorists such as Henry Giroux and Lawrence Grossberg

⁵ See *Time* (Canadian Edition), January 19, 2004.

⁶ In this chapter, the terms “child” or “children” (here referring to older children, ie. 8 to 13-year-olds), “teenager”, and “youth” are used interchangeably. Their historical roles as separate and distinct categories will be explored in detail in the literature review in Chapter 2.

are especially useful because in their examination and labelling of the ideological structures of adult culture, they suggest that these structures can impose limitations upon their members. While their guesses or projections about the experiences of youth may be no more true than those of adult culture in general, they nonetheless open up the theoretical space for an alternative teenage view to be acknowledged and explored.

Educational theorist Henry A. Giroux's asserts that the United States is "at war with its young people", a group he labels "the abandoned generation":

All youth are targets, especially those marginalised by class and colour. This is a war waged by liberals, conservatives, corporate interests, and religious fundamentalists against those public spaces, goods, and laws that view children and youth as an important social investment, and includes a full scale attack on children's rights, social services, the welfare state, and the public schools (Giroux, 2003, p. xvi).

In Western society, the care and protection of children falls to parental adult figures, and as such it is they who construct the legislative world which affects the rights and practices of youth. As a result, notes Henry Giroux, "[the children's] voices and needs are almost completely absent from the debates, policies,...that are constructed in terms of their needs" (Giroux, 2003, p. xvi). According to Giroux, societal concerns about children then are often framed through their relationship to the private sphere: "seen most clearly in the moral panics mobilized in the dominant media around children being abducted or preyed upon by paedophiles or other evil assailants" (Giroux, 2003, p. xvi). Visible issues surrounding the welfare of youth tend to be constructions of adult concerns about society's ability to protect its cultural future, rather than concerns and fears felt by youth themselves.

Cultural studies theorist, Lawrence Grossberg, joins Giroux in his examination of America's "war against children", in his article "Why Does Neo-Liberalism Hate Kids? The War on Youth and the Culture of Politics" (2001). Grossberg asserts that this widespread cultural attack on youth is representative of the adult need to re-imagine America's social, cultural, economic and political future; in essence to resolve themselves of blame for the creation of the current conditions of U.S. society (Grossberg, 2001). Analysing this assessment, Giroux claims "Grossberg correctly suggests that the war being waged against youth cannot be separated from the needs of many adults to discount their own responsibilities as engaged citizens and to erase the obligations of the future" (Giroux, 2003, p. xv). As the popular culture examples provided in the previous section illustrate, this ideological framework becomes visible through the vocabulary we presently use to discuss the problem(s) of youth. The tendency of North American media to move between the theoretical representational categories of youth as "victim" or youth as "threat" are guided by the social environment created by adult society. *Maclean's* magazine is able to move from the condescending cover story "How Teens Got the Power"⁷ in March of 1999, to the sympathetic "The Kids are All Right"⁸ two years later, because the issues being presented are occurring during a period of heightened concern occurring in adult culture, which is followed later by a period of temporarily reduced level of concern.

⁷ See *Maclean's*, March 22, 1999.

⁸ See *Maclean's*, April 9, 2001.

While there seems to be little debate in the field of popular culture studies about the elaborate framework through which particular topics referred to as “youth issues” become visible in mainstream media, there appears to be little examination about how youth actually feel, respond and react to the framing of these issues. In particular, Giroux wishes to address this issue in his work *The Abandoned Generation: Democracy Beyond the Culture of Fear* (2003):

...young people and communities of color [are becoming] collateral damage in an ongoing war against justice, freedom, citizenship, and democracy. [This book] argues that as desperate as these conditions appear at present, they have become the basis for a surge of political resistance on the part of many youth, intellectuals, labor unions, educators, and social activists all over the world (Giroux, 2003, p. xx).

Has the media been aware of this “surge of political resistance” in our youth? Perhaps, however recognition of this shift in a July 2003 *Newsweek* article continues to frame the issue in relation to adult questions and concerns. The article in question, appropriately titled “A Generation Finds Its Voice” (thus drawing a distinction between the values of the members of this generational group and those of other groups), examines the ways in which high school students across the United States have become “activists” in the wake of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. “A new wave of activism swept through America’s high schools this past year” the article explains; from walk-outs to mock United Nations debates to rallies, students were “infused with urgency and relevance” (Noonan, 2003).

Further examples of student initiated activism follow in the article; however, what gives meaning to this small collection of stories is the adult author’s ruminations on their possible meaning. The movements of activism are framed in a typical fashion, through

“adult” issues of concern:

[This social activism is] a welcome change from the 1990's, when prosperity seemed to trigger an epidemic of detachment among young people, and voter turnout among 18-to-24-year-olds dropped steadily. But will today's high school students remain politically active now that the war is over? Will these kids, who have lived through so many extraordinary events– the contentious 2000 presidential election, 9-11, Afghanistan– grow into civic-minded adults? (Noonan, 2003).

Note that although this article is embracing the idea of political activism as proof of a new generation of “civic-minded” youth, it is only recognizable to adult culture when placed within the traditional context of the civic republican model of citizenship. This model emphasizes the duties of the citizen towards the state, which helps to explain why adult culture continues to view the act of voting as proof of the presence of civic-minded qualities. This can be seen in the above quotation as the author characterises the political “detachment” of youth of the previous decade in terms of low voter turnout levels, which suggests as well that when he asks whether high school students will “remain politically active” he seems to be asking whether this generation will be more inclined to vote into their adulthood.

The article goes on to examine adolescent psychology, attributing the interest in the war in Iraq with the particular age of the youth activists in question (giving particular credit to the roles of adult parental figures and adult mediated schools in the proper political socialization of today's youth).

As they mature, teenagers commonly experience a window of idealism, experts say, around 15 to 17, when they begin to apply the values they've learned at home and in school (such as a sense of fairness) to the larger world around them. They often develop an almost utopian belief that the world ought to be as good as it can be, and that they can make it happen.

If this noble impulse coincides with a big event like war, it may lead to lasting changes in character (Noonan, 2003).

This article however, does not appear to believe its own contentions as it questions the permanency of this “new social movement” in its last paragraph: “Though the urgent buzz of war has faded, there’s no denying that for high-school kids, the world is a bigger and more complicated place than it was last fall. Anxious parents – and politicians – watch and wonder whether this means a new age of activism or the same old apathy” (Noonan, 2003).

The article ends with an upbeat explanation of the excitement of one of the student activists over his approaching eighteenth birthday which will make him eligible to vote. This is an attempt by the author to make a connection between what adult culture sees as a positive movement towards political change (ie. the “new” social activism practised by the youth of America), and what adult culture typically understands as traditional forms of political participation (ie. voting). As will be discussed in the following section, the issue of political participation is a popular and troubling topic in the current debate about youth related issues; one which is often framed from the viewpoint of “concerned” adults.

What and where is the crisis of citizenship?: A Canadian study of low voter turn-out rates

A quick read of Jon Pammett & Lawrence LeDuc’s study “Explaining the Turnout Decline in Canadian Federal Elections: A New Survey of Non-voters” (2003), reveals the acknowledgement that voter turnout in general has been on the decline in Canada since

1993, from 70% down to 61% in the 2000 general election (Pammett & LeDuc, 2003, p. 4). The study contends that when questioned, both voters and non-voters attributed the reason for the turnout decline to be the "...negative public attitudes towards the performance of the politicians and political institutions involved in federal politics" (Pammett & LeDuc, 2003, p. 7). The authors of the study raise an interesting point when they note that it has often been the case that citizens have complained about their governments and the politicians that represent them, so why has this resulted in a decline in voter turnout *at this particular point in time?* The study speculates that what the authors have identified as a "widespread feeling that political participation is meaningless" may be directly attributable to the decline in voter turnout (Pammett & LeDuc, 2003, p. 7).

How does this relate to the youth demographic of non-voters? This group cited the largest amount of non-voting reasons in the "lack of interest" category. 38.4% of 18-24 year olds gave the following reasons for not voting: not interested/didn't care, vote meaningless/election foregone conclusion, forgot/unaware, too complicated/confusing (Pammett & LeDuc, 2003, p.17). Furthermore, the study found that among non-voters there was a lack of understanding of the concept of civic duty, defined there as "...the feeling that participation is to be valued for its own sake, or for its contribution to the overall health of the polity" (Pammett & LeDuc, 2003, p. 38). Of those who voted in the 2000 election, 55.9% felt that it is "essential" that people vote in elections, while only 19.2% of non-voters agreed with the same statement (Pammett & LeDuc, 2003, p. 38). The link here made by the authors follows that "...the conscientious voter motivated by

civic duty feels that voting is important for its own sake” (Pammett & LeDuc, 2003, p. 38).

Section nine of the report is an analysis of the reasons given by both voters and non-voters for the decline in youth voter turnout rates. Participants were asked: “It has often been observed that young people are less likely to vote than older people. Why do you think that is?”, to which answers tended to fall into the two broad categories of “Not Integrated” and “Disengagement” (Pammett & LeDuc, 2003, p. 50). The conclusions of this section state that “...age is...an important predictor of the development of a feeling of civic duty”, and when an understanding of the concept of civic duty is missing, youth do not feel compelled to vote (Pammett & LeDuc, 2003, p. 50).

In an attempt to assemble some sort of consensus pertaining to the source of this lack of “civic duty” as a concept in the vocabularies of Canadian teenagers, the authors also hit upon what they labelled a possible “remedy” to the problem. When asked whether the participants believed that “schools should do more to educate children in the benefits of voting and political participation”, 83% of respondents stated that they strongly agreed or agreed with this statement (Pammett & LeDuc, 2003, p. 53). (See Figure 1). This “solution” was much more popular with participants than the alternative option of lowering the legal voting age to 16 years of age.⁹ Drawing on what the authors

⁹ The statement appeared in the original study as follows: “The voting age should be lowered to 16 to encourage young people to participate”. 77% of the total respondents claimed to either “disagree” or “strongly disagree” with that statement (Pammett & LeDuc, 2003, p. 54).

labelled “overwhelming agreement” by participants when asked to respond to the suggestion that schools should be more involved in civic education, they make the following observations:

Giving more attention to political education in the schools, media, and in the home, would...reinforce current policy thinking in educational circles, [for example] witness the efforts of provincial governments to build more civic training into the secondary school curriculums (Pammett & LeDuc, 2003, p. 54).

Solutions offered in the conclusion of the study relate directly to this idea of educational reform: “Increased attention to civic education in the schools, particularly as it pertains to social and political participation, will convey a positive message about the benefits of interacting with others in the fulfilment of civic duties” (Pammett & LeDuc, 2003, p. 73).

Clearly, in the minds of the Canadian public, the social institution of the school is recognized as the most appropriate place in which to educate youth about the notion of citizenship.

Figure 1* - “Schools should do more to educate children in the benefits of voting and political participation”

*reproduced from Pammett & LeDuc, “Explaining the Turnout Decline in Canadian Federal Elections: A New Survey of Non-voters” (2003), Table 44, p. 53.

Canadian youth and changing notions of citizenship

Similar to Henry Giroux's assertions that the United States is at war with its youth, Canadian teenagers have of late been referred to as the "lost generation" in relation to the concept of civic engagement. In 1996, the Ontario provincial government released a mandate for the reform of public education institutions within the province which began implementation in the fall of 1998. Among the curriculum changes was the requirement of forty hours of community service to be completed as a graduation diploma requirement, as well as a mandatory civics course requirement. The provincial government claimed that these changes would help to establish a link between individual students and the community, in order to better prepare students for 'the outside world'.

The purpose of these reforms was two-fold:

One is to provide young people with the skills, knowledge, and work habits they will need to find or create gainful and satisfying employment and be independent, productive, and contributing members of society. The second role is to help students fulfill their personal potential, develop general life and coping skills, 'learn to learn', build self-esteem, develop interests and integrity, and 'become good citizens' (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1997, p. 24).

Based upon a traditional civic-republican model of citizenship, the educational reforms appear to be an attempt to teach teenagers about the concept of civic duty. Why is this educational reform necessary? With an increasing number of government studies, such as the one produced by Pammett & LeDuc, showing that Canadians as a group are volunteering and voting less and less, there appears to be a need to change this trend. The overlying fear seems to be that "citizenship" as a cooperative notion is disappearing, and that something must be done to re-engage the public. The answer for adult culture is to

look towards the behaviour of youth as an indicator of this trend; they act as a “smaller” sample of the larger population. They are a convenient demographic from which to examine this “problem” both because they are a recognizably separate social group (thus projecting the blame away from adult culture), and also because as a group their actions are, to a certain degree, influenced by the adult population (thus an educational “solution” can be implemented to solve the perceived problem).

A national forum on Youth Voting was held in Calgary in October 2003, to address the issue of youth's disengagement from civic duty. In his keynote address, Election Canada's Chief Electoral Officer Jean-Pierre Kingsley acknowledged that youth voting is on the decline. Citing Pammett & LeDuc's 2003 study, Kingsley submitted that: “...while the turnout rate in the 2000 election was just over 64%, participation among 18-24-year-olds was much lower. In fact, just over 24% of Canada's youngest group of electors exercised their right to vote in that election. More than 75% of young people who had the right to vote in 2000 did not do so” (Kingsley, 2003, para. 8). Kingsley explained the reasons for the decline in youth voter turnout (as cited in the study) as: low levels of political interest and knowledge, declining sense of voting as a civic duty, administrative difficulties, and lack of contact with political parties and candidates (Kingsley, 2003, para. 10). The foreboding tone Kingsley attached to this decline in youth civic engagement could not be mistaken when he commented that: “...this trend is not unique to Canada. Research has found a similar age gap in many advanced democracies. I find no solace in that. Democracy contains a paradox within itself: it is strong when the people make it theirs; and it is vulnerable when they don't” (Kingsley, 2003, para. 9).

Unlike these other scholars and observers, I propose that the concept of “citizenship” is not disappearing, rather Canadian youth experience the concept of citizenship in a much different way than the traditional notion of rights versus duties. In short, traditional forms of citizenship are shifting. For teenagers today, the concept of citizenship has become mediated through the permeating notion of consumerism.

Through the historical rise of the teenager as cohesive social group, due in large part to the formation of the social institution of the High School, teenagers have become a lucrative consumer group targeted by the largest branded corporations in the Western world. It is in this context that Canadian youth have come to understand the concept of rights and duties as linked to their roles as consumers. This position is expressed through the concept of the consumer-citizen, which has come into existence through the expanding process of the globalization of American culture. The notion of the consumer-citizen is one in which the individual is no longer tied to the state through duty and responsibility; the consumer-citizen exercises their rights through consumer practices.

These changing notions of the connection between citizens, consumers and the state are important to examine in the exploration and reassessment of what citizenship means to teenagers. This thesis proposes that rather than being “lost”, these teenagers have created their own alternative categories from which to negotiate the role of the citizen, and may be “found” again if we shift our focus from preconceived notions of the concept of the citizen, towards new and changing notions of what it means to live and function in our present Canadian society.

The cultural roots of the political socialization of today's teenagers

According to David J. Jackson's *Entertainment and Politics: the Influence of Pop Culture on Young Adult Political Socialization* (2002), political socialization is a process by which an individual obtains knowledge which imparts political beliefs, values or norms (Jackson, 2002, pp. 3-5). Studies of the process of socialization traditionally identify specific agents which are thought to influence the growth and shaping of a child: the family, the school and peers, the church, and the news media. While Jackson acknowledges the importance of the traditional components of this list, the purpose of his book is to argue that entertainment media (television, pop music and movies) should be considered agents of socialization as well. He argues that there are competing social messages embedded in the cultural texts produced by television shows, pop music artists and mainstream filmmakers, which children today are constantly exposed to, aware of, and are using to construct their political reality. Jackson makes a convincing argument, however his assertions and examples are not pertinent to the overall argument being made in this thesis. What is relevant and interesting in the present context is the concept he identifies as *the reason for* the need to shift towards recognizing entertainment media as agents of socialization: the presence of "culture wars" which influence the political views of today's youth.

Summarizing the findings of his study, Jackson notes:

My conversations with students in classes and other settings and my review of the responses of students to open-ended survey questions demonstrate that young people today think about politics in ways that traditional political science terminology does not account for (Jackson, 2002, p. 22).

New terminology is needed because the political issues facing youth today belong to a different category of political ideology; they exist as a very different “set of coherent beliefs about politics” (Jackson, 2002, p. 6). Building on theoretical assertions from several other authors, Jackson outlines what he defines as traditional political ideology in the United States:

Historically, the polar opposite terms liberal and conservative imply choices between conflicting positions on issues such as the scope of governmental activity, the responsibilities of the federal versus the state and local governments, regulation of the economy, isolationism versus intervention in the affairs of other nation-states, and domestic social welfare spending (Jackson, 2002, p. 6).

Following this definition, it is noted “Young adults do not often think of these terms in this way” (Campbell and Strate, 1981, in Jackson, 2003, p. 6). The changing force is the “culture war”:

Political ideology for the young today includes a host of ‘culture wars’ or ‘life-style’ issues: attitudes towards religion, abortion, affirmative action, civil rights, conformism, gay rights, promiscuity, marriage, violence, women’s role and others *clearly not demarcated by the traditional definitions of liberal and conservative [terminologies]* (Jackson, 2002, p. 7) (emphasis added).

Jackson emphasizes the presence and importance of the culture wars in the lives of today’s youth: “...it is a battle for the hearts and minds of American youths over competing positions on a wide variety of socio-political issues...‘culture wars’ issues are important to young people generally, and especially among the young who are deeply engaged with the popular culture” (Jackson, 2002, p. 23).

This thesis proposes that *consumerism* must also be added to Jackson's list of lifestyle issues involved in the “culture wars” which affect North American teenagers.

The “teenager” and “consumer culture” are historically intertwined, giving meaning and purpose to each other, so much so that one concept cannot be defined without the other. Consumer culture acts as a mediating instrument, the framework through which teenagers come to understand their world.

Following this logic, Alissa Quart's *Branded: The Buying and Selling of Teenagers* (2003), asserts that the presence of consumer culture in the lives of teenagers is unquestionable:

Today's teens are victims of the contemporary luxury economy. They have grown up in the age of the brand, bombarded and defined by name products and intrusive and clever advertising strategies. Raised by a commodity culture from the cradle, teens dependably fragile self-images and their need to belong to groups are perfect qualities for advertisers to exploit...Kids are forced to embrace the instrumental logic of consumerism at an earlier-than-ever age (Quart, 2003, p. xii).

The tone of her assertions leave little to the imagination of the reader; Quart clearly sees the presence of branding as threatening. The inherent danger is “...the degree to which teens now consider marketing and promotion in their lives, as buyers of goods and as kids who consider their own character and personae brands unto themselves” (Quart, 2003, p. xii). Quart goes on to illustrate this contention through numerous industry examples of the desire to brand, and equally numerous personal teen testimonies of the desire to be branded.

There is a slight shift in the subject matter in the last section of the book however, where Quart moves towards an explanation of a process she labels “Unbranding”, namely instances of anti-corporate activism executed by “unbranding kids”. While these examples of resistance can clearly be read in a positive light given the oppressive

environment which created them (detailed in every previous chapter of the book), Quart also seems to hint at another element at play just below the surface of the branding/anti-branding game: "...the self-presentation of today's teen-brand-resisters indicates something...to me. Being anti-corporate and unbranded is a much needed 'other' identity for kids who have been cast as demographics rather than as citizens" (Quart, 2003, p. 196).

Seamlessly, David J. Jackson's discussion of political socialization has met Alissa Quart's anti-consumerism text of concern: "unbranding" is about more than denouncing a consumer product or logo. It is a way to understand the assertion of personal rights and freedoms, a "life-style issue" in the "culture wars". Consumer activism is a new framework for understanding how teenagers understand and participate in the concept of citizenship. This thesis takes up that issue.

After the broad introduction provided here, the following chapters will explore more specifically the key concepts and arguments of this thesis. Chapter 2 will explore the historical origins of the social categories of both the "child" and the "teenager". The aim of the historical analysis is to illustrate the ways in which these categories are social constructions which change over time in direct relation to conditions affecting society at large. The intended effect is to draw attention to the ways in which current moral panics over the disappearance of the concept of citizenship in today's Canadian youth can be framed in a larger historical context. This chapter also establishes the relationship between the teenager and consumerism. It will draw upon several historical surveys

which document the rise of the teenager as a specific social category which becomes intertwined with the rise of consumer culture in 1950's North America.

Chapter 3 will address the concept of the “consumer-citizen”. Through an explanation of traditional theories of consumption and citizenship this chapter will offer a comprehensive understanding of the “consumer-citizen”, a concept which emerges in late modern capitalist societies ruled by neo-liberal principles. In this type of society, it is theorized that market forces come to dominate the public sphere thus reducing the rights of citizens to the choices of the consumer. A link will then be established between the historical category of the teenager and the importance of consumer culture (as previously explored in chapter 2); the central idea being that the “teenager” is defined through consumerism and thus is naturally able to adopt the position of the “consumer-citizen”. This position is important for understanding the ways in which citizenship is being re-framed by Canadian teenagers: the “consumer-citizen” views rights as linked to individualistic consumer practices, rather than traditional civic duties “owed” to the state, such as voting.

Chapter 4 will move on to address the practice of adult culture’s notions of citizenship in Canadian high schools. In the context of this thesis it is important to examine the ways in which school officials are addressing concerns that citizenship as a practice is disappearing, because they are using a particular framework for both identifying and addressing the problem. This chapter will examine Ontario’s high school curriculum, specifically the recommendations of the special report produced by The Royal Commission on Learning (1993), which helps to explain the *perceived reasons*

held by adult culture in the justification of the need to alter Ontario's public school curriculum. A second important document, the curriculum reform which followed the Royal report– *Stepping Up!* (1996) – is important because it highlights the perceived importance of “teaching” teenagers to become good citizens. The new plan includes the implementation of a mandatory civics course, as well as the graduation requirement of forty hours of community service. Examining adult culture's notions of the concept of citizenship will reveal that practices which stem from this ideological framework, such as high school course work, are based upon traditional notions of citizenship stemming from the civic-republican model which exists very much outside of present teenage understandings of citizenship.

Juxtaposed against this movement towards the improvement of civic education, is the reality of the process of privatization in North American secondary schools. If the aim of improved civic education is to make better citizens of our youth, then privatization undermines this endeavour to a certain degree because it reduces the basic freedoms of teenagers in this environment. Schools short on government funding are being forced to find revenue from alternative sources, and multinational corporations interested in branding teenagers are extremely interested in buying access to what they consider a lucrative market: a social space which is comprised of *the* most desirable marketing demographic – 13-18 year olds, who due to mandatory attendance laws are together in this space for at least six hours every day, ten months of the year. Examining a sampling of theoretical work on this topic will allow the thesis to, first, establish the characteristics of this type of environment, and second, to suggest a connection between this

environment and the emerging concept of the teenage “consumer-citizen”.

Chapter 5 will examine teenage practices of citizenship as they occur in the space of the high school: cases of social activism in which high school students exercise their consumer-citizen rights. A number of general examples of student consumer activism which take place all over North America will be used to illustrate that although the target of the protest changes, the issues which drive the protests remains the same: students recognize that corporate infiltration of their public schools limits their “rights” to chose, and to speak and act freely. Chapter 5 will then move on to explore in detail, two case studies based in Ontario high schools: the students of Meadowvale Secondary School versus Youth News Network and the Peel District School Board, and Nicholas Dodds versus Pepsi-Cola Inc. and the York District School Board. Each case study is compiled from multiple texts, in large part from Canadian news sources including, *Maclean's*, *The Toronto Star*, *The Globe and Mail*, (as well as a number of other local and regional papers), and the *CTV News* archives. Other sources include websites linked to particular organizations, as well as several special reports published by non-profit institutes.

Examining multiple texts surrounding the same story is intended to establish a coherent and comprehensive interpretation of each case study. In particular, this thesis is interested in drawing out and exploring the reasons which teens use to justify their involvement in these acts of consumer activism: specifically the discussion of “rights” and how that concept is understood by the parties involved. Using texts mediated by adult culture to examine the voices of today’s youth establishes that adults do often provide the space for teenagers to speak in the public sphere. It is the project of my thesis however,

to highlight that *what is said* by youth can be interpreted differently by both groups, who place the comments within different contexts. I wish to emphasize that rather than speaking for youth, as I claim adult culture often attempts to do, I am revealing voices of youth which are already present in popular mainstream dialogue about teens. They need simply to be re-framed in order to be understood in the changing context of teenagers and citizenship; this opens up the space for different interpretations of teen behaviour. These cases, although they collectively involve only a small number of teenagers, illustrate the existence of a process of redefinition of the concept of citizenship; they are examples of the shifts of teenage consciousness that Mike Cameron's Coke day stunt suggests, a shift that for the large part is unexamined at present and therefore has gone unnamed.

Chapter 6 offers the overall conclusions of my argument: in light of the observations drawn in the previous chapters; it will explore the concept of the "Global Teenager". This is a socio-economic culturally diverse group bound together through the experience of consumerism. A group defined not only by what it buys, but also what it chooses *not* to buy. This is the conceptual space in which today's youth are constructing a generational conception of citizenship premised on the practices of a consumer culture.

Chapter 2 - From "Childhood" to the "Teenager": Understanding the Social Constructions of the Adult World

In framing my analysis, the "teenager" must be understood as an historical creation. As a construction, the social category of the teenager is then open to multiple interpretations; this is a group for which meaning, purpose, and value are constantly changing in relation to society at large. In the introduction to *Generations of Youth: Youth Cultures and History in Twentieth-Century America* (1998), editors Joe Austin & Michael Nevin Willard explain the framework in which the exploration of youth cultures must be placed.

The public debates surrounding 'youth' are important forums where new understandings about the past, present, and future of public life are encoded, articulated, and contested. 'Youth' becomes a metaphor for perceived social change and its projected consequences, and as such it is an enduring locus for displaced social anxieties. Pronouncements such as 'the problems of youth today', used as scapegoat for larger social concerns, objectify and reify young people *as the problem in itself*. Young people are approached with the assumption that they are 'problems' (Austin & Willard, 1998, p. 1) (emphasis in original).

In this context, a group can have multiple meanings and uses for its members, as well as for those outside the group. A social category can be constructed and deconstructed according to political, cultural, and economic agendas. For instance, adult culture mourns a decline in civic participation, while at the same time teenagers embrace a new form of social activism. The contradictory relationship between how adult culture sees teenagers and how teenagers see themselves has historical roots which extend back at least five hundred years.

This chapter will address the existence of the social categories of youth (ie. “childhood”, “adolescent”, “teenager”) as constructions of adult society. Illustrating an historical progression through the categories highlights the way in which the view of youth in each time period is dictated by the cultural influences acting upon adult culture of that same time period. The historical analysis will begin with the limited role of the “child” in the ancient world, and will move towards the mid-twentieth-century emergence of the “teenager”, ending with current discussions of the social role of today’s youth. Examining the ways in which adult culture’s attitudes to child rearing change over time, it is possible to identify the ideological frameworks which give rise to these attitudes. Comparisons between these attitudes reveal that adult culture’s concerns about youthful behaviour reappear again and again over time. Illustrating the presence of this trend is intended to suggest that current concern over low political participation rates among teenagers fits into this pattern. As such, it has the potential to be read as a concern of adult culture, which belongs to a certain ideological framework in which it takes on a particular meaning.

While the issues which cause concern to adult society change, the way in which they deal with it does not: the solution begins with the protection of their children. It is this projection of adult culture’s concern onto youth which sets up the concepts of “childhood” and “teenager” as social constructions. The attitude of each time period becomes the ideological framework for the treatment of youth, and adult “solutions” are applied to alter the behaviour of youth. These adult attitudes merit examination because they are culturally dominant views which exclude the values and attitudes held by youth

themselves. Acknowledging that adults have better access to the space in which attitudes regarding children are formed (ie. the public sphere or the mass media), also acknowledges that mainstream cultural representations of the teenager are negotiated and shaped by this process.

The vast majority of scholarly work on 'youth' and youth cultures deals with issues of representation, institutional formation, psychosocial development or the reflection of adult concerns within the cultural practices of young people. These are valuable studies that help to situate the discursive constructions of youth within a wider social framework yet they leave us with histories that tell us more about the history of adults than about young people... (Austin & Willard, 1998, p. 7).

This is an important distinction in the formation of my argument because it will illustrate that the alternative social practices of today's teenagers do exist: they are simply less visible in a mainstream society shaped by adult culture which continues to frame youth culture through a positional lens. The point here is to open up the theoretical space for addressing the practices of youth as a different form of citizenship. Highlighting the ideological structures that adult culture has employed across time in relation to youth, emphasizes the importance of and the need to explore youth citizenship from another perspective.

The emergence of "the family": Attitudes towards children before the sixteenth-century

Philippe Aries asserts "The concept of the family, which...emerges in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, is inseparable from the concept of childhood" (Aries, 1962, p. 353). Historically these two concepts are linked together: "childhood" is often referred to

as an expression or product of the concept of the modern family.¹⁰ The seventeenth century is the period in which the social category of “childhood” emerges because the development is linked to changes which take place within the social institution of the family.¹¹ Historians studying familial ties generally agree that during the Middle Ages two understandings of the concept of the family existed. Aries summarizes this view:

The ties of blood composed not one but two groups, distinct though concentric: the family or *mesnie* which can be compared with our modern conjugal family, and the line which extended its solidarity to all the descendants of a single ancestor...there was not so much a distinction as an opposition between the family and the line, the progress of the one resulting in a weakening of the other, at least in the nobility (Aries, 1962, p. 353). (emphasis in original).

“The family” as described by Aries, is a composite of various members of the extended family who lived together on an estate which belonged to “the line”. This “joint

¹⁰ Note that the historical studies explored in this section do in some cases address the issue of gender (of both the child and the parent) in relation to the concept of childhood. For example, Aries contends that widespread cultural recognition of “childhood”, which came about with the advent of the modern family in the seventeenth-century, began with attitudes held by women – specifically, mothers and nannies – within the home (Aries, 1962, p. 129). As well, he illustrates that early European education systems (of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth-centuries) were predominately attended by male children (Aries, 1962, pp. 329-336). However, these views will not be explored here in detail: I use the terms “child” and “parent” in a general sense, to refer to both sexes.

¹¹ It should be noted that Aries’ argument about the date of the emergence of childhood has been disputed, notably by Nicholas Orme in *Medieval Children* (2001). Although Orme argues that childhood existed as a concept before modern times, he nonetheless agrees that the experience of childhood changes over time as society changes. As such, Aries remains in the present discussion because I am more interested in presenting the argument of childhood as a social construction *over time*, rather than the construction of a specific time period.

possession" occurred between parents, children with no property of their own, nephews and bachelor cousins (Aries, 1962, p. 353). This arrangement was largely economic in nature, "families" existed in this state because of the structure of the European nobility between the eleventh and the sixteenth centuries. Blood ties gave protection to the family ensuring that the members would be provided for through inheritance of property.

[The] concept of the line was the only concept of a family character known to the Middle Ages. It was very different from the concept of the family such as we have seen...[in] the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It extended to the ties of blood without regard to the emotions engendered by cohabitation and intimacy (Aries, 1962, p. 356).

Thus, "families" needed heirs to continue the line, and because life expectancy rates were low due to social and environmental factors, families had many children in order to ensure the survival of a few. This contributed greatly to the attitudes that adults of the time developed regarding their children: "Nobody thought, as we ordinarily think today, that every child already contained a man's personality. Too many of them died" (Aries, 1962, p. 39).

The History of Childhood (1974), a comprehensive collection of essays edited by Lloyd deMause, reflects this ambivalent position taken towards children before the seventeenth-century.¹² The introduction to the book outlines three "child-rearing modes" which summarize the attitudes of parental figures towards children between the time periods in question. Antiquity to the fourth-century is labelled "Infanticidal Mode", in

¹² This collection assembles an understanding of the historically constructed notion of childhood across time through an examination of parental attitudes and societal circumstances of the last five hundred years of Western history.

which "...parents routinely resolved their anxieties about taking care of children by killing them...", the next stage, "Abandonment Mode" is characteristic of the fourth to thirteenth-centuries, where because "...parents began to accept the child as having a soul, the only way they could escape the dangers of their own projections was by abandonment", and the third stage stemming from the fourteenth to seventeenth-centuries is called the "Ambivalent Mode", in which the child needed to be physically moulded into shape because the same child remained "...a container for dangerous projections..." (deMause, 1974, p. 51). Thus, for centuries children were viewed as a troubling by-product, rather than the main focus of the family unit.

M. J. Tucker concurs that the period leading up to the seventeenth-century was one of ambivalence towards children, one in which they were seen as occupying the lowest rung on the social ladder. This view was however, in the process of changing with the growing importance of education taking place in society. In "The Child as Beginning and End: Fifteenth and Sixteenth Century English Childhood" (1974), Tucker explains: "Increasingly, [education] became an avenue to upward social mobility and to securing important government posts...[it] became necessary to develop a person into a gentleman or gentlewoman" (Tucker, 1974, pp. 245-246). As it will be examined in the following sections, the growth of organized education is very closely associated with the emergence of the concept of childhood. Education becomes the institution which provides a social space for the period between young childhood and young adulthood¹³ : as the adult world

¹³ Tucker notes that in this period: "More and more children were being

became more engaged with the present care and future position of its children, education became a valuable tool to aid in this shift.

The cultural recognition of "childhood": The seventeenth-century child

Historians concur that a shift takes place in the seventeenth-century which leads to the establishment of childhood as a definitive stage separate from the adult world. This shift is made up of several interrelated factors. Aries suggests that:

In medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist; this is not to suggest that children were neglected, forsaken or despised. The idea of childhood is not to be confused with affection for children: it corresponds to an awareness of the particular nature of childhood, that particular nature which distinguishes the child from the adult, even the young adult. In medieval society this awareness was lacking (Aries, 1962, p. 128).

In *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (1962), Aries assembles an historical survey of the visible changes in societal attitude towards the concept of a separate "childhood". He traces subtle changes in the subject of contemporary artwork, religious iconography, and children's clothing through the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries. These changes, he suggests, alert the historian to the fact that these modes of cultural expression were becoming increasingly aware of a shift occurring in society at large: the recognition and appreciation of "...the personality which children were seen to possess, and the poetic, familiar significance attributed to their special nature" (Aries, 1962, p. 129).

recognized as human beings with different developmental problems than adults" (Tucker, 1974, p. 252).

Along with this new societal recognition of children as “special”, stands the larger organizational shift taking place in late sixteenth and early seventeenth century European culture. As lineal ties are weakened by the state, the family becomes the basis for social life (Aries 1962, p. 355). The need for social interaction diminishes as the state relinquishes royal duty. “The progress of the concept of the family followed the progress of private life, of domesticity. For a long time the conditions of everyday life did not allow the essential withdrawal by the household from the outside world” (Aries 1962, p. 375). Parents become much more invested in the welfare of their children. In this new modern family: “...all the energy of the group [is] expended on helping the children to rise in the world...” (Aries 1962, p. 404).

These societal shifts lead to what Aries refers to as the first concept of childhood, “coddling”: “...in which the child, on account of his sweetness, simplicity and drollery, became a source of amusement and relaxation for the adult” (Aries, 1962, p. 129). This is not, however, an equivalent to the modern notion of childhood, as it lasts only until the end of infancy. The solidification of childhood as an extended period comes about in the seventeenth-century as the product of sources outside of the family, interested not in coddling children but rather in assessing and further developing their psychological and moral natures. Aries contributes the creation of the second concept of childhood to the churchmen and moralists of the seventeenth-century (Aries, 1962, p. 131). Childhood is institutionalised by this group through the formation of the modern concept of schooling. This group “...succeeded in imposing their considered concept of a long childhood thanks to the success of the educational institutions and practices which they guided and

supervised (Aries, 1962, p. 329).

Joseph E. Illick's "Child-Rearing in Seventeenth-Century England and America" (1974), explores the role of education in the definition of the new social category of childhood. In this century, the child comes to be regarded increasingly as an "innocent" in need of protection. It is believed that children become good not by birth, but by education (Illick, 1974, p. 317). Educational systems (which are being reformed by clergy and moralists according to changing societal attitudes) increase in popularity in the seventeenth-century for three reasons: the bourgeoisie want to mimic the gentry who are reading; the humanists believe that schooling leads to universal moral improvement; and the Puritans claim ignorance as the root of all evil and view education as a solution (Illick 1974, p. 320). Believing that emotional display must be disciplined, and that self-control is a most important virtue, the education system became a tool "to protect a child against his own self-destruction" (Illick, 1974, p. 317). This system (popularized in colonialist America in the seventeenth-century) allowed for adult parental figures to not only gain more control over the development of the younger generation, but also to maintain that level of control. "Breaking the will of the child was based on the supposition that the parent's will could be substituted. The child would doubt his own abilities, repress his strivings and look to a higher authority" (Illick, 1974, p. 327). Puritan religious ideals continue to exercise power over the development of the concept of childhood into the proceeding century.

A domestic role for “childhood”: The eighteenth-century child

The Puritans continue this trend of “caring” into the eighteenth-century, seeing their children as the ‘hope of the nation’, taking extreme concern in educational matters to ensure their children could successfully perpetuate their cultural and religious beliefs.

John F. Walzer builds on the platform of education-as-protection established in the previous section in; “A Period of Ambivalence: Eighteenth-Century American Childhood” (1974). In this period, the Puritans realize their children as the primary means to perpetuate their cultural ideologies and thus invest heavily in their education, both religious and otherwise.

Children are no longer only innocent victims that need saving. Colonial Americans come to believe that children who are saved become religious links to God. Children can prove the worthiness of their parents through their own religious devotion. Roger Levesque’s “The Invention and Reinvention of Adolescence”(2000),¹⁴ argues that there is a strong connection between the perceived state of the youth population during this period and the choice to move to the New World by Puritan parents. “Indeed, the manner that period in life [adolescence] was observed as plagued by the many temptations and sins of the world partly led Puritans to leave for the New World. It would not be an overstatement to propose that attempts to control youth contributed to the founding of the nation” (Levesque, 2000, p. 14). This sense of hope or deliverance

¹⁴ From: Levesque, R J.R. (2000) *Adolescent, Sex, and the Law: preparing adolescents for responsible citizenship*. Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association.

projected onto children by Puritan parents further manifests itself in the very names that they choose for their children. Named not only “after the conditions of their births” (those born at sea en route to the New World called Oceanus and Seaborn), but also “with regard to their parents’ expectations”; names such as Experience, Waitstill, Preserved, Hopetill, Wait, Thanks, Desire, Unite, Supply, Rich Grace, More Mercy, Relieve, Believe, Reform, Deliverance, and Strange, become commonplace (Illick, 1974, p. 324). “The exotic quality of these names seems to demonstrate a special recognition of the child, no doubt related to expectations applied to the New World” (Illick, 1974, p. 324).

Illick hypothesizes that both the choice to name children in honour of parental expectations, as well as the formation of the educational system is the result of large societal shifts taking place within modern Western culture. Puritan adults find themselves within new frameworks of social organization which emphasize a strong sense of individualism. They are adjusting to “...the growth in importance of the individual as an increasingly independent and responsible entity who was no longer primarily a member of a corporate body and the replacement of hierarchical relationship by egalitarian relationships as an ideal” (Illick, 1974, p. 374). Increasing the influence over the individual lives of their children, such as in the choice of name and educational path, is an attempt to prepare Puritan children to face the difficulties that their parents face. Puritan expectations of child behaviour stem from adult fears about the redefinition of the role of social actors in the New World, which differs greatly from their former experiences in Europe.

A public role for “childhood”: The nineteenth-century child

In the nineteenth-century, concrete manifestations of the evolving attitudes towards children can be located beyond the institutional organization of the family, in the public space of the workplace in the form of protective child labour laws. These laws are intended to protect children from physical exhaustion and growing illiteracy rates. In 1802 the *Factory Act* is passed in Britain: a law protecting orphan apprentices, appropriately created for children who lacked parental figures to provide protection from the outside world (Robertson, 1974, p. 427).¹⁵

“Home As a Nest: Middle Class Childhood in Nineteenth-Century Europe”

(1974), written by Priscilla Robertson, cites Rousseau as a central figure in the debate over children’s rights in the nineteenth-century. She credits Rousseau with calling attention to the needs of children, explaining that he “...provided rationale for the view that children are born good, with a capacity for reason, and that their natural virtues need only to be brought out” (Robertson 1974, p. 421). The result is, in part, the formation of child labour laws which seek to protect innocent children. Robertson notes:

The nineteenth-century was the time when public bodies began to think of children as children, with special needs because of their helplessness and vulnerability, rather than as small adults with the right to hire themselves out for sixteen hours a day, or as the chattels of their parents. The change in sentiment that began within the family had, before the century was over,

¹⁵ Note however, that the state has vested interests in the social welfare of these children for other reasons, thus their motivation cannot be said to be solely altruistic: “It is clear the governmental interest was not exclusively humanitarian, for it became apparent to economists and especially military strategists that the prosperity and safety of the state depended on having a class of healthy citizens” (Robertson, 1974, p. 427).

grown to work great changes in society as a whole (Robertson 1974, p. 428).

Roger Levesque's "The Invention and Reinvention of Adolescence", suggests that the same sentiments which inspire child labour reform also contribute to the institutionalization of compulsory education. Education serves both as a symbol of the past evolution of Western cultural notions of childhood, as well as the future towards which adults wish it to move:

These reforms renewed community interest in children's lives and fostered the recognition that communities are inextricably connected to family life. Rather than simply reflecting family life, these reforms were seen as complementing and reinforcing the important roles of families or simply acting in their stead (Levesque, 2000, p. 18).

Schools are the physical manifestations of cultural notions circulating in American society. As a social institution, compulsory education is implemented for a number of reasons, quite aside from the simple desire to prepare children for their roles as good citizens in adult society. In fact, both child labour and educational reforms during the late nineteenth century are characterised as an attempt to subdue the competing notions of youth being debated in society at large:

Historians view the child-saving movement, which ranged from the later 1800's to the early 1900's, as the solution to the perceived threat of lower classes and the somewhat contradictory perceptions of all children as priceless innocents...These activists championed the need to recognize the special, vulnerable position of children in families and society and sought greater control of both children and the lower classes, which were deemed in need of assistance to raise their children into productive citizens (Levesque, 2000, p. 18).

The segregation of youth is intended to address both the problems of how to protect children from the adult world until they gain the skills to operate successfully

within it, as well as how to protect adults from the economic threat that children appear to pose as members of the employment pool:

Legislation [a combination of labour laws and educational reform in the late 1800s] effectively and systematically excluded youth from adult roles, deprived them of adult status, and prolonged their dependency well into their teenage years. With that exclusion came the ability to control and mold children, to protect them from exploitation, and to oversee their parents (Levesque, 2000, p. 19).

Levesque explains that the changes which help to shape the framework through which the concept of the child is understood remain the same today.

Industrialization transformed the economy which in turn revolutionized family life...changes in economic production greatly influenced family structure, family dynamics, images of families, and images of child development. All of these changes contributed not only to the formal recognition of an adolescent period, they also reaffirmed the image of adolescents as individuals who must be controlled and protected from the harsh realities of life, an image that reflects the essence of the traditional- and now reigning- model of adolescent life (Levesque, 2000, p. 16).

By the end of the nineteenth-century, the history of the concept of "childhood" has drawn a comprehensive picture of the way in which adult attitudes towards children exist historically as products of the social environment in which both groups are immersed. As such, it is important to note that "childhood" is not a fixed category with one meaning, rather in a constantly changing social environment, the meaning of the concept of the "child" changes as well. Historically, this meaning tends to be defined through the ideological structures of adult culture. A similar social process occurs in the twentieth-century, as a particular social environment gives rise to the distinct social category of the "teenager", highlighting the need to examine youth and their practices through an alternative lens.

Moving towards a concept of the twentieth-century “teenager”¹⁶

In the twentieth-century, young people both grow in importance within the family, and they grow in overall numbers. As society becomes increasingly complex, so too does the role of the teenager within modern western culture. Adult attitudes and opinions expressing concern about this cultural group become less clear, as previously held positions from earlier historical periods find their way into the popular consciousness. Robertson’s analysis of nineteenth-century views of children, introduced in the previous section, contends that eighteenth-century attitudes survive into the following century juxtaposing the pre-existing view of children as being in need of discipline, against the later view of the child as innocent and in need of protection.

These two attitudes run in counterpoint throughout the nineteenth-century—those who like children against those who do not; those who thrust nature versus those who fear God; those who discipline lightly opposed to those who believe that pain is good for the young; the Age of Reason confronting the Puritan Ethic (Robertson, 1974, p. 422).

Both of these attitudes survive into twentieth-century discussions of the role of youth

¹⁶ The two main historical studies of the teenager examined within this thesis (Hine and Palladino) are American in context, however they are being treated as generally representative of North American culture as a whole during this period. Michael Brake’s *Comparative Youth Culture: The Sociology of Youth Cultures and Youth Subcultures in America, Britain, and Canada* (1985), examines this idea of “borrowed culture” in a chapter entitled “‘Take off eh! – Youth culture in Canada”. He contends that youth cultures (specifically those in Britain, and United States) have grown from class divisions or “traditional class problems” which haven’t challenged Canadian culture because of our liberal multicultural policies. As such, “there is no distinct national flavour to youth cultures [in Canada], which are usually based on the styles of a borrowed tradition, rather than built on the indigenous forms of local traditions” (Brake, 1985, p. 145). Instead, Brake contends, “Canada has borrow its youth culture [from Britain and America] and kept them safely within the realm of fashion” (Brake, 1985, p. 161).

within Western society, and are reinforced by cultural developments which occur in that century: the creation of a separate and distinct youth culture which exists alongside, but apart from, adult culture. The separation of these two groups causes adults to experience a significant level of alienation toward teen culture which affects their attitudes towards this group: social distance from youth increases the need to monitor, and control their behaviour.

Tom Engelhardt's *The End of Victory Culture: Cold War America and the Disillusioning of a Generation* (1995) addresses the social divide that grows between adults and teens in twentieth-century North America. The chapter entitled, "The Haunting of Childhood", explains the shaping of teenagers as a group through the cultural artifacts of the mass media, including comic books, television programs and popular music. What is of most interest in this argument is not the artifacts themselves, but rather the *context in which they were created*, which is hinted at through the choice of the word "haunting" in the chapter title. Engelhardt is constantly reminding his readers that during the post-World War II period, the social divide between adults and youth comes to define the overarching issues of concern in mainstream culture. In this period:

Adult unease about the young,...gained in intensity from new realities, for adolescents (now labelled 'teenagers') were organizing themselves in new and unsettling ways, distinct from and mocking the frameworks and values of the adult world. They were creating (or responding to) new kinds of narratives (Engelhardt, 1995, p. 133).

Engelhardt presents a comprehensive and compelling narrative explaining the issues feared by adults for their children at this exact point in time in history. The feeling of alienation for adult culture stems from the proliferation of new cultural texts, which

teenagers are consuming in order to distinguish themselves as a separate group:

Between the end of World War II and the Kennedy accession, childhood was the symbolic meeting point for two sets of fears, the place where two threatening kinds of un-American freedoms could be detected in a frozen world. The first was the fear that the domestic Other was escaping social and cultural containment...(the poor white...made a threatening reappearance as the juvenile delinquent; while the black outsider,... [was] materialized as the rock and roll singer)...The second set of post-war fears involved the 'freedom' of the commercial media- record and comic book companies, radio stations, the movies, and television- to concretize both the fantasies of the young and the nightmarish fears of grown-ups into potent products (Engelhardt, 1995, pp. 135-136).

This social scenario is simply a further manifestation of earlier debates over the welfare of youth in Western culture: at times adult culture addresses youth as an extension of themselves – they desire to protect the young, while at other times, adult culture sees youth as separate and mysterious – the actions of youth are often then described in a negative tone as “other”. This is the heart of the “youth as victim” versus “youth as threat” argument, the dominant framework of the adult constructed mass media which continues to influence our widespread societal attitudes towards youth culture.

It is the interaction of these complex social factors that results in a shift toward the need to redefine the concept of “childhood”. New social categories emerge for children, ones which increase the degree of separation between the young and old of modern society. The “child”, gives way to the “adolescent” and “youth”, and finally to the distinct label of the “teenager”.

The emergence of youth culture: 1920's to 1945

As with the term “childhood”, “adolescence” existed within the Western

vocabulary for centuries before it took on the distinct and specific meaning, that is for the most part, attributed to it now.

The word 'adolescent', which comes from a Latin root meaning 'to nourish', derives from a word used by the ancient Romans and came into English, via French, in the fourteenth century. It meant someone who was still growing, often but not necessarily a teenager. Since the turn of the twentieth century, however, adolescence has referred to a specific period of life fraught with a series of difficult psychic challenges (Hine, 1999, p. 33).

The shift in the meaning of this term, which Hine identifies as situated in the early stages of the twentieth century, is attributable to numerous interacting factors. Grace Palladino contends that interpretations of the meaning and use of the word "adolescent" during this period are strongly tied to the earlier eighteenth-century views of 'the child', which emphasized the child as "innocent": "...adolescents were awkward, vulnerable creatures, the innocent victims of raging hormones, rampant insecurity, and fervent idealism...characteristics that were apparently linked to puberty and a lack of experience" (Palladino 1996, p. xv). This view becomes part of a mainstream cultural dialogue about the "true nature" of the child in Western society, one which helps to define the cultural role of the teenager.

"Adolescence" defined: popular psychology unites youth

The debate between the "child as victim" versus "child as threat" positions presented itself in the early part of the twentieth-century through discussions occurring in the field of mainstream psychology. The creation of the term "adolescent", generally credited to American education theorist G. Stanley Hall, is part of this debate (Levesque,

2000, p. 19).¹⁷ Hall's *Adolescence: Its Psychology and its Relation to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education* (1904), presenting a theoretical position based on "...Freudian ideals[,...]...Darwinian evolutionary theory and a general faith in progress", became the basis for the field of adolescent psychology (Hine, 1999, p. 33). Hall's observations of the adolescent are formed through his understanding of the changing notion of "men", which in his words "...[are] not a permanent type but an organism in a very active stage of evolution toward a more permanent form" (Hall, 1904, p. vii). He called this movement from stage to stage "recapitulation theory". It rests on the belief that the development from childhood to adulthood traces or re-enacts the sociobiological evolution of the human race (Danesi, 1994, p. 7). "For Hall, the infant relived the animal stage, the adolescent the savage stage, and so on. Hall obviously assumed that the sociobiological history of humanity became a part of the genetic makeup of the individual" (Danesi, 1994, p. 7).

Hall regards adolescence as a definitive stage in the movement towards a new state of being (Hall, 1904, p. xiii). This marks a fundamental shift in the way North American society recognizes its youth:

¹⁷ Thomas Hine states that adolescent psychology as a field was in fact invented by G.S. Hall (Hine, 1999, p. 33). Marcel Danesi's *Cool: The Signs and Meanings of Adolescence* (1994), agrees with this contention. He states in his opening paragraph: "It is true...that even the earliest civilizations differentiated between *young* and *old* as biologically and socially significant categories. But the idea of making the pubescent period a specific one for psychologists to study was forged only in 1904, when Stanley G. Hall proposed to his colleagues that they pay more attention to the psychosocial characteristics which marked the developmental phase that began with puberty and ended with adulthood" (Danesi, 1994, p. 3) (emphasis in original).

Hall and other experts viewed childhood as consisting of a series of developmental stages that differentiated children deemed immature and vulnerable from the more mature and malleable adult. Couched between childhood and adulthood was the period of adolescence, which was now conceived as a natural and universal developmental stage (Levesque, 2000, p. 19).

The experiences of adolescents between the ages of thirteen and nineteen emerge as the choice subject of study for psychologists because “...these seven years represent an enormous chunk of a person’s life, one in which most people experience big physical, emotional, intellectual, and social changes” (Hine 1999, p. 15).

It is important at this point to recall that “adolescence” as a social construction in this context is being assembled by adult culture. The desire to study young people through a psychological lens, that is to understand complex behaviour by dissecting it, stems directly from the presence of the mainstream debate of child as victim/child as threat which remains in the popular consciousness. Hall himself outlines this debate in the interwoven comments of the preface to *Adolescence*, which describes adolescence as: “...the best decade of life. No age is so responsive to all the best and wisest adult endeavour. In no psychic soil, too, does seed, bad as well as good, strike such deep root, grow so rankly, or bear fruit so quickly or so surely”, and then in a subsequent page, conversely warning: “Never has youth been exposed to such dangers of both perversion and arrest as in our own land and day” (Hall, 1904, pp. xviii-xix, xv).

Adolescent psychology constructs a popular dialogue about the need to protect young people and mould them into proper adults; this need is emphasized through the argument that all adolescents undergo the same process: thus adolescence is universal (Hine, 1999, p. 37). This notion contributes to the categorization of young people as a

collective group; no longer are children thought to experience the period of growth into adulthood in extremely diverse ways (based on regional or local differences), rather adolescents are united through a common set of developmental phases. This was the notion of “youth”.

“Youth Culture” defined: consumerism unites youth

In applying the category of “youth”, mainstream adult culture did more however than simply isolate adolescents into what they saw as more a manageable system for encouraging behavioural change; they also contributed to the formation of a peer culture which would become separate and distinct from the hegemonic norm of mainstream adult culture.

During the early twentieth century, a youth peer culture took shape as middle-class young people began to spend more and more time with each other at school and during leisure activities. A key factor was the marked rise in enrollments at high schools, colleges, and universities in the 1910s and 1920s; in addition, secondary and post secondary schools were reconfigured as students were increasingly organized by age into specific ‘grades’. Consequently, the young person’s primary identification with his or her family was displaced, in part, by generational identifications that became available both locally and nationally— through schools, mass media, and consumer culture— and an unprecedented generational consciousness took shape both among and about youth (Felando, 2000, p. 86).

As Cynthia Felando notes in the last phrase of the preceding quotation, it is important to recognize that although the category of “youth” is distinct in and of itself during this period, debates surrounding youth are by no means unified. The polarized argument of adolescent as victim versus adolescent as threat still remains. Youth may be the “...foremost symbol of modernity in American popular culture during the 1920's”,

however in the popular consciousness, they are continually both praised *and* condemned (Felando, 2000, p. 101) (emphasis added).

For the most part the “praise” of the creation of this new socially cohesive category of “youth” comes from the recognition of this group as a demographic worthy of study. Although agents of this study include “...a broad range of emergent professionals, [including] social scientists and social workers...”, Felando suggests that Hollywood was the first to pinpoint youth as a commodity (Felando, 2000, p. 84).¹⁸ “Hollywood in the 1920's: Youth must be served” explains there although there is mainstream interest in the study of adolescents before this time (between 1900 and 1920), the subjects of this study were generally young people labelled as “socially problematic”: the poor, immigrants, and juvenile delinquents. “By the 1920's, however, the focus had shifted to white, middle-class youth, and the notion of youth as a delinquent class was largely displaced by the notion of youth as a consumer class” (Felando, 2000, p. 85).

The emerging idea of youth as a consumer class stems, in part, from the record number of young people attending the cinema during this period. Adolescents like the cinema because it is affordable and accessible, and : “...it permitted a convenient (and unchaperoned) setting for the rituals of adolescent meeting and courtship, as these, too, were removed from the home and transformed into “dating”, an activity both more public and more private than in their parents' time” (Comacchio, 1997, p. 12).

¹⁸ “During the 1920s, youth was visible in American popular culture as never before, as both a commodity to be sold and a demographic market to be sold to” (Felando, 2000, p. 82).

"Youth Culture" organized: the high school unites youth

Adult culture is not necessarily happy with the social freedom that the newly created category of "youth" enjoys and seek to institutionalize education as a social control mechanism. Cynthia Comacchio's "Dancing to Perdition: Adolescence and Leisure in Interwar English Canada" (1997), explains that despite the basic educational aims of the institution of the high school: "[they] may have been most effective in universalizing the adolescent experience through their deliberate cooptation of various aspects of modern youth culture...the peer society contributed to the construction of an age-defined behavioural code" (Comacchio, 1997, p. 17).

In the 1930's, more and more youth begin attending high school in the wake of the depressed labour market.¹⁹ In an attempt to preserve employment for the heads of families, children are encouraged to attend school for as long as possible. This movement towards educational reform encourages the development of the "teenager" as a separate social category:

As high schools claimed a larger portion of teenage youth during the 1930's, this concept of teenage rights and democratic family life began to take off. Convinced that they were old enough to set their own standards, high school students assumed a measure of personal freedom and

¹⁹ In fact, youth were prohibited by law from taking employment during this period. This was part of Roosevelt's "New Deal" which attempted to alleviate stress on the depressed labour market through economic planning. Hine notes that "The New Deal played a key role in the creation of the teenager. It did so in two ways. First, its policies actively discriminated against young people in the workplace. Later, it created new training and aid programs that dealt with what it defined as youth problems, some of them cause by its own policies" (Hine, 1999, p. 204).

generational independence that challenged traditional notions of parental authority and respect (Palladino 1996, p.7).

Thomas Hine explains that while schooling systems existed before the 1930's, education was not necessarily a priority for most families because they were more concerned with the economic contributions that children could make to the family income (Hine, 1999, p. 140). This changes in the wake of the Great Depression, as societal fears shift: "the decision to forgo the benefits of young people's labour in favour of a prolonged period of education and training grew from parents' fears that change was rendering their own skills and knowledge obsolete" (Hine, 1999, p. 53). In the period before the 1930's, social class was regarded as fixed: "what you were, in the 1930s, determined who you were and how far or fast you could expect to go in life. An adolescent's future rested squarely on a parent's past" (Palladino, 1996, p. 14). This social attitude is in transition throughout the 1930's, as universal education emerges as a perfect way to shield children from the increasingly harsh world, while at the same time preparing them to function within it.²⁰

In their construction of the social history of the teenager, both Hine and Palladino outline the way in which high school was intended to function as an institution which would indoctrinate the middle-class lifestyle on a large societal scale (Hine, 1999, p.

²⁰The project of the 1930's in regards to youth, is a project of organization: "While the Jazz age has glamorized and eroticised youth, the Depression and the war that followed did something even more decisive to youth. They bureaucratized it" (Hine, 1999, p. 204). Bill Osgerby's "'A Caste, a Culture, a Market': Youth, Marketing, and Lifestyle in Postwar America"(2002), agrees with Hine: "[During] the consumer boom of the 1920s a more fully formed, youth-oriented leisure culture became recognizable- a phenomenon heavily indebted to the concomitant expansion of high education" (Osgerby, 2002, p. 17).

243). Boys would attend school in order to train for a white collar job, while girls would attend school to learn how to manage a household (Palladino, 1996, p. 16). While it would seem that the economic frugality of the 1930's would put an end to the youth culture which had thus far survived through early consumer culture (such as Hollywood films), in fact claims Hine, the creation of high school counteracts this downward shift because the assembly of large numbers of youth into a common social space reinforces the existence of a cohesive peer culture (Hine, 1999, p. 204).

High school is the threshold through which every young American must pass. Its classes impart knowledge we believe young people need to become good adults. Its athletics and extracurricular activities provide the principle stage for young people to explore their talents and find their strengths. It brings young people together, providing a fertile ground for the development of youth culture. By enrolling both young men and young women, the high school gave teenagers control over their own social life, something that parents controlled before everyone went to high school. Without high school, there are no teenagers (Hine, 1999, p. 139).

Comacchio agrees with Hine's observations and labels modern Canadian high school, as the "levelling element in the adolescent experience"(Comacchio, 1997, p. 19). This institution assembles large numbers of young people into small spaces on a daily basis and as a result the concept of "peer culture" grows in importance: "[high school] reinforced age-group consciousness by trying to establish a common adolescent experience, centred within its walls, which would be the 'norm' for all adolescents regardless of their personal background or inclinations" (Comacchio, 1997, p. 19).

Although a youth peer culture is present in the education system during the 1930's, the absence of consumer spending means that this group all but disappears from the popular cultural landscape (Hine, 1999, p. 220). For the first time since the early 1920's,

there is a divide between youth culture and popular culture. While adolescent bobby-soxers and swing music dominated the popular consciousness in the 1920's, radio and film emerge in the 1930's as commercial popular culture for us. As Hine notes: "Popular entertainment was no longer an outsider activity. It was a major industry that had won the largest audience in history" (Hine 1999, p. 221). In order to regain the popular consciousness and infuse it with a distinctive popular youth culture, numerous changes had to take place in American society.

Identifying and labelling the "teenager": 1950-1960

The solidification of the term and the idea of "the teenager" emerges in the United States during the period of World War II.²¹ While the word 'teenager' had been used prior to this period to describe various youth subcultures which emerged between the turn of the century and the 1930's, it is not until the post World War II period that an environment emerges in which the word "teenager" is applied to a large cohesive group of young people. Hine explains:

What was new about the idea of the teenager at the time the word first appeared during World War II was the assumption that all young people, regardless of their class, location, or ethnicity, should have essentially the

²¹ Both Hine and Palladino agree that the term "teenager" is first used in the popular mainstream culture in 1941. Hine cites this source as an article in *Popular Science* magazine (Hine, 1999, p. 8). He adds that it is also used in an unspecified popular book title in 1945. (Bill Osgerby's "'A Caste, a Culture, a Market': Youth, Marketing, and Lifestyle in Postwar America" (2002) also agrees with this source of the term "teenager" (Osgerby, 2002, p. 18).)

same experience, spent with people exactly their age, in an environment defined by high school and pop culture (Hine 1999, p. 11).

The shift back towards youth as the determining force of mass popular culture takes place in the 1950's, as the result of numerous factors. In a post-war environment, citizens are encouraged to spend, and not only does the house-wife emerge as primary target for marketers, but parents are also moved to spend their increasing income on their children. Through the institutionalization of high school, teenagers now spend most of their time with their peers, and as such develop tastes and desires specific to their social grouping.²² Palladino explains that in the teen world after World War II, popularity becomes the measure of success. She notes: "...it was the driving force behind a new and improved teenage market for clothes, entertainment, and, most important, information and advice..." (Palladino 1996, p. 98). Marketers understand the power of the teenager market; they had kept the movie industry alive after World War II, and as such "in an economy that was forced once again to induce demand, rather than simply responding to it, the teenage market re-emerged as a potent force" (Hine 1999, p. 237).

Both Hine and Palladino agree that the culmination of the power of the teenage consumer and the savvy of the marketing industry advertisers arrive in the mid-1950's

²² It is important to note that although peer culture had not yet been studied in detail during this period, more recent scholarship has affirmed the strong degree of influence it holds over its members. Austin and Willard's *Generations of Youth: Youth Cultures and History in Twentieth-Century America* (1998) suggests: "The peer group has become one of the major institutions of socialization during the twentieth century, and recent studies indicate that the influence of the peer group for some populations is perhaps greater than any other institution" (Austin, 1998, p. 6).

with the emergence of the youthful culture of “rock n’ roll”. “Now teenagers were the acknowledged stars of pop music, and their everyday experiences like dating, dancing, driving and partying dominated the airwaves” (Palladino 1996, p. 132). Marcel Danesi’s *Cool: The Signs and Meanings of Adolescence* (1994), confirms that it is in the mid-1950’s that the relationship between the teenager and the media/entertainment industry is fully formed: “Songs and movies became progressively juvenilized in content” (Danesi, 1994, p. 18). This turn towards the teenager as the central audience is illustrated by the emergence of Elvis Presley on the popular music scene, James Dean in popular film, and DJ Alan Freed in popular radio (Hine 1999, pp. 236-237). As well, during this time period, *American Bandstand* emerges as the first television program designed exclusively for teenagers. It would provide a popular forum for the rock n’ roll culture of youth to be seen and adopted by mainstream culture (Danesi, 1994, p. 18).

What emerges then, from the post-war period is a stage in North American history where the tastes and desires of young people become the dictating forces of dominant mainstream popular culture; that is not to say that adult culture enjoys or even approves of the “rock n’ roll” lifestyle. Palladino explains that rock n’ roll is highly threatening to adults of the 1950’s because it has racial ties to the African-American population. The threat is moral:

Rock n’ roll was the musical expression of a delinquent street culture, critics charged, which had to be nipped in the bud. It celebrated the wrong kind of values (and the wrong kind of people) and promoted a hedonistic view of life that mocked the very notion of wholesome adolescence (Palladino, 1996, p. 127).

This threat continues into the following two decades, as teenagers turn the central

characteristic of their youth culture – collectivity – to their advantage. Adult culture had intended to restrain and control youth with the bureaucratization of the high school. Instead however, the move to assemble teenagers together in one place for this purpose leads to the development of a strong peer-mediated culture which sets itself up in opposition to the one which had created it.

Cultural unrest for a cohesive social group: The teenager in the 1960's and 1970's

If the 1950's is the era in which teenagers gain cultural power through the consumer market, then the 1960's and 1970's are the decades in which they put that power to use in different ways. The marketplace had shaped teenagers into a demographic, and as such teens learn that a certain degree of power comes with this recognition:

The first boomers helped to shape that still-contested set of phenomena known as 'the sixties'. Many young people challenged American institutions, including, eventually, even high schools to live up to their democratic rhetoric. 'The sixties' and their aftermath have generated libraries worth of documentation, reminiscence, analysis, and polemic, nearly all of which involve young people as heroes, dupes, explorers, bohemians, or barbarians (Hine, 1999, p. 250).

Part of this power stems from the sheer size of the first boomer generation; in 1964 this group numbers 22 million (Palladino, 1996, p. 195). Recognition of the size of this demographic produces a shift in the late 1950's and early 1960's in which the teenage culture of rock n' roll is tamed, incorporated, and sold back to teens by the marketing world. "The first generation of teenagers large enough and affluent enough to deliver the kind of market that advertisers dreamed of, the baby boomers transformed 'delinquent' teenage culture into a prosperous big business" (Palladino, 1996, p. 195). Palladino

documents 1961 as the year in which Pepsi begins to advertise itself as a drink “for those who think young” (Palladino, 1996, p. 195).

As such, “rock n’ roll” as a symbol of youth culture is embraced by adult mainstream culture: it is now safe for adults to engage in.²³ Youth culture is dictated by an external adult interpretation of teenagers, and then sold back to them. Palladino explains that the concerns facing youth in the 1960's are in actuality quite different from the 1950's adult conception of the teenager-as-consumer which was being foisted upon them:

[Teenagers] were worried about nuclear war, despised their parent’s racism and rejected the notion of taking their place in the adult rat race. They were looking for stimulation, not security. They demanded social justice, not the privileges of class. And they looked forward to college as a place to try out new ways of living and learning, not as a passport to conventional success (Palladino, 1996, p. 202).

The bureaucratization of the high school experience, characterized by standardized testing implemented as a result of educational reform recommendations made during the Cold War, is alienating to students and works to strengthen the influence of teen peer-group culture (Hine 1999, p. 254).²⁴ Marcel Danesi agrees with Hine’s assertion, explaining

²³ Palladino cites the model Twiggy and fashion of Mary Quant as examples of the embracing of youth driven style by adults of the 1960's (Palladino, 1996, p. 198).

²⁴ These recommendations were made by James Bryant Conant in his 1959 report on how high schools should contribute to the planning/implementation of Cold War strategies. One of his main suggestions was to make schools bigger so that more students might attend, thus producing the largest number of successful graduates primed for white collar work possible (specifically scientists and mathematicians). The standardization of testing was suggested as a method to bureaucratize (and thus facilitate) the evaluation process of growing student bodies (Hine, 1999, pp. 252-254).

that the institution of the high school takes on a great degree of importance in the 1960's; it existed both apart from and within the larger societal context formed by adults.

The High school environment [of the 1960's] was becoming more and more a locus for socialization, providing the milieu within which teenagers centred more and more of their lives. It came to constitute a community in the ethnographic sense of the world: in other words, it was increasingly evolving into a self-contained social system within the larger societal framework (Danesi, 1994, p. 22).

Much to the dismay of this generation, the bureaucratization of education would extend beyond high school to the college, which many young people discover to be was an adult controlled world in which students are children with no rights (Palladino, 1996, p. 210). Young people of this era: "...deeply resented the fact that colleges still emphasized social life over the more serious business of learning and rewarded conformity, not creativity, in the class room" (Palladino, 1996, p. 209).

As such, a new cultural identity for youth emerges in this period, one in which the differences between youth culture and adult culture play out across the divide of overarching social issues in 1960's North America. "The combination of an irreverent popular culture, tensions unleashed by the Vietnam War, and the baby boomers' astonishing demographic power had generated a class of teenagers who were bolder and more aggressive than adults had come to expect" (Palladino 1996, p. 231). The disharmony between youth and adult views on the subject of civil rights and the issue of the Vietnam War becomes a backdrop upon which a large scale generational war establishes itself. According to Hine, the cultural unrest stems "...[not from] a generation gap, but rather [from] unresolved issues in American society that had been forgotten during the war and its euphoric aftermath" (Hine 1999, p. 259). Thus, the 1960's and

1970's teenager is the product of a complex and interwoven set of social circumstances which stem from the interplay between how adult culture views teenagers, and how teenagers view themselves.

The 1980's Teen - MTV and social isolation

At this point, there is a large gap in the existing body of teen literature, however what is more important to this thesis is what remains unsaid by both Hine and Palladino about the teenager in the last decades of the twentieth-century. What happens to the social category of the teenager in the 1980's? Does it disintegrate or re-emerge under different social politics? Hine hints at the answer when he asserts: "...Today's [1999's] teenagers are literally children of Ronald Reagan's America..." (Hine 1999, p. 281). This phase of teen culture is heavily influenced by market reforms set forth by Reagan's administration as he takes office in 1980. This administration seeks to diminish the role of the welfare state, increase levels of privatization, and above all establish a free market of goods and services in which the citizen becomes a consumer. As in the case of the post-World-War-II period, whether intended or unintended, government policy greatly influences the teenager of the 1980's.

Family life changes as median income levels drop in the 1980's; in most cases requiring families with two parents to earn dual incomes in order to maintain the standard of living of the middle-class (Hine, 1999, p. 285). In her explanation of a new politics of consumption, Juliet B. Schor outlines a short history of what she labels "competitive consumption": spending driven by a comparative process in which individuals attempt to

keep up with the norms of a social group with which they identify (Schor 1999, p. 448).

This process, she argues, drives the excess economy of the 1980's and 1990's; consumption standards rise as income levels remain the same or diminish. "Resources shifted into private consumption, and away from free time, the public sector, and saving" (Schor 1999, p. 451). As a result: "Hours of work have risen dramatically, saving rates have plummeted, public funds for education, recreation, and the arts have fallen in the wake of a grass-roots tax revolt" (Schor 1999, p.451). This world, claims Schor, is created through government policy changes:

[People] did not suddenly become greedy. The aspirational gap has been created by structural changes—such as the decline of community and social connection, the intensification of inequality, the growing role of mass media, and heightened penalties for failing in the labour market (Schor 1999, p. 451).

MusicTelevision (MTV) emerges in 1983 as a powerful social trend in the lives of North American teenagers. It was designed as a marketing engine: "[in its] 24-hour flow, MTV functions like one continuous ad in that nearly all of its short segments are indeed ads of one kind or another"(Kaplan, 1987, p. 12). In an environment of growing alienation where social spaces are disappearing and privatization is increasing; peer-group relations between teens are arguably diminishing and MTV steps in to engage and connect teens to the widening wonder of the youth driven marketplace. Bob Pittman, a key figure in the development of the original concept of MTV, describes the potential audience as "television babies who grew up on TV and rock and roll" (Lewis, 1990, p. 20). As Lisa A. Lewis painstakingly explains in *Gender Politics and MTV: Voicing the Difference* (1990), MTV as a concept emerges out of a shift away from traditional notions

of media audiences, towards the idea that fragmented audiences can be lucrative if targeted properly (Lewis, 1990, p. 14).

As Hine notes, MTV is not about participation in the traditional sense: "while the youthful expression of the 1920's, 1940's, 1950's, or 1960's often took the form of wild dancing, more recently it has been about solitary posing. This phenomenon is reflected, and...encouraged, by MTV" (Hine 1999, p. 279). In fact, explains E. Ann Kaplan in *Rocking Around the Clock: Music Television, Postmodernism, and Consumer Culture* (1987), the "solitary posing" described by Hine is intentional and intended to evoke feelings linked to consumption practices, a sort of "...hypnotic trance in which the spectator is suspended in a state of unsatisfied desire but forever under the illusion of *imminent* satisfaction through some sort of purchase" (Kaplan, 1987, p. 12) (emphasis in original).

The difference between a teen culture mediated by music videos rather than music, is defined through the concept of participation.

In contrast with the rudimentary format of 'American Bandstand', in which the viewer seemed simply to be looking in on young people having fun dancing with one another, MTV videos tend to be more about brooding than participation. They are highly subjective, like dreams or psychodramas. They connect the viewer with a feeling, rather than with other people." (Hine, 1999, p. 279).

What occurs in the 1980's is a mediated version of youth culture; one in which mass media and consumption practices present a homogenized version of the "teenager". Why does this representation of the teenager go unchallenged in the 1980's? Perhaps because the actual group that composes this generation is smaller than the socially cohesive baby boomer generation that went before it during the 1960's, and as well perhaps because the

members of this group are more socially isolated from one another, trusting the mass media to provide the peer-group connection. Regardless, MTV becomes a defining force of a generation, uniting viewers through a false sense of connection; preparing them for evolution into the consumer driven category of 1990's "global youth".

The 1990's Teen and beyond: Uniting global youth

Movement of the concept of "teenager" into the 1990's rests heavily on the preceding idea of social isolation. Teens of this decade (and our present one), are often referred to as alienated from the adult world. Danesi suggests that the 1990's mark a specific period in the history and life of the "post-modern teenager", one in which the teen

...will tend to belong to a clique with its own models of behaviour and its own value systems. This entails specific codes of dress, hairstyle, bodily demeanour, language, and general comportment...The post-modern teenager reflects a kind of radical response to the disenchantment with the traditional moral codes and models of our culture (Danesi, 1994, pp. 34-35).

The 1990's can perhaps be referred to as the decade of fragmentation of the concept of the "teenager" at a grass roots level, the time in which most cohesive social groups are broken up in order to recognize the diversity and complexity of social categories.²⁵ The "teenager" as a comprehensive category disappears and is replaced by a

²⁵ Hine claims that identity politics, postmodern theory, and advertising to micro markets are the central issues concerning the process of fragmentation in the last quarter of the twentieth-century (Hine, 1999, p. 276).

multiplicity of subcultures, such the Goth (Gothic) and Rave cultures.²⁶ Most notably, the study of subcultures has been examined by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham in the 1970's and early 1980's by such scholars as Stuart Hall, Dick Hebdige and Angela McRobbie.²⁷ I am not concerned with the specific content of these studies, but rather wish to illustrate the way in which the 1990's teenager transcends the local categories of specific subcultures through their understanding of a global category of the teenager.

An article published in *American Demographics*, "Can TV Save the Planet?" ponders the significance of MTV in a teenage-consumer-driven world:

MTV is probably the most impressive global youth...phenomenon...with separate indigenous music video networks including MTV Latino, MTV Brazil, MTV Europe, MTV Mandarin, MTV Asia, MTV Japan, and MTV India, the network has the ability to reach a large proportion of the world's youth literally overnight (Walker, 1996, para. 16).

What is interesting about MTV is not the difference in the actual musical content produced across the various national platforms, but the organization's recognition that these channels are designed for one purpose: the sale of consumer goods. According to

²⁶ Hine describes these groups as "tribes of youth": they are a range of youth subcultures defined by the music they listen to. "Tribes are about a yearning to belong to a group- or perhaps to escape into a disguise" (Hine, 1999, pp. 277-279). Some academics contend that this fragmentation of youth culture caused by divergent musical styles begins in the late 1970s with the advent/growth of hard rock, punk rock, and disco music. For an interesting discussion of this position, see Marcel Danesi's *Cool: The Signs and Meanings of Adolescence* (1994).

²⁷ Well known studies in this area include: *Resistance through Rituals: Youth subcultures in Post-war Britain* (1976), (editors Stuart Hall, and Tony Jefferson), Dick Hebdige's *Subculture: The meaning of style* (1979), and Angela McRobbie and Jenny

MTV's vice president of international marketing Janet Scardino, the containment of culture and converse spread of consumer habits is a positive shift:

In some markets, there has been a concern that Western media will cause national identity and values to suffer...What we've seen is that the media don't change values or ethics. They are much more likely to impact kids' behaviour as consumers. We're seeing a growing commonality among global youth as it relates to media habits and spending habits (Walker, 1996, para. 4).

The New World Teen Study (1994), conducted by a private marketing-research company – New York's The Brain Waves Group – is the first global quantitative study which focuses on the attitudes, lifestyles, values and consumer behaviour of teenagers in 26 countries, and concluded that:

...teens who watch MTV music videos are much more likely than other teens to wear the teen 'uniform' of jeans, running shoes, and denim jacket...They are also much more likely to own electronics and consume 'teen' items such as candy, sodas, cookies,...fast food...and a wide range of personal-care products...(Walker, 1996, para. 18).

What unifies teenagers across these groups is the act of consumption. However different they may be, they all consume if for no other reason than to buy clothing and accessories that will differentiate themselves from each other. Consumption becomes the outlet through which identity is defined. Public space for today's teenagers is the space of consumption. Hine asks: in a world with little civic space "...how...do we expect people to learn to behave as members of a community?", young people live in a world where the space they create is sold back to them (Hine 1999, p. 275). This is where we see a connection to the reference that the teens of today are shaped by Reagan's policies of the

Garber's "Girls and Subculture: An Exploration", in Hall et al. (1976).

1980's; the teens of today are living their understanding of the world through consumer practices.

Conclusion

Thomas Hine's *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager* (1999) asserts that at the close of the twentieth-century, and into the beginning of the twenty-first-century: "The degree to which adults fear [teenagers] as a group has...increased" (Hine, 1999, p. 283). In part this rising level of concern is attributed to the growing number of teenagers in the present decade: there will be more teens than those that composed the first generation of baby boomers in the late 1950's and 1960's (Hine, 1999, p. 296). Perhaps adult culture fears these numbers because of the possible social threats (both real and imagined) that teenagers represent, or perhaps they are concerned with how to prevent a greater number of young people from becoming the victims of physical and ideological injustices. Regardless, it is important to recognize that the framework for understanding the way in which issues about teenagers are approached and treated in the mainstream consciousness survives from a common social attitude which emerged roughly 100 years ago. Furthermore, that framework is built upon preceding notions about adult culture's projections of concern onto youth which reaches back another 500 years: it is a pattern which reveals a somewhat limited framework for understanding youth.

As outlined in the first half of this chapter, "childhood" is a notion which emerges at a specific point in time in Western history. "Childhood", emerging as a concept proper in the seventeenth-century, is a product of the interaction of the reconstructed notions of

education and the family unit. This modern concept of the family changes the role of children in society, from both the view point of the children, as well as that of the adults. This dichotomous relationship continues into the early twentieth-century as youth culture emerges and begins to dictate popular cultural tastes and styles. Renewed interest in the notion of the “modern family” comes about with both the educational reforms of the Great Depression which make high school a universal experience in the 1930's, as well as in the social conditions created after World War II which places teenagers at the centre of a sociological debate about how to best infuse the economy with good post-war spending habits.

The cultural resistance movements launched by 1960's and 1970's teens can be read as resistance to the 1950's adult culture's definition of youth culture. The 1980's sees a resurgence of the marketing techniques of the 1950's: MTV takes youth culture, repackages it, and sells it back to its creators. The idea of the “global teen” of the 1990's is a clear manifestation of this technique; the marketing practices of transnational brands transcends national borders, assuring that teens from different cultures “...frequently have much more in common with each other than they do with their parents” (Walker, 1996, para. 19). Thus, in the shadow of a historical pattern, youth continue to be unified into a cohesive social group through the collective exclusion from adult culture, and thus continue to be defined as “other” to the rest of society. In this state, separate ideological frameworks emerge for making sense of the world which are particular to each group. Adult culture tends to frame teens using their own terms. Teens, however, are developing separate viewpoints for understanding the world which stem from ideological positions

developed through their own experiences of Western society. In order to understand teenage notions of citizenship, we must explore the lens through which youth have been programmed to see the world: the practices of the consumer society.

Chapter 3 - The “Consumer-Citizen”: Theories of Consumption and Citizenship

This thesis offers a critique of the ways in which the concept of citizenship has been constructed in relation to youth, and suggests a reassessment of the notion of citizenship for Canadian teenagers. The key element in this reassessment is the movement away from the traditional concept of the “citizen”, towards the idea of the “consumer-citizen”. This is a hybrid concept which combines theoretical elements from the traditional literature of both consumption and citizenship discourse.

Generally speaking, traditional views of consumption theory hold that consumption is a process in which the individual is manipulated into consuming commodities by an external force, such as social pressure from peer groups, or the powerful force of corporate marketing. A theoretical position such as this leaves little room for human agency, hence the view of the consumer as *passive*. Conversely, traditional citizenship theory believes that “good” citizens must inherently be *active* participants in the functioning of their nation-states, through involvement in public debate which may be exercised through participation in the electoral process. Borrowing elements from both traditions, the concept of the “consumer-citizen” describes new social practices in which previously labelled “non-engaged citizens” *actively* pursue the fulfilment of their individual rights through the sphere of consumption. In this sphere, political action is defined on the individual level: the consumer-citizen exercises their rights through the terms of the market – they may choose to buy or not to buy. As an organized framework of global consumption continues to grow, so too does the importance of understanding this theoretical position, particularly (in this context) in respect to the

influence it holds over youth's notions of citizenship.

Recent globalization literature, using the political economist lens, has begun to discuss the role of the “consumer-citizen” in the emerging “global economy”. Although not always labelled as such, the conceptual idea of an individual bound to a lifestyle or culture (rather than a particular nation-state) through shared consumer choice, is being explored in multiple sites within this academic discourse. These varying, but similar definitions will be explored in the later sections of this chapter. Before that discussion however, this chapter will first address the historical and theoretical backgrounds which give rise to the concepts of consumption and citizenship.

Why we engage in the act of consumption: Theories of consumer culture²⁸

The following section is interested in drawing out a basic framework for explaining the presence of consumer culture. The preceding chapter established a specific historical connection between teenagers as a group and consumer practices. Here, in establishing a theoretical explanation for the existence of the culture which produces those practices, a framework will emerge for explaining the role of the

²⁸ Here, I am concerned with theoretical explanations for consumerism as a cultural whole, rather than the individual act of purchasing and consuming a good or service. Steven Miles contends that “while consumption is an act, consumerism is a way of life...[it] is the cultural expression and manifestation of the apparently ubiquitous act of consumption” (Miles, 1998, p. 4). Thus the theories that follow address the explanation of consumerism on a broad cultural level. Veblen, Bourdieu and Campbell are employed here because they offer explanations for the appearance and continuation of consumer culture as an ethos, rather than simply the sum of numerous individual acts of consumption.

consumer in modern society. Later, this will help to explain the way in which the “consumer” becomes linked to the idea of the “citizen”, as the central theoretical concept of this thesis.

Here, I trace out several major theories of consumption: they sketch out the way in which different historical explanations for the practice of consumerism emerge over time.

Consumption literature can be divided into several distinct categories: classical, contemporary and post-modern.²⁹ As my study focuses on the modern theoretical concepts of the teenager and citizen, I do not address post-modern theories of consumption:³⁰ instead I am concerned with the first two categories.

I have chosen the work of Thorstein Veblen to reflect classical consumption theory which has its roots in sociology.³¹ Pierre Bourdieu falls into the contemporary category because his work helped to define a specific sociology of consumption; he is addressed here for the similarities as well as the differences he shares with Veblen’s classical approach. Colin Campbell’s work falls within the contemporary category as well; he is influenced by sociologist Max Weber, however he is writing within an

²⁹ For detailed discussion of these classifications within the field, please see chapter one of Mark Gottdiener’s *New Forms of Consumption: Consumers, Culture and Commodification* (2000), and chapter two of Steven Miles’ *Consumerism as a Way of Life* (1998).

³⁰ Postmodern approaches to consumption include the work of Jean Baudrillard and David Lyon. See Gottdiener (2000); Miles (1998).

³¹ Other theorists in this category include Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim. See Gottdiener (2000); Miles (1998).

established field of consumption literature. He is included here because he both emerges from and breaks away from his classical roots, offering new explanations for consumption. The continuities between these approaches suggest that consumption remains an important ideological structure in Western society, while their differences suggest that as a cultural concept, this structure is open to constant interpretation and re-definition.

A theoretical background: Borrowing from Marx

Although Marxist analyses of the economic inequality of early Western industrialized society are in fact more interested in class structures than the process of consumption, Marx is generally credited with presenting the first “sociological” theoretical framework through which consumption practices could be examined (Firat & Dholakia, 1998; Miles 1998; Gottdiener 2000). Before this break, classical models of consumption are strictly economic in nature – following the tenets of market economy theory: namely that consumers control the market through their choice to purchase or not purchase a given commodity. A. Fuat Firat & Nikhilesh Dholakia define this as the concept of “consumer sovereignty”: “the market serves the needs of the consumer through the mechanisms of competition. This philosophy...is derived from the classical economics framework of perfect competition” (Firat & Dholakia, 1998, p. 24). Firat & Dholakia define the central problem with this view through the following question: “What happens when some consumers have greater buying power than others and, therefore, their demands are more *effective* in the market?” (Firat, 1998, p. 24) (emphasis in

original).

Steven Miles outlines the role of Karl Marx as formative in the construction of consumption theory despite the fact that Marx is more concerned with the production of commodities than their consumption (Miles, 1998, p. 16). Marx contends that the very nature of the system of production mediates the relationship between the workers who fabricate the commodities and the capitalists who sell them on the open market; within this process, the commodity becomes valuable not for its actual “use-value”, but rather for its “exchange-value” (Miles, 1998, p. 16). Thus, we see the first theoretical admission of the importance of the role of the material products of labour in the lives of members of Western society. Marx is also the first to identify the contradictions of the “consuming paradox”: in order to continue producing commodities, workers are forced to consume those made by their fellow workers, as such “the wheels of capitalism effectively came to be oiled by the workers themselves” (Miles, 1998, p. 17). Miles notes that “in this context, the sociologist of consumption owes a debt to Marx for addressing questions that would later provide a significant, though incomplete, basis for a sociology of consumption in its own right” (Miles, 1998, p. 17).

While this thesis is more concerned with theoretical developments which occur after, and diverge significantly from Marxist scholarship, it is nonetheless worth mentioning Marx in this context because the theorists employed in the theoretical explanation of this thesis – Veblen, Bourdieu, and Campbell – are influenced by the collective body of consumption literature which comes before them. In particular, they are interested in exploring elements which were critically absent from Marx’s original

analysis: namely the recognition that multiple factors (and not solely economics) play a role in the mediation of human relationships.

Thorstein Veblen: Emulation from the top down

Thorstein Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), is based in part on Marxist theory, however it branches out to include and examine the way in which social relationships impact the process of consumption. In the existing body of consumption literature, Veblen's perspective has come to be identified as a "theory of emulation". In the context of this thesis this perspective is important because, like Marxist analysis, it acknowledges the importance of commodities in the shaping of people's lives through their interactions with each other. The difference for Veblen is the reason for which individuals engage in the process of consumption. Rather than being impelled simply by economic need, as Marx suggests, Veblen asserts that complex social meanings are derived from the process of consumption, specifically those concerning the organizing principle of social class.

Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class* provides an outline of the way in which the leisure class in modern culture grows into the taste forming elite. Writing in 1899, Veblen is interested in tracing out the history of the leisure class (which for his purposes emerged in feudal Europe), and more importantly in exploring the idea and identifying the practice of what he labels "conspicuous consumption" (Veblen, 1934, p. 1). According to Veblen, historically the leisure class has been made up of the non-industrial groups of the nobility and the priesthood, that is to say that the leisure class was distinct and easily

recognizable in feudal societies (Veblen, 1934, p. 2). As these societies evolve however from "...peaceable savagery to a predatory phase of life", (a move towards a system of individual ownership), the process of emulation becomes increasingly important (Veblen, 1934, p. 16).

The process of ownership is, in short, a process of emulation; you must acquire the same possessions as others within your group in order to prove your worth as a member. Veblen asserts that "conspicuous consumption" arises because "predatory" cultures no longer retain distinct boundaries between social classes which results in "...expenditures made not for comfort or use, but for purely honorific purposes", that is to illustrate your membership within the upper leisure class. As such, this newly constructed leisure class then becomes the class to which others wish to belong, and that they seek to emulate through their own acquisition of consumer goods (Chase in 'Forward' to Veblen, 1934, p.xiii).

The leisure class stands at the head of the social structure in point of reputability; and its manner of life and its standards of worth therefore afford the norm for the community. The observance of these standards, in some degree of approximation, becomes incumbent upon all classes lower in the scale. In modern civilized communities the lines of demarcation between social classes have grown vague and transient, and wherever this happens the norm of reputability imposed by the upper class extends its coercive influence with but the slight hindrance down through the social structure to the lowest strata. *The result is that the members of each strata accept as their ideal of decency the scheme of life in vogue in the next higher stratum, and bend their energies to live up to that ideal.* On pain of forfeiting their good name and their self-respect in case of failure, they must conform to the accepted code, at least in appearance (Veblen, 1934, p. 84) (emphasis added).

For Veblen, each class participates in this complex system of emulation not necessarily because they choose to, rather they must because others in the system are doing so.

Steven Miles comments that Veblen's "analysis of the *nouveaux riches* of the late nineteenth-century...[who were] intent on mimicking the lifestyles of the upper classes in Europe", highlighting the complexity of the relationship between various social classes. "In contemporary consumer society, the degrees of demarcation and the role that consumption plays in the ways in which people associate with each other have become highly sophisticated" (Miles, 1998, pp. 18-19).

The sophistication of Veblen's model of conspicuous consumption rests on the fact that it is not simply an economic demarcation between classes, but is it social as well, as Mark Gottdiener's *New Forms of Consumption: Consumers, Culture, and Commodification* (2000) identifies.

Veblen views consumption practices as the differentiating criterion for social classes. The labouring and upper classes are based definitionally on economic distinctions; but their *social* differentiation rests on the visible evidence of consumption practices (Gottdiener, 2000, pp. 7-8) (emphasis in original).

What is important about this observation, something which is often cited as misunderstood by critics, is the fact that Veblen assumes this process of social differentiation to be unconscious (Trigg, 2001, para. 34). That is to say that, emulation is a socially complex process which compels engagement for reasons beyond the simple desire to be seen wearing the same fashion as your peers or being in possession of the same furniture as your neighbour. Andrew Trigg's "Veblen, Bourdieu, and Conspicuous Consumption", employs Veblen's observation that conspicuous consumption is not so much about displaying excess as it is about fulfilling the "...desire to live up to the conventional standard of decency", as evidence in support of the argument that emulation

occurs at a “second remove” (Trigg, 2001, para. 31-32). Of importance to my overall argument, and something which will be further developed by Bourdieu’s theoretical position, is the recognition that consumption practices in Western society very early in history become *complex* social processes which both shape, and are shaped by, interaction between social actors.

Pierre Bourdieu: Emulation in the “trickle round”

Pierre Bourdieu mirrors the theoretical framework of Thorstein Veblen, contending that consumerism begins and continues as a system because of societal class structures; members of the lower classes generally seek to imitate the lifestyles of those above them. “Bourdieu argues that human beings are motivated by the need to reproduce a collective pattern of preferences based on class demarcation” (Miles, 1998, p. 21). The difference for Bourdieu is the fact that emulation does not solely occur as a “trickle-down effect” from higher to lower classes as outlined by Veblen, rather there is a “trickle-round of tastes”, in which various classes obtain some degree of social power through their particular styles of appropriation of commodities (Trigg, 2001, para. 28).

Bourdieu’s *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste* (1984), offers an explanation of the way in which consumer tendencies work to mirror and enforce class differences among members of a given society. This model is useful in attempting to establish a case for the power of and attraction to consumer culture; individuals engage in the system of consumption because they stand to gain certain symbolic power (“cultural

capital") from the commodities they consume.³² This symbolic power stems from the reproduction of the ideology which governs the social class to which the individual belongs. Bourdieu attributes the process of ideological reproduction (ie. the production of cultural capital), to both informal and formal systems of education:

whereas the ideology of charisma regards taste in legitimate culture as a gift of nature, scientific observation shows that cultural needs are the product of upbringing and education: surveys establish that all cultural practices (museum visits, concert-going, reading etc.), and preferences in literature, painting or music, are closely linked to educational level...and secondarily to social origin (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 1).

The notion ascribed to the collective sum of these various forms of cultural preferences is the idea of "taste". Bourdieu asserts "taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar..." (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 6). In this way, the "taste" of a social group or class comes to define that group in opposition to others which exist in society. "Taste" becomes a social marker which defines an individual's membership to a particular group, and as taste is displayed by an individual through the consumption of commodities, consumption can then be described as "...a stage in a process of communication, that is, an act of deciphering, decoding, which presupposes practical or explicit mastery of a cipher

³² "Cultural capital can be defined as the accumulated stock of knowledge about the products of artistic and intellectual traditions, which is learned through educational training and...also through social upbringing" (Trigg, 2001, para. 21).

or code" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 2). This code is made up of a multitude of "...signs, symbols, ideas and values which are used as a means of marking off one social group from another (Miles, 1998, pp. 21-22).

This is a complex process, as noted in Twigg's comparison of Veblen and Bourdieu, one in which the social actors engaged in the process are unaware of the ideological structure within which they are functioning.³³ "The principles that organize people's actions...are adaptable over time depending upon the constraints and uncertainties that evolve under different situations, [the] individuals are not conscious of the cultural force that guides their behaviour" (Trigg, 2001, para. 34).

Both Veblen and Bourdieu offer theories of emulation as the explanation for cultures of consumption. These are useful approaches for explaining quite generally why members of a given society seek to consume, and in establishing the way in which consumption becomes a complicated social process in modern society: one in which individuals often do not recognize they are involved. A frequently cited critique of these theories however, follows from their central tenet of the degree of complicity involved in the consumption process, which implies a lack of space for human reason and agency. The point here, is not to discredit the work of Veblen and Bourdieu who provide useful explanations of the functioning of consumer culture, but rather to acknowledge that

³³ Refer to Bourdieu's concept of the "habitus" in *Distinction* (1984), for a more complex analysis of the functioning of ideological structures in society. See also Martyn J. Lee for a brief but clear analysis of this concept in *Consumer Culture Reborn: The cultural politics of consumption* (1993), pp. 30-34.

consumption literature also recognizes the limitations of these models.

Given the complexity of social life in modern North American culture, questions regarding participation in, and thus the perpetuation of, a consumer society move past the somewhat simplistic model of social class hierarchies, towards other explanations. The question then becomes – what other reason(s) embedded in modern society, apart from class based emulation practices, might compel people to participate in the process of consumption? This question is especially pertinent in the present discussion involving teen consumer practices.³⁴ The proliferation of consumer practices in 1950's American culture, which gives rise to the powerful demographic group of “youth”, is a widespread phenomenon which takes hold throughout North America. There is more at work here than simply class emulation practices, which must have been unclear given the shifting definitions of social groups as the modern middle class came into existence. Colin Campbell describes this element of change as the wide spread cultural recognition of a “feeling”, an individual need to participate in the consumption process stemming from a historical religious position which emphasizes the emotional, he calls it “the romantic ethic”.

³⁴ Questions of class might also be applied to explain the social hierarchies of groups of teenagers found within the culture of the high school itself. Addressing emulation as a reason for the consumption of certain kinds of products within the social groups, the reasoning behind this behaviour is located beyond the walls of the high school itself in the emulation of public figures and celebrities. That study however, is beyond the scope of this thesis, which wishes to address consumption as a uniting force between teenagers, emphasizing the common points of reference that teens share which they employ for understanding their roles in society.

Colin Campbell: The individual pursuit of pleasure

Colin Campbell offers an historical explanation for the rise and dominance of consumer culture in the age of modernity in *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism* (1987). His argument rests largely on the claim that an “aesthetic of emotion”, a state of favouring “emotionality”, which develops and is adopted into modern mainstream culture in the west due to historical ties with the Puritan ethic³⁵ and the cultural movement of romanticism.³⁶ He contends that this process begins in the early nineteenth-century, as the concept of “[modern] hedonism” gains positive favour through its association with the tenets of the romantic movement.

The concept of traditional hedonism emerges out of the simple physiological search to fulfil a need. Campbell wishes to differentiate between this desire and the quest to experience pleasure. Yiannis Gabriel & Tim Lang explain: “Need represents the disturbance of a state of psychological equilibrium; it is based on absence, on lack, on necessity. By contrast, pleasure, argues Campbell, is ‘not so much a state of being as a quality of experience’” (Gabriel & Lang, 1995, p. 104). Therefore, the process of seeking

³⁵ Stemming from the Puritan community defined as: “a sect of Protestants in 16th and 17th-century England advocating the simplification of the doctrine and worship in the Church of England” (Stein, 1980, p. 726). The way in which the Puritan practice of the strict observance of morals leads to the emotionally free quality of the romantic movement is a complicated one, and will not be examined in depth here. For a detailed discussion, refer to Campbell’s original text, as well as Boden & Williams’ “Consumption and Emotion: The romantic ethic revisited” (2002).

³⁶ “Romanticism” here defined as: “a style of literature and art of the 19th century that encouraged freedom of form and emphasized imagination and emotion” (Stein, 1980, p. 779).

pleasure is not a means to an end, it is a continual process in which the individual seeks not “to restore an earlier state of disturbed equilibrium, but [to search for]...a certain kind of stimulus which will bring about a pleasurable experience” (Gabriel & Lang, 1995, p. 104).

If traditional hedonism was concerned with sensations (smell, sight, hearing, taste and touch), then modern hedonism centres on emotion (Campbell 1987, p. 69). It is this aesthetic of emotion which helps to explain the acceptance and prominence of consumer culture in the Western world; the romantic ethic, (“...teachings concerning the good, the true and the beautiful...”), gives rise to a character type which allows for the adoption of hedonist behaviour (Campbell 1987, p. 206). The cultural movement of Romanticism is personified in the romantic character type, a person for whom there are two worlds; the first is the “world of truth, goodness, and beauty” which is eternal, infinite and above all *real*. The second is the “world of actual appearances”, which is ugly, evil, and above all *untrue*. This world view leads to an oppositional understanding of the self versus society.

What emerges, according to Campbell is a situation in which the middle-class individual (the driving force of consumer culture) is “doubled”; the bohemian self which is concerned with deprivation and pleasure is forever at odds with the bourgeois self which is concerned with comfort (Campbell 1987, p. 223). This tension is the driving force of consumer culture; the interplay of the two selves pushes individuals to continually consume for personal enjoyment and continually produce for the greater social good. Campbell notes: “...these twin cultures ensure the continued performance of those contrasted but interdependent forms of behaviour essential to the perpetuation of

industrial societies, matching consumption with production, play with work” (Campbell 1987, p. 227).

Sharon Boden & Simon J. Williams note the paradoxical nature of the relationship described by Campbell:

The more proficient one becomes at creatively imagining emotions and sensations, the more likely it is that ‘real’ consumption fails to deliver a comparable intensity of pleasure. This establishes a cyclical pattern of consumer frustration in which actual consumption is typically a disillusioning, dissatisfying experience...[as a result] modern hedonists are ceaseless in their demand for original, novelty commodities (Boden & Williams, 2002, p. 496).

Above all however, it should be noted, that modern consumption in this context is characterized, not as oppressive or restrictive, but rather as a creative process in which “imagination and emotions play pivotal roles” (Boden & Williams, 2002, p. 494). In this way, Campbell’s theory of consumption escapes the common critique of the structuralist views of Veblen and Bourdieu that individuals are forced to participate in consumer culture by the ideological systems in which they live. While it is important to acknowledge the existence of such systems, the theoretical foundations of my argument become much stronger once I am able to establish a more individualistic approach to explaining consumer behaviour. Campbell’s analysis provides a theoretical approach to the specific category of teenage consumption: teens consume commodities constructively and for their own personal pleasure, rather than solely for the purpose of imitating another social class.

Joining together then, the theories of Veblen and Bourdieu which contend that consumption has historically involved a complex set of social interactions, as well as

Campbell's assertion that the romantic ethic has been culturally ingrained, consumerism reveals itself to be a complex ideological system. Given the reach and scope of consumer culture explained here, it undoubtedly influences many facets of modern life, and of particular interest to this thesis is the way in which traditional notions of citizenship are affected.

Why we engage in the democratic process: Theories of citizenship³⁷

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the hybrid concept of the “consumer-citizen” is interested in borrowing components from the traditional theoretical positions of both consumption and citizenship. The preceding section illustrates the theoretical framework which explains the existence of a consumer culture in Western society, and the following section will attempt to do the same for the concept of citizenship. This section will explore the theoretical explanations for the existence of the “citizen” in Western culture, tracing the role of this figure through several historical junctures, which

³⁷ Here, I am particularly interested in the way in which the practices of capitalist consumer society become tied to notions of citizenship, specifically in the role of the consumer-citizen which is addressed in this section through the work of Scammell, Barber and Dobbin. Before examining this position however, it is necessary to trace out the origins of the role of the citizen in Western society in order to understand the traditional conceptions of the “citizen”, as accomplished through the scholarship of Faulks, Heater and Kulynych. Examining a more complete historical picture of citizenship helps to identify not only the components of traditional concepts of citizenship (ie. the liberal versus civic republican approaches), but also those elements which are borrowed into the hybrid concept of the “consumer-citizen”. (The previously mentioned analysis also provides a theoretical base for Chapter four’s discussion of the way in which adult practices regarding citizenship education are based in the tradition of the civic-republican model of citizenship).

allows for a concrete understanding of the role of the citizen in society. Later, this will help to understand how the “citizen” becomes linked to the “consumer”, in the hybrid role of the “consumer-citizen”.

Traditional modes of citizenship

Keith Faulks' *Citizenship* (2000), the central project of which is to present a postmodern critique of liberal citizenship, provides a brief yet useful history of the social origins of citizenship which will help here in suggesting the fluid nature of the concept. Faulks employs the following as a basic definition: “citizenship is a membership status, which contains a package of rights, duties and obligations, and which implies equality, justice and autonomy” (Faulks, 2000, p. 13). These components are not mutually exclusive by nature, however they very infrequently exist together in the same time and space due to competing ideological constructions which have emerged from the historical origins of the concept, which according to Faulks continue to distort the understanding of the true nature and role of citizenship.

As an historical phenomenon, the evolution of citizenship, as outlined by Faulks, is a movement from the obligations-based citizenship of Aristotle's Greek *polis* which disappeared with the rise of religion, to the subject-citizen of Hobbes' sixteenth-century Europe which disappeared with the separation of church from state, to the egalitarian citizen imagined by the participants of the eighteenth-century French Revolution. The movement towards a modern conception of citizenship is aided by several socio-economic and political developments, such as the development of a money economy in

medieval European cities in the twelfth-century onwards, and much later in the eighteenth-century, the movement to better define geographical boundaries between European states (Faulks, 2000, pp. 21-24). However, according to Faulks, the key event in the formation of the “modern citizenship” is the French Revolution, “which fused citizenship with the nation state” (Faulks, 2000, p. 8). The revolutionaries sought to abolish the hierarchical system of the subject-citizen (monarchy as sovereign), and replace it with a system in which all citizens were considered universally equal (people as sovereign) (Faulks, 2000, p. 31). They sought as well however, to establish a system in which citizens were required to fulfill obligations to the state, which included civic-political duties and military service, in exchange for these personal liberties. Ultimately this ideal system would not be realized,³⁸ identifying a central tension in the discussion of modern citizenship which continues today: how to grant rights which ensure individual autonomy while also compelling individuals to contribute to the overall public good.

Derek Heater's *What is Citizenship?* (1999), provides a useful further analysis of the two central theoretical positions which form the basis of the debate over the definition of modern citizenship: the civic republican style which places stress on duties and the liberal style which places stress on rights. The civic republican style of citizenship is a model of community in which individuals recognize their role in the collective notion of the state. It is, as Aristotle describes, “...a relationship of mutual respect and the active

³⁸ Faulks notes that the revolution was not necessarily successful in instituting its goals, and what was accomplished (which is not specified) was undermined when Napoleon came into power (Faulks, 2000, p. 35).

pursuit of common purposes between virtuous citizens” (Heater 1999, p. 56). Within this model, the citizen has a duty to fulfil in response to the state; the individual must contribute to the greater good of society by participating in the public sphere. Public debate is believed to be the key ingredient in a healthy democratic state.

The liberal style however, which has been the dominant Western style for the past two centuries, is much less demanding of the individual. “It involves a loosely committed relationship to the state,...held in place by a set of civic rights, honoured by the state, which otherwise interferes as little as possible in the citizen’s life” (Heater, 1999, p. 4). It requires that the state protect the rights of the individual, notably the right to hold property, in return the citizen must pay taxes, but is not necessarily required to participate in the public sphere. Capitalism flourishes in a system of liberal citizenship, where the right to pursue individual interests is protected by the state. (This last argument will become important in the impending discussion of the concept of the “consumer-citizen”, in which civil rights become secondary to market rights).

The tension between these two traditional modes of citizenship extends to the debate surrounding youth: what is the relationship between the balancing of rights vs. duties for this group? Jessica Kulynych’s article, “No Playing in the Public Sphere: democratic theory and the exclusion of children” (2001), contends that while historically Western society has granted rights to children, at the same time it does little to encourage civic participation. Drawing on the work of Habermas, Kulynych contends that “...the crucial axis of citizenship in the contemporary world is membership in the common political culture...”, from which children are excluded (Kulynych 2001, p. 232). When we

speak of children's rights, we are often referring to the liberal model of citizenship in which children worldwide are recognized as holding civil and social rights.³⁹ These rights include the right to life, health care and protection against abuse (Kulynych 2001, p. 237).⁴⁰ Missing, are the rights associated with political participation, and this is the central problem with the way in which we define the rights of children.

She agrees with Habermas that the problem with following a model in which civil, social, and political rights are defined separately, is the implication that they do not share any of the same components. Thus, granting civil and social rights to children, while denying them political rights (such as a voice in the public sphere), teaches children that their guaranteed rights (ie. civil and social) exist apart from the sphere of public debate. For Kulynych, the political element of citizenship should be present within the categories of civil and social rights, that is to say that children should be included in the political sphere if they are to understand and fulfill their roles as citizens. This involvement needs to include more than simply "...formal, legal channels of political participation, such as the right to vote or hold office" (Kulynych 2001, p. 238). Rights alone do not necessarily define a citizen in the eyes of the state, rather, contends Kulynych, "the identities of

³⁹ Here, Kulynych is borrowing from the organizational categories of T.H. Marshall's "Citizenship and Social Class" (1950) which identifies civil rights, political rights, and social rights as the central concepts in the study of modern liberal citizenship (Kulynych, 2001, p. 237).

⁴⁰ The formal recognition of civil and social rights comes from the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989. Examples of these forms of rights include: survival rights, membership rights, protection rights, and empowerment rights (Kulynych, 2001, p. 237).

citizens give substance and force to their rights" (Kulynych 2001, p. 239).

This article offers an interesting viewpoint which provides a potential explanation for the social disconnect of teenagers; in a world where their rights are not fully recognized, why would a teenager feel a reciprocal sense of civic duty? Kulynych notes: "merely granting children rights of democratic participation is not likely to change significantly their political status in a culture that continues to define children as private beings" (Kulynych 2001, p. 239). In a private world of individual consumption, the teenager sees little use for civic duties as dictated by the traditional civic republican model of citizenship.⁴¹

What emerges from this environment – primed for consumer behaviour and lacking an understanding of traditional civic participation – is an overarching concept which merges elements from both of the previously mentioned theories: the consumer-citizen. Within my argument, the concept of the consumer-citizen is the key to understanding the ways in which the traditional notion of citizenship is changing for the teenager. While not always labelled exactly as such, the concept of the consumer-citizen has surfaced in recent discussions of transnational branding and the process of globalization. A thorough understanding of this concept provides this thesis with a

⁴¹ It should be noted that this view is not restricted to teenagers in modern consumer culture, but exists as a broader ethos across all groups in society. Gabriel and Lang note that generally speaking, all social actors in western society shifted away from the realm of "citizen", towards a definition as "consumer" under the governmental policies of the New Right (ie. Reagan, Thatcher [and Mulroney]) during the 1980's (Gabriel & Lang, 1995, p. 177).

concrete theoretical base from which to attempt to answer the question of how teenagers are redefining citizenship.

The emergence of the “consumer-citizen”

The debate between the balance of liberal rights and civic republican duties, extends not only from classical discussions of citizenship through to present debates about the child's place in the public sphere as examined by Kulynych, but also becomes a central tenet in the formation of the concept of the “consumer-citizen”.

Keith Faulks' explanation of liberal citizenship is a good place to begin the discussion of the “consumer-citizen”, because in framing his analysis through a postmodern lens, Faulks is concerned with examining the causes and effects of the shift from liberal to neo-liberal systems of governance in Western society. This shift happens at a specific place in time, and is the result of specific circumstances which are worth examining here, not only for the more obvious reason of gaining an improved understanding of the origin of the “consumer-citizen”, but also because a brief historical review of this period will give further support to the claims made in chapter two regarding the historical development of the category of the teenager during the same time period. The political reasoning behind the shift from liberal to neo-liberal ideologies helps to explain the direction in which teen culture evolves after the fragmentation of the group which occurred in the 1970's. North American governance policies of the 1980's,⁴²

⁴² Here we are addressing the governments of Reagan and Mulroney, and to a

based largely on market logic, will be shown to directly affect cultural ideologies surrounding consumption, as well as popular conceptions of citizenship.

The liberal tradition: Emphasis on individual rights

Despite the similar time frames of the American and French Revolutions,⁴³ and their general aim to move towards a new concept of citizenship, Faulks contends that the two events are very different in intent and outcome. While the French imagine a country in which both civic duties and liberal rights would be balanced, the Americans are concerned with “claiming the rights already owed [to them] through the common law of their colonial masters, the British” (Faulks, 2000, p. 31). Faulks emphasizes that the move toward a truly individualistic conception of citizenship in the United States stems from the historical origins of its members:

The stress upon individualism resulted largely from the immigrant nature of the American polity. Americans were suspicious of radical politics that might create an oppressive community that would impose the very uniformity from which many Americans had fled in Europe (Faulks, 2000, p. 32).

Thus, in adopting a liberal system, Faulks contends that citizenship in the United States has inherited an ideological contradiction which, to its detriment, shapes the way in which the concept of citizenship evolves in that context, particularly in relation to the later adoption of neo-liberal organizational policies.

lesser extent in the context of this thesis (and thus not intended to be included under the title of “North American” policy)- Britain under Thatcher’s rule.

⁴³ The American Revolution dates to 1776, while the French Revolution dates to

In its very basic state, the liberal tradition defines citizenship as a set of individual rights (Faulks, 2000, p. 56). "Most importantly, the possession of rights denotes individual autonomy. Rights give space to the individual to develop their interests and fulfil their potential free from interference from other individuals or from the community as a whole" (Faulks, 2000, p. 56). Historically, the problem with this fundamentalist approach to liberalism is the way in which the favouring of personal rights places the individual *in opposition to* the collective or community.⁴⁴ Faulks contends that this oppositional framework helps to explain the "ambivalence" (and at times what could be considered hostility) of the liberal system towards the democratic process and social rights (Faulks, 2000, p. 57).

As a result, there are two interrelated problems: the first is that civil rights and social rights become *exclusive categories that cannot coexist* – with the former being favoured over the latter, and the second is that under the neo-liberal system (where civil rights are favoured above all else), civil rights often come to be *redefined or replaced as market rights* (Faulks, 2000, pp. 63-64). This ideological division between civil and social rights is what allowed Western neo-liberal governments of the 1980's and 1990's to:

...rollback social rights in the name of economic efficiency and the enhancement of people's civic freedoms. The problems that the capitalist

1789.

⁴⁴ Faulks cites Locke and Paine as early proponents of this position: "The first liberal theorists to assign a central role to rights, such as Locke and Paine, believed that the citizen needed to be protected from the growing power of the state...in the words of Paine [the state was] a necessary evil" (Faulks, 2000, p. 56).

system experienced from the 1970's onwards were blamed largely upon the growing expenditure on social rights and the associated growth of the bureaucratic and inefficient state that was strangling the freedoms of the market (Faulks, 2000, p. 64).

While aspects of civil rights may overlap with components of market rights – such as the right to accumulate and spend wealth, there are certain elements which are compromised in a neo-liberal system – such as the right to protest and the right to free speech (Faulks, 2000, p. 65). What results in this system is a context in which the functioning of a capitalist economy is favoured over the functioning of a democratic society; ideologically speaking, value becomes defined in economic terms rather than humanistic terms. Neo-liberalism then, draws a distinct division between active and passive citizens, as “active” citizens come to be defined as those who “assert their market rights of consumer choice,...[and participate in] conspicuous consumption” (Faulks, 2000, p. 67).

While a somewhat brief and simplistic view of the social factors which gave rise and shape to neo-liberal policies in North America in the 1980's, the summary here of Faulks provides a good foundation for launching into a discussion of a related subsequent historical context in which the “consumer-citizen” emerges proper: the age of globalization.

“Globalization” as a concept

Globalization is not a new concept, although current understandings of this complex social process are quite different from historical approaches to the topic which existed in the Western world prior to the 1970's. Historical definitions can include

anything from the prehistoric wanderings of hunter-gatherer tribes, to the pre-modern spread of religion and writing technologies and the organization of world trade routes, to the modern project of colonizing the Americas (Steger, 2003). For the purposes of this thesis however, I am interested in a definition of “globalization” which emerges in the 1960's, one which defines a break with the previously mentioned historical conceptions of this concept. This break occurs for various reasons, and is the result of multiple social factors which include:

- i) the implementation of liberalist government policies intended to fuel the industrial revolution (which were responsible for the growth of nationalist ideologies which resulted in international conflicts including both World Wars).
- ii) the growth of a world wide transportation system which had resulted from an infrastructure implemented during the industrial revolution to transport goods.
- iii) the development and implementation of communication technologies– both as an aide to the transportation of goods and people as well as forms of mass entertainment.
- iv) the rise of multi-national corporations and the importance of “brands” which grew from the economic imperatives of the post World-War II period in America,
- v) a large population boom in which the earth's population reached 3.7 billion in 1970,⁴⁵ which resulted in changing migration patterns (Steger, 2003).

As a result of the complex interaction of these factors, the idea of a “global community” emerges: a real, rather than imagined, situation in which social actors are no longer geographically isolated, but share materials, ideas and space with groups that were once

⁴⁵ Steger contends that this population boom was significant given that the earth's population “...increased only modestly from about 300 million at the time of the birth of Christ to 760 million in 1750” (Steger, 2003, p. 33).

isolated themselves.

Manfred B. Steger's, *Globalization: A very short introduction* (2003), suggests that the very definition of "globalization" has changed over time through various definitions as a process, a condition, a system, a force, and an age (Steger, 2003, p. 7). For the purposes of his analysis, he defines globalization as the process by which we achieve "globality", which is defined as: "a social condition characterized by the existence of global economic, political, cultural, and environmental interconnections and flows that make many of the currently existing borders and boundaries irrelevant" (Steger, 2003, p. 7). The power inherent in these "interconnections and flows" is the speed and frequency with which they appear: "reinforced on a daily basis, these persistent experiences of global interdependence gradually change people's individual and collective identities and thus dramatically impact the way they act in the world" (Steger, 2003, p. 12).

In addition to its definition, academics also dispute the components of globalization. That is to say that if globalization is "a set of social processes that are thought to transform our present social condition into one of globality", then the actual categories which comprise the set are by no means defined or solidly agreed upon (Steger, 2003, p. 8). Nonetheless, Steger outlines the four main areas of concern which tend to arise in the context of this discussion: the economic dimension, the political dimension, the cultural dimension, and the ideological dimension. Depending on one's position within the field of study of globalization, the process may be comprised of one or multiple aspects outlined above. For the purposes of this thesis, globalization is understood as a process which comprises the economic, the political, and the cultural,

with the ideological sphere being the sum total of the other three parts of the definition.

Similar to the preceding discussions of “consumption” and “citizenship”, “globalization” is treated here as an overarching system of beliefs which influences societal behaviour on a large scale.

How then, is this ideological dimension of globalization formed in North America during this time period? The economic sphere is defined through the neoliberal policies of the Ronald Reagan administration, mirrored by Brian Mulroney in Canada,⁴⁶ and Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom,⁴⁷ which abandons the “state interventionism” of Keynesian economics, and implements a free market economy which would link nations around the globe (Steger, 2003, p. 40). Steger contends that tenets of the neoliberalist position include:

1. Privatization of public enterprises
2. Deregulation of the economy
3. Liberalization of trade and industry
4. Massive tax cuts
5. ‘Monetarist’ measures to keep inflation in check, even at the risk of increasing unemployment
6. Strict control on organized labour
7. The reduction of public expenditures, particularly social spending

⁴⁶ Murray Dobbin’s *The Myth of the Good Corporate Citizen* (2003) outlines similar neoliberal practices instituted by the Mulroney government in the same time period as those of the Reagan administration. He notes that the choice to eliminate public-sector jobs, privatize government corporations and cut social programs in Canada have the intended end result of making citizens more dependent on corporations (Dobbin, 2003, p. 41).

⁴⁷ Stuart Hall has written extensively on the topic of the negative effects of neoliberal policies on British society during the 1980’s. For an in-depth discussion of this topic see Hall’s *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left* (1988).

8. The down-sizing of government
 9. The expansion of international markets
 10. The removal of controls on global financial flows
- (Steger, 2003, p. 41).

The tenth component of neo-liberalism listed here hints at the actual complexity of this seemingly simple “laissez-faire” system: for this system to flourish, each nation must trade with other neo-liberal nations. Thus, the political sphere of globalization can be seen to rest on the economic: national sovereignty is of lesser significance in a system in which favourable trade relations are of the utmost importance. The cultural dimension of globalization thus becomes the arena in which the traded goods are consumed for more than simply use-value, rather they are intricate pieces in a cultural puzzle; involved in “...the symbolic construction, articulation, and dissemination of meaning” (Steger, 2003, p. 70).

Within this system, following the model described above, economics becomes a driving force behind the governmental policies of 1980's North America. Social programs operate at diminished capacity, organized labour unions are discouraged, and unemployment levels rise while taxes are lowered. This is a state in which social rights are sacrificed in the name of civil rights. This is the heart of Faulks' argument explained in a previous section. Because liberalism places individual rights *in opposition to* collective or community rights, civil rights and social rights are viewed as unable to exist within the same system. Furthermore, because of the economic basis/emphasis of the neo-liberal system, civil rights (the most basic of which is the right of the individual to hold property) become redefined as *markets rights*. This is a system in which the scope of citizenship becomes reduced because active participation in the system is defined by

market activity: the choice to participate is the choice to consume. This is the realm of the “consumer-citizen”.

Discussions of the “consumer-citizen”

In her article, “The Internet and Civic Engagement: the age of the citizen-consumer” (2000), Margaret Scammell comments that “...the act of consumption is becoming increasingly suffused with citizenship characteristics and considerations” (Scammell, 2000, p. 351). What Scammell points out so precisely, is the growing debate that claims that citizenship and consumption are no longer separate or opposing ideas; “it is no longer possible to cut the deck neatly between citizenship and civic duty, on one side, and consumption and self interest, on the other. They are not at opposite ends of the spectrum...” (Scammell, 2000, p. 352). For the purposes of this thesis, both “consumption” and “citizenship” have reached an intersecting point at which, as separate concepts they are no longer isolated, but rather bleed into each other sharing meaning.

Benjamin Barber’s “Democracy at Risk” (1998), supports Scammell’s contentions, arguing that global culture is a consumer culture; it is not interested in democracy or citizens – but consumers: “Global consumerism threatens a totalizing society in which consuming becomes the defining human essence” (Barber, 1998, para. 22). The problem with this system is the presupposition that capitalism, and specifically the consumer role, can provide answers to all of our societal problems. Looking at citizens as consumer-citizens limits public debate; we are free to decide *what* to buy, but we lose our forum for discussing citizenship issues related to consumption (ie. “do our consumption choices

damage the environment or encourage the practice of child labour?") (Barber, 1998, para. 30). Barber contends that the growth of global culture threatens public space; as capitalism solidifies the role of the consumer-citizen as the norm, civil society is disappearing. In his view it is important to recognize this fact, as civil society is "...the domain that can potentially mediate between the state and the private sector...Civil society offers women and men a space for activity that is simultaneously voluntary and public" (Barber, 1998, para. 60).

While he uses a different name for this category, Murray Dobbin's *The Myth of the Good Corporate Citizen* (2003), agrees that the "global shopper" (a category comprised of middle-class consumers) are no longer citizens (Dobbin, 2003, p. 49). This shift has taken place as a result of the process of globalization.

As governments withdraw from regulating the economy and providing programs and services, the ordinary citizen faces a world with less and less public space, less collective expression. In a world dominated by corporations selling goods and services, people are more and more defined by what they buy and less by their participation in the community. We are being reduced to little more than customers in the world marketplace, our citizenship increasingly reduced to a set of negative constitutional freedoms (Dobbin, 2003, p. 48).

For Dobbin, the danger inherent in this process is the decline of public space, of civil society and the real ties that bind the members of a community together; in its place the products we consume are becoming the common point of identity (Dobbin 2003, p. 50).

Dobbin clearly outlines the shifts taking place in Western society, in which he claims neo-liberal policies of economic organization come to limit the power of the citizen to effect social change. This happens because the ideological focus of the consumer culture is not the field of public debate, but rather the space of the open market. "Democracy in

the new millennium will be either the democracy of the customer– one dollar, one vote– or the democracy of the conscious, deliberate, self-aware citizen” (Dobbin, 2003, p. 6).

The writings of Scammell, Barber and Dobbin offer a solid base from which to argue that the notion of the consumer-citizen is recognized in the discussion of consumer culture, and is central in the debate regarding the process of globalization. Scammell’s recognition of the movement of meaning between the once opposing concepts of consumption and citizenship is useful here in the legitimate construction of the hybrid concept of the “consumer-citizen”, as is Barber’s explanation of the rejection of engaged citizens for engaged consumers. And outlining the shrinking role of the public sector or sphere in democratic society, Barber touches upon Dobbin’s point that “global shoppers” are no longer citizens. However, despite the useful characterizations of the consumer-citizen established here, Scammell, Barber, and Dobbin share one common element in their analyses which merits further clarification in the context of this thesis: all three define the role of the consumer-citizen as a negative position.

As Yiannis Gabriel & Tim Lang’s exploration of “The Consumer as Citizen”, in *The Unmanageable Consumer* (1995) illustrates, a tension has long existed between the concept of the citizen, and that of the consumer, which appear on the surface to be theoretically opposed (Gabriel & Lang, 1995, p. 173). They note: “[the citizen] is essentially a political concept, defining individuals standing within a state and a community, according them rights and responsibilities”, while the consumer “...originates from a very different ideal [where] individuals act as atoms, unencumbered by social responsibilities and duties, free of the obligation to account for their preferences and

choices" (Gabriel & Lang, 1995, pp. 174-175). This division between the two concepts is evident in the work of all three authors described above, and is characterized in the following assertion by Dobbin: "It is our collective obsession with buying 'stuff' that undermines both our capacity as thinking citizens and our ethical place in the world. It bears repeating: we can be either global citizens or global customers, but we can't be both" (Dobbin, 2003, p. 1).

Gabriel & Lang agree that consumer culture has caused the traditional definition of citizenship to be changed, as it has been "commodified and corrupted by consumer capitalism and the political and ideological powers which underpin it" (Gabriel & Lang, 1995, p. 174). However, they differ from the above theorists in their forecast of the potential for future change; they believe that there is room for the consumer-citizen to participate in the shaping of society. Gabriel & Lang contend that this space exists; "whenever a vocabulary of opposition and defiance is required [in modern capitalist society] it is as likely as not to proceed from the ideal of the citizen" (Gabriel & Lang, 1995, p. 174). And although they focus the bulk of their chapter on the characterisation of past dialogues between the emerging consumer-citizen and the state as unsuccessful, they cannot end their discussion without the projection that the very existence of these dialogues is promising unto itself.

It is telling that whenever a vocabulary of organized and conscious opposition to consumer capitalism and its powerful accoutrements is required, citizenship, especially global citizenship, citizenship without frontiers, even if it is an assertion and celebration of the local, of the community, invariably appears on the agenda (Gabriel & Lang, 1995, p. 186).

This is the space in which I wish to characterize the role of the consumer-citizen.

Although it is a limited role in theoretical terms, as it appears to restrict the scope of public debate reducing by the citizen's voice to the binary monetary terms of the market (ie. buy or do not buy), it also holds the potential to effect real social change. Perhaps for younger generations, the concepts of citizenship and consumerism are not mutually exclusive, rather the "citizen" has adapted to its new surroundings, reasserting its presence in the consumer society: "At the moment the consumer-citizen appears as a timid figure at the borders of contemporary consumption...Yet, citizens are figures who from time to time raise their voices, to the surprise of many" (Gabriel & Lang, 1995, p. 186).

This movement towards the amalgamation of the concept of the consumer with the concept of the citizen has already begun in youth culture. The role of consumable products as common points of identity is a growing concern among critics of globalization who claim that the regular movement of "global brands" across national borders will result in a global corporate culture. It is this process, along with the historical relationship between teenagers and consumption in North America (and their role as determinates of popular taste), which has given rise to the "global teenager".

The global teenager

Dobbin's *The Myth of the Good Corporate Citizen* (2003) asserts that the success of the neo-liberal capitalist democracy is hinged on a central important notion: "the key to the global marketplace is the global customer whose identity is found in the stuff they buy" (Dobbin, 2003, p. 60). This is the context in which "teenagers" emerge as lucrative marketing targets, a group which possesses disposable income and relatively "unfixed"

concepts of personal identity.

Thomas Hine's historical survey of the social category of the teenager outlines the economic realities of teenage spending power at the turn of the twenty-first-century:

Teenage consumers help to drive such leading industries as popular music, movies, snack foods, casual clothing, and footwear. They spend about \$100 billion a year, just on things for themselves. Two thirds of this comes from their own earnings, the rest from their parents. In addition, large numbers of people in their teens shop for food for their families and influence purchases whose estimated worth...ranges from \$40 billion to \$100 billion a year (Hine, 1999, p. 23).

The success of this industry rests on the interplay between the separate worlds of youth and adult culture; this is a complicated relationship based, not on one-way communication flows from powerful adults to weak and susceptible teenagers, but rather, on a complex network of messages between both groups. As Hine notes, marketers are interested in teenage buying patterns precisely because they are not "fixed"; however their aim is more likely to be influence over these choices rather than absolute control over them as it is in reality the teenagers themselves who tend to dictate consumer trends and popular tastes:

Those producing the products aimed at the young are also paying attention to them, looking for things they are likely to respond to. Indeed, the direction of youth culture and of commercialized popular culture in general tends to be more a matter of influence trickling upward than downward (Hine, 1999, p. 193).

He asserts that there is a paradox inherent in this relationship in that the distinction of youth culture from adult culture (regardless of whether the shaping of that culture stemmed from adult interventions or teenage opinion) has historically rested on the act of consumption.

Money plays an apparently paradoxical role in generating youth culture. Because youth culture is, in essence, a series of decisions about personal appearances and entertainment, it can scarcely exist if its members don't have the money they can spend as they see fit in ways wholly distinct from how their parents would spend it (Hine, 1999, p. 226).

As such, consumption rests at the heart of the social category of the teenager, and this fact has been recognized since the early creation of this social group: as early as the 1920's, advertising specialists began to emerge and give "expert advice" about how to "inculcate youth with a crucial capitalist credo, that the 'American citizen's first importance to [this] country is no longer that of citizen but that of consumer'" (Felando, 2000, p. 88). Eighty years later, at the turn of the twenty-first-century, this fact is not only as true, but a name has been given to this special category of consumer-citizen: the global teenager.

The "global teenager" emerges from a context in which consumer culture is a global culture which is practised collectively at local levels, and unites teenagers *across* international cultures. Dobbin notes: "the global teenager already exists in the developed world...[teens] have more in common with other Coke drinkers than they have with their own communities and their own history" (Dobbin, 2003, p. 57). Consumer culture acts as a uniting factor for youth across cultural groups because consumption plays a key role in the very formation of the social category of the teenager. Key brands targeted at youth, such as Nike and Pepsi, transcend national borders – they are global brands. Thus in their identification with these brands in the formation of a separate youth culture, teenagers find themselves linked together through a network that moves beyond national borders. And because of this extended international network created by the global brands which are used to construct meaning in the lives of today's teenagers, other factors (such as local

history, and nationality) are weakening in importance in the creation of civic identities.

It is my argument that Canadian teenagers do not necessarily understand civic duties in a national context because the formation of their identities as members of a collective youth culture are inherently tied to the concept of a consumer culture which is global in nature. Teenagers are not concerned with citizenship at a national level because their “culture” has been established by a global marketing machine which seeks to engage consumer choice as the defining element *across* capitalist democratic societies. Dobbin agrees that consumption is quickly becoming the common factor which unites individuals across societies and cultures in these “new” generations:

As civil society, and the connectedness it provides, steadily erodes, this generation and the one to follow will identify by default with whatever does provide that feeling of connectedness. And about the only thing left, given the erosion of citizenship and the decline of religion in most countries, is the global product (Dobbin 2003, p. 57).

Echoing Dobbin’s sentiments, the movement towards the recognition of the category of the global teenager as “consumer-citizen” can also be seen in A. Fuat Firat & Nikhilesh Dholakia’s examination of consumer culture in *Consuming People: From Political Economy to Theatres of Consumption* (1998). “Global consumption” is the final chapter which addresses the shift from the citizen to the consumer as the subject of analysis in current discussions of the political economy and the globalization debate. They assert:

Cultures are increasingly, and in many cases solely, linked by the products (television programs, athletic shoes, brand name(d) T-shirts, beverage brands, fast food restaurants, automobiles, etc.) of a market that is indeed global. In countries and regions where even ideas, political systems and rights, and people (tourists, among others) cannot reach, one now encounters popular global brands (Firat & Dholakia, 1998, p. 102).

Furthermore, Firat & Dholakia touch upon a connection, as an explanation for this phenomenon of the growth in importance of the consumer-citizen, which lends itself nicely to the argument being made in this thesis: the “branded” connection between individuals in various cultures stems not only from the similarities in the knowledge and awareness of the *actual* physical consumer products, but in the fact that there are similarities *in the rights we hold* to consume these products. “Of all the rights we have, possibly the rights that are most consistent and equal around the globe are our rights as consumers” (Firat & Dholakia, 1998, p. 103). We are globally linked then, not only through the consumption of the same consumer products, but also through the recognition that we operate within a global economic system which encourages (and to a degree requires) all nations to make the option to consume a universal right, in order for the system to function.

For the category of the global teenager this process has already begun – a youth culture is united through an identity formation process which engages the same global brands as sites of meaning. Acting as a socializing factor in the lives of today’s teenagers, consumerism is the ideology which shapes their understanding of the world: thus their conceptions of citizenship are conceived *through* the politics of consumption. This ideological position redefines the teenager’s relationship with the nation-state: consumer culture is a personal (local) activity which takes place on a transnational stage – national connection has been erased. The meaning of citizenship has changed. In the traditional sense, it no longer exists. For teens however, it is being reformulated within a new ideological framework and is being exercised in new and different ways.

Conclusion

This is the context in which the civic identity of teenagers must be examined: acknowledging first the role of consumer culture in the formation of a separate and distinct youth culture, and then secondly recognizing the “global”, and thus transnational, nature of this process – a new and complex foundation is created from which to present a revised concept of citizenship as understood by Canadian teenagers.

This chapter began by presenting traditional theoretical views of both consumption and citizenship discourse as a foundation for understanding the hybrid concept of the “consumer-citizen”, employed as a central tenet of the argument presented in this thesis. The history of consumption theory was explored through the writings of Veblen and Bourdieu who attribute the existence of consumer culture to theories of social emulation, as well as Campbell, who broadens the scope of explanation for consumer culture to a culturally embedded individual search for pleasure.

The framework for understanding the notions of citizenship explored in this chapter stem from the traditional categories of both the liberal and civic republican styles examined in the works of Faulks and Heater, while Kulynych extended these observations to include an analysis of the treatment of children in the public sphere. The historical interplay examined in this chapter between the establishment of rights in the liberal tradition and the requirement of duties in the civic republican tradition, is useful in examining the ways in which teenagers have separated these two ideas, and through their understanding of consumer culture, have reconstructed these notions according to their distinct experiences as a social group. This is the project of the examination of the

concept of “consumer-citizen”, examined in this chapter through Scammell, Barber and Dobbin, all of whom contend that in the context of globalization, the “consumer-citizen” is becoming an increasingly important concept. The “consumer-citizen” is the theoretical position from which this thesis will advance its central argument that the relationship between the social category of the teenager and consumption changes the way in which Canadian teenagers conceptualize citizenship.

The problem of the mismatch between teen’s views of citizenship and adult culture’s conceptions of citizenship which are being treated in this thesis do not exist in a vacuum, and were in fact inspired by recent trends which presented themselves in both the Canadian media and the recent policy objectives of national organizations such as Elections Canada. The following chapter will address the concerns expressed by adult culture on the subject of teenage conceptions of citizenship, as well as explore the social practices initiated by adults to regulate the “problem”. Specifically, the chapter will examine education policy – mandates made by the Ontario government to change secondary school curricula in an attempt to teach teenagers about “citizenship”. This examination is important not only because it offers a concise and clear view of the platform from which today’s adult culture understands the concept of “citizenship”, but also because the analysis will outline the difference between this view and the way in which the global teenager is likely to understand “citizenship”. In establishing adult culture’s (narrow) “traditional” view of citizenship in the next chapter, this thesis will illustrate the room in which an alternative view for teenagers is possible.

Chapter 4 - Citizenship in our High Schools: The Adult Practices of Teaching “Good Citizenship”

On May 22, 2000, a national magazine ran a story entitled “Don’t you dare try to instill fundamental loyalties”. *The Report Newsmagazine* told its readers that the Ontario government, under the leadership of then conservative premier Mike Harris, was proposing a law which would require school children to recite an oath of allegiance every morning along with the singing of the national anthem.

Education Minister Janet Ecker defended her government’s promotion of morning exercises at an April 26 press conference in Toronto. The song and the oath are ‘important symbols’, she said, designed to remind students that being Canadian ‘entails certain responsibilities as citizens’ (Parker, 2000).

The author claims that the pledge was designed as part of the “get-tough school code of conduct” called the *Safe Schools Act*, which also included harsher suspension and expulsion rules. Arguably intended to inspire good behaviour, the proposed oath entailed the following: “I affirm that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada, her heirs and successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada and fulfill my duties as a Canadian citizen” (Parker, 2000). Parker reports that while some educationalists criticised the pledge for its failure to recognize the multicultural aspect of Canadian society, and while Catholic school trustees felt that a pledge which ignores the existence of God was inappropriate, the problem with the oath for Liberal critics was its British heritage. They felt that it emphasized for students the importance of individual rights, while minimizing the role of personal duty towards the state.

The heated debate was short-lived however, within the month it was decided that

while the singing of the national anthem would be mandatory, the citizenship oath would remain optional:

Education Minister Janet Ecker admitted that even committed monarchists questioned the wisdom of forcing students to recite the oath, which includes a pledge of allegiance to the Queen. It will be left up to individual schools to decide if they want to implement the measure (“Ontario scraps mandatory oath”, 2000).

This incident can be read as a smaller occurrence in the larger narrative context in which the meaning of citizenship is being renegotiated in Canada. This shift is taking place through various sets of social practices, carried out by both the adult and youth populations.

Alongside the new understandings of “citizenship” for today’s youth, Canadian adults are themselves engaging in new forms of social practices which they hope will remedy the “problem” of low levels of political participation. Aware of a long social history between citizenship training and public education, adults frame education policy as the solution to this problem. The problem with measuring engagement in active forms of citizenship through this model however, is that new teenage social practices are not visible. The “consumer-citizen” operates outside of the model of the civic republican style of citizenship, and yet adult solutions to remedy the problem of low levels of political participation in the youth population continue to revolve around this particular notion of the concept of citizenship. It is the project of the present chapter to examine more fully both the social environment which gives rise to – as well as the practices within it which give shape to – the adult world engaged in the process of solving the “problem” of youth’s perceived disengagement from the political.

The site of the renegotiation of the meaning of citizenship: The high school

This thesis will explore the notion of the “consumer-citizen” through the social institution of the high school. The high school will be addressed as the context or place in which the theoretical idea of the “consumer-citizen”, as it applies to today’s teenagers, can be observed and analysed. I have chosen the high school as the site of the present discussion of changing notions of citizenship in the lives of teenagers for both historical and practical purposes. There is a long established history between public education systems and citizenship training in Canada which helps to explain why adult culture seeks solutions to the problem of political disengagement through civic-republican models of citizenship (Wotherspoon, 1998; Comacchio, 1997; McKenzie, 1993). Practically speaking, given the increasing secularization of the youth population of society (ie. complete institutional separation from adult culture, the cultural fragmentation of youth identities into increasingly smaller groups, lack of access to public spaces like community centres and public parks due to reduced levels of social spending), the space of the high school emerges as the prime location for the study of teenagers as a cohesive group. As such, it is a socially complex site in which today’s youth are engaging in various overlapping social practices which give meaning to their identities as teenagers. Thus, the importance of the high school here is not merely contextual, but serves to act as a site of negotiation, in which traditional notions of citizenship are being contested. The richness and depth of the site of the high school as a place in which to examine both adult and teenage notions of citizenship stems from an interplay between the history of the institutionalization of high school, and the (intended and unintended) social situations

which result.

As discussed in Chapter 2 in relation to Hine's work, historically speaking, high school becomes a universal experience because adult culture wishes to control and contain youth: compulsory school attendance reduces unemployment levels in the 1930's.

Although the bureaucratization of the daily lives of teenagers does in fact help with this process, it also prolongs the period of youth – a key factor in the creation of a separate and distinct youth culture. Hine explains that in the 1920's:

For ever-growing numbers of young people, the real life of going to work and starting a family was deferred, replaced by student life, played out almost entirely with people one's own age. Young males and young females, most of them past puberty, met every day at high school. Parents could no longer control their interaction. The central social role once performed by the family had been usurped by the aggressively modernizing institution of the high school (Hine, 1999, p. 197).

With the institutionalization of high school, the peer group replaces the family as the central socializing agent in the lives of North American teenagers. And this process becomes much more widespread in the 1930's with the rise in enrollment levels: "...it was during the Depression years that high school finally enrolled a majority of the school-age population and moved toward being the universal experience of America's young" (Hine, 1999, p. 204).

In the 1930's, the role of the high school is more custodial than instructive, and is associated with the teaching of basic living skills as outlined in "Cardinal Principles of Education", produced by The National Education Association in the U.S. in 1918. According to this group, the seven aims of the education system are as follows: "health, citizenship, vocation, worthy use of leisure, worthy home membership, ethical character,

and command of fundamental processes" (Hine, 1999, p. 198). Education policy initiatives of the 1930's are based upon a general notion of these previously established notions of "good education", which themselves stem back to late nineteenth-century social views regarding the education of immigrants. Public schooling was regarded as an instrument of social control. Hine notes that this notion from the late nineteenth-century survives and reproduces itself in the 1920's and 1930's through the sentiment that: "in a society being transformed by industrialization and immigration, the school seemed to some the only hope for preserving traditional American values" (Hine, 1999, p. 155).

Thus it can be said that reasoning for the institutionalization of the high school stems in part from the universalizing civic education it can provide. In the Canadian historical context, the same rationale is employed, although arguably it is of even greater importance in the process of "building" a distinctly Canadian nation. Terry Wotherspoon's, *The Sociology of Education in Canada: Critical Perspectives* (1998), offers a brief survey of education in Canada, emphasizing the historical context in which the public education system was born. During the mid-to late-1800's, Wotherspoon notes that increasing levels of immigration, as well as:

...political and economic threats to Canadian lands and resources gave rise to new demands for a system of free public schooling. Whereas schooling under denominational and colonial control fostered loyalties to traditional sources (Church, class, and old-countries), *the most ardent proponents of a common public school system sought the development of distinctly Canadian identities* (Wotherspoon, 1998, p. 51) (emphasis added).

Even at this early date, Wotherspoon explains that formal education is understood to have "dual objectives": as both a system in which fundamental skills and knowledge can be taught, and through this process, a system in which people's identities are reshaped.

In both structure and content, schooling is centrally involved in the process of disciplining the individual through emphasis on rules and habits rather than lessons alone...[As such] *political reformers recognized that schooling could be an important contributing factor to the process of Canadian nation-building*. This process involved, in part, the shaping of individual subjects committed to the Canadian State and its institutions and values (Wotherspoon, 1998, p. 52) (emphasis added).

The historical notion of education as a unifying experience, exists still in the way in which the twentieth-century institution of the high school is labelled as a “universal experience”. This term refers to the idea that all North-American youth of the past century have generally participated in similar experiences during their teenage years. This shared experience is the result of first, the fact that all teenagers are required by law to attend high school until a certain age; second, the sheer number of hours that teenagers spend enrolled in high school during their lifetime; and third, (as a result of one and two) the cohesive collective youth culture which arises from the close daily social proximity in which (all) teenagers find themselves. In large part, teenagers shape their identities and understandings of the world through their daily experiences within the high school. This process is not fixed, rather it is constantly in motion, and is the result of various interrelated social practices stemming from both the teenage and adult cultures that exist within this environment.

State intervention: “Teaching” good citizenship

Given the historical relationship between public schooling and the idea of a unified experience for youth, it is no surprise that during a period of perceived crisis regarding low levels of political participation by today's teens, adult culture engages in traditional practices related to education in order to find a solution. Recall from Chapter

1 that Jon Pammett & Lawrence LeDuc's voter turnout study reported that 83% of respondents either "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that "*schools should do more* to educate children in the benefits of voting and political participation" (Pammett & LeDuc, 2003, p. 53) (emphasis added). The solutions both suggested and implemented by adult culture to improve traditional citizenship education exist alongside alternative teenage conceptions of citizenship. These social practices exist within the same time and space, however they have different meanings for each group, which stem from the theoretical background from which their conception of citizenship is based. For the teenagers, the "consumer-citizen" is attached to notions of global consumer culture which stems from the liberal tradition of citizenship, while for the adult culture, the "citizen" is based on components of the civic republican style. The theoretical discussion presented in Chapter 3 established that the central components of these two traditions of citizenship exist in opposition to each other: the liberal style places stress on rights, while the civic republican style places the emphasis on duty, and a possible method through which these two tenets may be balanced in a single system has long been debated.

Historically, the teaching of citizenship through public education has involved the civic republican style. Given the desire to train both immigrants and the youth population as "new citizens", the emphasis has been placed on their duties to the state and their roles as part of the collective nation. Juxtaposing this against the idea that today's teenagers are trained to become "consumer-citizens", thus making sense of the concept of citizenship through the liberal tradition, the space in which a mismatch occurs between adult and teenage versions of citizenship becomes clear. Teens are understanding

citizenship as a set of rights owed to them by the state, (in large part the right to own private property), and their roles as active citizens are exercised through various social practices which operate within this framework (to be explored in depth in Chapter 5). Conversely, adult culture continues to address citizenship education through the tenets of the civic republican tradition: the citizen has certain roles to fulfill as a member of the state (particularly in the arena of public debate), thus adult conceptions of “good citizens” are often measured through voter turnout statistics.

What we have then, is a social world in which adult culture’s conception of citizenship and teenage conceptions of citizenship are formulated and exist within two different frameworks of reference. Both sets of practices unfold within the same social space of the high school, making both groups aware of the actions of the other, but unable to appreciate the meaning of the practices of the other group. Meaning is lost because the two systems remain ideologically separate, due to their different theoretical bases. This chapter is engaged in the examination of the particular framework through which citizenship education is mediated for adults, which will highlight the reason for the disjuncture between perceived low levels and actual levels of political participation by today’s youth.

Ontario’s public school curriculum

The story told at the outset of this chapter of a mandatory oath of citizenship for Canadian school children illustrates the way in which citizenship education has moved into a spotlight in the collective consciousness of the Canadian people. Although the actual policy was rejected, it is the ideas inherent in assigning an oath of allegiance that

are important to the discussion of this thesis. The values involved in “good citizenship” and how to instill those in younger generations has been the subject of a very vocal debate and significant political action in the Ontario public school system in the last decade.

Up until this point, I have been discussing the present national concern for the decline in youth based civic participation in the broad context of North America. Naturally however, given space and time constraints, the case studies presented in this and the following chapter must narrow in focus. As such, “citizenship” as a concept will be examined here very particularly in the specific context of the province of Ontario. This choice was first made based on general knowledge of the mid-1990's provincial education reforms which carried stipulations for curriculum changes pertaining specifically to the civics education, and the choice was reinforced by a concurrent trend noted in the Canadian media of an increasing number of news stories about student-instigated consumer activism in Ontario public high schools. This thesis emerged from the questions – how, why, and where do these two trends intersect, and what is their relationship to each other? As the first part of an answer to this question (the second half will follow in Chapter 5), the following sections of this chapter will examine curriculum reforms instituted by the Ontario provincial government intended to improve civic education in the public school system (*The New Plan: Stepping Up!* (1996)). These are the social practices which adult culture engages in as solutions to the problem of low political participation levels among today's youth. Their framework of understanding comes from the civic republican tradition of citizenship; thus their policy initiatives involve for the most part, the teaching of duties.

In addition to addressing the components presented in the provincial educational initiative called *The New Plan* (in which the actual components of the adult practices of citizenship will be examined), it is also important to examine the report which provides the recommendations which leads to the reforms: "For the Love of Learning: Report of the Royal Commission on Learning" (1994). As discussed throughout the literature review in Chapter 2, a common theme defining the relationship between adult and youth culture in modern society is a tendency for the former to project general malaise about the state of the world onto the latter, and in turn to institute solutions within their power to deal with these perceived problems. As such, the context constructed in the report of the Royal Commission on Learning is a component of the larger social practice (the institutionalization of the reforms) which follows, and provides a more comprehensive understanding of the ideological framework within which adult culture is functioning.

The Royal Commission on Learning (1993): Identifying key issues related to civic education

The Royal Commission on Learning was assembled in 1993 by the Minister of Education and Training, the Honourable Dave Cooke, because of reported levels of increasing concern from educators, the public, and the government of Ontario about the state of education in the province (Ontario...Vol. I, 1994, p. 11). The report explains:

In Canada in recent years, education policy-making has been most concerned with excellence and equity. On the other hand, shrinking education budgets and recessionary times have engendered a demand for accountability in delivering educational services. Because of these issues, combined with the anxiety of Canadians to stay competitive in today's globalized information-age economy, a number of provinces have commissioned studies on shaping education to deal with an uncertain

future (Ontario...Vol. I, 1994, p. 37).

The two co-chairs and three commissioners were instructed to conduct an in-depth study of the state of public education in the province, through submissions and presentations by Ontario citizens. Twenty months later, in December of 1994, a four volume report entitled "For the Love of Learning: Report of the Royal Commission on Learning" was published and presented to the public. The general sections of the report addressed the following issues: Volume I - Mandate, Context, Issues, Volume II - Learning: Our Vision for Schools, Volume III - The Educators, and finally Volume IV - Making it Happen. Over five hundred pages long, the report attempts to synthesize the various viewpoints presented by the thousands of citizens who expressed their opinions, and it attempts to provide some sort of consensus regarding possible solutions to the problems of the public education system.

The "tone" of the report: Creating a context for educational reform

As early as the preface, the authors acknowledge that although they encountered "...passion, concern, knowledge, myths, commitment, [and] grandstanding" in their interview process of Ontario citizens, there was very little agreement about the actual problems of the education system and what potential solutions may be available to remedy the situation (Ontario...Vol. I, 1994, p. xvi). As such, this report goes to great lengths to describe the various components of the social environment in which their report was conducted, in an attempt to create a context for understanding the various viewpoints represented therein. Moreso than the recommendations provided at the end of

the 500 page report (which are vague in this context, and more usefully studied through *The New Deal* reforms that follow), the carefully constructed context explained in “For the Love of Learning” is most useful to the discussion here.

First, the authors are quick to establish a context for their own report by placing it in a long history of Ontario education projects.⁴⁸ While the actual reforms implemented from these previous studies are not of the utmost importance here, they are nonetheless generally worth noting because their existence represents part of a pattern: the way in which adult concern about youthful behaviour is a constant theme in the modern world. The authors add that the scope of interest in educational reform goes beyond the provincial government in Ontario: it has of late become labelled a “universal pursuit”:

Even those systems we love to envy, such as those in Germany and Japan, are anxiously being re-examined. In fact, there are few jurisdictions in the industrialized world that have not agonizingly appraised and re-appraised their school systems over the past five decades... (Ontario...Vol. I, 1994, p. 3).

The “universal pursuit” of improved education has been fuelled by increasingly complex interwoven factors which exist as common social trends across the Western world: economic and technological change, employment uncertainty, and changing family structures (Ontario...Vol. I, 1994, pp. 36-37). In specifically addressing the topic of public schooling, the report asserts, “without doubt, the

⁴⁸ The Royal Commission’s predecessors are the Hope Commission (1950), concerned with the apparent lack of English language skills in high school graduates, and the Hall-Dennis committee (1968), which focussed on the outdated curriculum and inflexible programs of Ontario public schools.

[education] system exists in an era of extreme anxiety about what the future holds for Ontario's children, as well as of stress related to our apparent need to be 'competitive' in a ruthless global economy" (Ontario...Vol. I, 1994, p. 2).

Interestingly, in offering the reader a succinct snapshot of the unstable social environment from which this study was born, the authors have touched upon two of the most important thematic elements in this thesis: the social category of the teenager and the movement towards a globalized world. This is the way in which the authors explain the need for the study; they identify and explain a general malaise that appears to exist at the point of time of the commissioning of the report.

Like all organizations, our Commission operated within a particular time, and our deliberations were inevitably influenced by the context of unsettling truths around us...[one of which is that] our society is characterized by turbulence, creating widespread uncertainty and anxiety. Canadians fear a future of diminished opportunity, and expect public institutions to deal with this acute concern (Ontario...Vol. I, 1994, p. 1).

The way in which the general population turns to public institutions to address and adapt to overarching social concerns is the very reason for which public school education is justified as a timely topic of worth for a comprehensive study. "It is education...that touches each of us at one time or another in our lives, and...more than most things, [it] can intimately and directly limit, or help create, our future. Few public institutions matter more to the destiny of the ten million people of this province" (Ontario...Vol. I, 1994, p. 1). And this is the social context in which the Minister of Education and Training and the Lieutenant Governor of Canada justify the commissioning of the report, identifying the need to ensure that youth are "well-prepared for the challenges of the 21st century" (Ontario...Vol. I, 1994, p. vii).

Potential solutions: Identifying key areas of importance

The potential solutions offered by the report exist apart from what the committee labels, “conventional tools of school reform” such as testing or remedial programs. In reference to the lack of unanimity concerning both the problems and solutions of the Ontario education system as defined by its citizens, the solutions offered by the committee are much more abstract than their predecessors. They present a “value-added approach”, which identifies four general social areas in which changes need to be implemented: early childhood education, teacher development, information technology, and community education. These four “driving forces” are seen as essential to effecting change in the overall system. “[They are] essential to major transformation of the system, to support key partners in playing the new roles we have suggested for them, and to drive the other reforms we recommend” (Ontario...Vol. I, 1994, p. 6).

In the context of this thesis, the most important engine is the idea of community involvement because it demonstrates a recognition of the need for the students to move beyond the physical walls of the school out into their surrounding environment. The report addresses this engine as the lynchpin to the other three:

...the entire learning process would be enormously strengthened if schools became genuinely community-based institutions...Community alliances would give the school access to resources, expertise, and services that would help in educating the greatest number of students, and would give the community a vital role in the life of its school (Ontario...Vol. I, 1994, p. 7).

The importance of the idea of community involvement stems from the Commission's assertion that the public education system is in part viewed as unsatisfactory by Ontario residents (as are other systems around the world) because of the unrealistic demands

being placed on them. That is to say that in an increasingly complex social world, as a society we tend to assume that public schools (in addition to educating our children), should

...assume *sole* responsibility for building self-esteem; compensate for parental abuse, impoverished backgrounds, and nutritional deprivation; offer new models for solving conflicts; provide for physical exercise; and make the Ontario workforce more globally competitive (Ontario...Vol. I, 1994, p. 56) (emphasis in original).

This is what the Commission identifies as the issue of “primary vs. shared responsibilities”; in their proposed system more interaction between public schools and organizations within their own communities would result in more general satisfaction with the educational system because teachers would be free to accomplish their primary goal of encouraging intellectual development, while receiving help in achieving secondary goals. “Ensuring that students develop flexibility, eagerness to learn, and the ability to work in teams” states the report, “...is a responsibility shared by schools, parents, and other community organizations, as are citizenship, social responsibility, leadership and initiative, and coping with change” (Ontario...Vol. I, 1994, p. 57).

In an attempt to solidify the rather abstract solutions offered through the “engines of change”, the report goes on to define what they consider the specific purposes (both real and ideal) of Ontario public schools. Not surprisingly, the list asserts intellectual development to be of the utmost importance, however it is interesting to note that “citizenship” has found a secure place on the list as a secondary function of the system:

- Intellectual Development: reading and writing skills, intellectual understanding, problem-solving skills, critical thinking skills.
 - Learning to learn: nurture the ‘natural curiosity of students’.
 - Citizenship: ‘prepare young people to participate in and

contribute to life in a modern, diverse, and democratic society, and to respond knowledgeably, flexibly, and appropriately to changing social conditions, from the local to the more global level'.

- *Preparation for work/career development*: teach students how to bridge the gap between the school world and the world of employment.
- *Instilling values*: support/instill cultural, moral, spiritual values: including non-violence, anti-racism, honesty, justice, individual responsibility, and service to the community.

(Ontario...Vol. I, 1994, p. 54).

What is most intriguing about this list is the way in which three of the four secondary points, which are meant to give support and depth to the central idea of intellectual development, show an increasing level of awareness of, or concern with, the idea of community connection. The report explains that while the commission acknowledges “intellectual development” to be the first priority of schools, the need to construct a better link between students and the outside world is also of significant importance. The idea is to broaden the context of the institution of the public school so that it might also include family, religious institutions and community organizations within its own definition (Ontario...Vol. I, 1994, pp. 55-56). The “reconnection” between school and community is intended to provide links and alliances for students which can help them with their “non-educational needs”, that is – anything and everything that does not fall under the category of the intellectual development skills provided by the teacher, such as career choices and basic life skills (Ontario...Vol. I, 1994, p. 58).

Here, the idea is to relieve a certain amount of burden from the teacher by shifting the site of value learning or instilling, to the relationship that the student forms with the greater community. The Commission believes that “schools have the responsibility of

helping students develop values related to the welfare of society”; however, the weight of this responsibility should be shared with other groups as its importance in present day society is unequivocal. The report adds that part of the increasing importance of value learning for Canadian students is the fact that the values we hold as a society are implicitly bound up in our identity as Canadians. Thus for the Royal Commission “Canadian identity” is a complex concept constructed through the notions of shared values and a common notion of citizenship:

This issue is particularly sensitive at this turbulent point in our history, with the difficult quest for a renewed relationship with Quebec in the federation, the urgency of finding a new partnership with the aboriginal populations, and the diverse cultural input of newcomers from all over the world. We often feel that forces pulling us apart are stronger than those nurturing our cohesion as a country (Ontario...Vol. I, 1994, p. 61).

The idea of creating a stronger relationship between the institution of the school and the community at large is intended to help combat the inferred lack of social cohesiveness described in the previous quotation. It is clear from the carefully constructed “snapshot” presented to the reader of the social context in question, that the Commission wishes to underline the importance of value learning in the process of identity formation for students of Ontario schools. The context in which these values are identified as important is the same context which will produce the educational reforms to teach them: two years after “For the Love of Learning”, *The New Plan* is formulated and ready for implementation in Ontario schools.

The New Plan: "Stepping Up!" (1996): Putting theory into practice

Following the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Learning,⁴⁹ the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training developed a new curriculum which was presented to the Canadian public in 1996. The "New Plan" outlined changes in diploma requirements to be implemented in the fall of 1999 beginning with grade nine students. While there are numerous curriculum changes to note, this thesis is particularly interested in two specific reforms which involve civics education: the first is the addition of forty hours (over the full four years of high school) of community service as a diploma requirement, and the second is the implementation of a mandatory half course in "civics".

The New Plan did not emerge in its first instance as one single coherent and comprehensive document, rather, until its implementation in the fall of 1998 at the grade nine level, it was presented to the public through various sources including, a number of public discussion papers, brochures, and government websites, through which, or across which, the reforms become better defined over time. The present section of this chapter will draw from all of the previously mentioned documents, in order to construct a specific and comprehensive picture of the two civics reforms of interest here.

⁴⁹ "For the Love of Learning" provides only minimal information regarding the actual implementation of specific reforms relating to citizenship education. While they did specify that community service should be added to the list of diploma requirements (requiring twenty hours per year - two hours per month), and they did generally require that a "life-skills" credit be added which was described as a course "...with modules in career education, community service, violence prevention, anti-racism, media literacy, and personal/financial management", these suggestions were modified by *The New Plan* - and thus will not be discussed at length in this section (Ontario...Vol. II, 1994, p. 84).

Extending the context: *The New Plan* takes shape

Early in 1995, a public policy paper was released by Dave Cooke, the Minister of Education and Training, entitled "New Foundations for Ontario Education: A Summary".

The paper provided a basic summary of the historical background of the Royal Commission's report as well as a quick look at the study's central findings. Cooke explains that the Ontario provincial government has chosen to "...address the commission's main conclusions through its New Foundations reform plan", although it will not address every one of the 167 recommendations (New Foundations, 1995, p. 5). This paper is very general in tone as well as in relation to the implementation of the two "civics" reforms; it indicates that the ministry will provide "...incentives for schools to create innovative co-operative education programs in partnership with community groups", and provides only minimal information regarding the new secondary school curriculum, stating that it will enable students to "acquire a common core of knowledge, skills, and values in the areas of language, mathematics, science, technology, critical thinking, and interpersonal skills (New Foundations, 1995, p. 21).

A more detailed paper follows in 1996, entitled "Excellence in Education: High School Reform: A discussion paper". This paper, released by the succeeding Minister of Education and Training, John Snobelen, includes a five page questionnaire which invites members of the public to assist in the formation of education policy. In its basic explanation of the general reforms to be implemented, this paper begins to hint at the "current" importance of civic education which was first so heavily emphasized in "For the Love of Learning". "Excellence in Education" notes that curriculum changes are

necessary because

[the] curriculum should be relevant to their future goals and *should prepare them to become contributing members of society*. Today's courses don't pass that test. The high school curriculum has not been overhauled in more than a decade – a decade in which many fields have seen great changes... (Excellence, 1996, p. 6) (emphasis added).

It is in this paper that a mandatory civics course first makes its appearance; it is presented as a component in a list of options which are designed to address the issue of which compulsory credits should be included as diploma requirements. The appearance of this required credit in this context is not surprising given the defined key roles of the high school outlined in the paper. They are identified as, first, to prepare students with the skills and knowledge to be productive in the working world, and second, to teach them life skills and self esteem they need to develop integrity and become 'good citizens' (Excellence, 1996, p. 24).

Over the next three years the specific curriculum changes are developed, finalized and released to the public in March of 1999 through a series of memorandums, news releases and government webpages.⁵⁰ Then current Minister of Education and Training, Dave Johnson, emphasizes the public involvement in designing this new curriculum, highlighting for the general public the way in which education policy has been shaped by those with real concern and interest in the system:

⁵⁰ Although not discussed at length here because of the repetition of information, the Ontario government has provided a separate webpage/web brochure explaining the new curriculum to students. "Stepping Up!: Your guide to Ontario's New Standards for High School" is available at:
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/brochure/stepup/stepup.html>

The new high school program has been in the works for more than two years and is the result of extensive consultation with parents, teachers, school boards, universities, colleges and business... 'We took the time to do it right' said Johnson, 'We listened to concerned Ontarians at each stage of the curriculum development' (Ontario's new high school, 1999, para. 9-10).

A news release on March 4th of 1999,⁵¹ outlines the general changes to the curriculum; the new plan now labelled "Stepping Up!" includes: 18 compulsory credits instead of 16, more emphasis on math, language, and science, and the addition of a civics course, mandatory community involvement and workplace preparation opportunities (Ontario's new high school, 1999, para. 5).

Defining "civics": The social practice of teaching citizenship

The New Plan marks a significant moment in Ontario education policy in which the theme of citizenship is elevated to a new level of importance. The decision to add a mandatory civics course, as well as the graduation requirement of forty hours of community service, were conscious changes made by the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training to reflect the community involvement recommendations made by the Royal Committee's report. These curriculum reforms are intended to "encourage civic responsibility and promote community values...Through community involvement,

⁵¹ The news released was based on information contained within the report "Ontario Secondary Schools, Grade 9 to 11: Program and Diploma Requirements" (1999). This report summarizes the new graduation requirements, emphasizing the key objective of the revised program (which will be reiterated in subsequent reports): "The program will prepare students for further education and work, and will help them to become independent, productive, and responsible members of society" (Ontario Secondary Schools, 1999, p. 6).

students can experience first hand how everyone can make a contribution to their community” (Highlights of the new high school, 1999, para. 14-15).

“Civics”: mandatory half course, Grade 10 level

Under *The New Plan*, “civics” emerges as its own proper course in the public high school system; formerly it had been a smaller unit within the Canadian history component of the curriculum. In 2000, as the *Stepping Up!* curriculum becomes finalized in greater detail, the public is presented with a detailed description of the course in “The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 to 12: Course Descriptions and Prerequisites”. This document provides a specific definition of the topic in question, explains its relevance in today’s world, and outlines the issues to be discussed as well as what learning is expected of the student in each section of the course. A description of the Grade 10 civics course appears as follows:

This course explores what it means to be an informed, participating citizen in a democratic society. Students will learn about the elements of democracy and the meaning of democratic citizenship in local, national, and global contexts. In addition, students will learn about social change, examine decision-making processes in Canada, explore their own and others’ beliefs and perspectives on civics questions, and learn how to think and act critically and creatively about public issues (The Ontario Curriculum...Course, 2000, p. 26).

This course has been designed with a specific purpose in mind, as outlined in a separate related document entitled “The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 to 12: Canadian and World Studies”, in which the link between these courses and the (community involvement) recommendations of “For the Love of Learning” is re-established. “An important goal of the Canadian and World studies program is to help students develop the knowledge,

skills, and values they need to become responsible citizens and informed participants in Canadian democracy in the twenty-first century" (The Ontario Curriculum...Canadian, 2000, p. 2).

This document outlines how this learning will be accomplished; the course is divided into three strands which focus on three different, yet interrelated aspects of citizenship: Informed Citizenship, Purposeful Citizenship, and Active Citizenship. The third category is of most importance because the previously established argument of the social context of the teenager is centred around the adult perception that *active* civic participation is on the decline, thus this thesis is particularly interested in the ways adults intend to "teach" *active* citizenship.⁵² "The Ontario Curriculum" outlines the components of the "Active Citizenship" strand as follows:

- basic civic literacy skills, which include:
 - inquiry strategies
 - critical and creative thinking
 - decision making
 - resolving conflicts
 - collaborating
 - *the opportunity to apply these skills 'meaningfully by participating actively in the civic affairs of their community'*
 - an understanding of the practices used in civic affairs to influence public decision making.
 - an understanding of the contributions made by agencies serving community interests and needs.
- (The Ontario Curriculum...Canadian, 2000, p. 46) (emphasis added).

⁵² As "Informed Citizenship" (which appears to be based on the civic-republican tradition), and "Purposeful Citizenship" aim to simply educate the student about the historical forms of citizenship rather than addressing forms of "active" participation, they will not be explored here in detail.

Of the four bulleted learning objectives listed above, only one (highlighted in italics) centres around the idea of active participation, which requires the students to “participate effectively in a civil action or project of interest to them and of importance to the community (e.g., attend public hearings, plan religious or cultural event, join special interest group, write letters to editor)” (The Ontario Curriculum...Canadian, 2000, p. 53).

“Community Involvement”: mandatory volunteer activity, forty hours (over four years)

The curriculum requirements for community involvement are less specific than those provided regarding course content. “Highlights of the New School Program”, released to the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training website in 1999, gives the first account of the specifications for this new diploma requirement which states that the services of students may be employed by both formal voluntary organizations or through more informal opportunities in local neighbourhoods. It adds that the Ministry and local school boards will ensure that all students are provided with community service opportunities. The volunteer component of *The New Plan* is further defined in a related memorandum subsequently released, in which the public is provided with samples of the paperwork designed for students to be used in the documentation of their community involvement activities.⁵³

⁵³ The memorandum in question is “Policy/Program Memorandum No. 124a”, available through the Ontario Ministry of Education website at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/124a.html>

Analyzing the reforms: Putting the educational practices in a theoretical context

Although in theory the direct equation between teaching good citizens and having good citizens appears simple, in reality the relationship is problematic. Specifically, in this instance, a large part of the problem is the way in which the educational reforms are formulated within the adult framework for understanding citizenship, which is based on the civic republican tradition. The problems reveal themselves in both form and content: the course material *and* the way in which it is taught is a passive approach to learning citizenship, and the community involvement activities do not emphasize participation in *collective* activity.

The civics course: Passive learning

Current critics of the move to create good citizens through education policy have suggested that the gap between the high number of teenagers enrolled in these programs and the low level of political participation by this same group is the result of ideological problems in the way in which the course material is taught. Sheldon Berman's *Children's Social Consciousness and the Development of Social Responsibility* (1997), asserts that the drawback of learning about the concept of citizenship from a textbook is the way in which civic participation comes to read as a formalized and bureaucratized relationship between state and civil servant.

For the most part, textbooks teach students about the obligatory nature of obeying the law and paying taxes, for which in return they are guaranteed the right of individual protection. Berman explains:

The very conception of citizenship that teachers and students hold and that is used to frame instruction is limited. It focuses attention primarily on being a good person rather than being actively engaged in the political process, on protecting self-interest rather than promoting the common good, and on the individual as the locus of responsibility rather than institutional, systemic, or structural aspects of our political culture (Berman, 1997, p. 174).

Berman warns that the destructive element here is the formal promotion of the idea of self-interest as a central tenet of the concept of citizenship. This approach de-emphasizes the role of active participation, producing a world view in which: “[Teens] define [citizenship] in terms of protecting one’s self-interest rather than promoting the common good” (Berman, 1997, p. 176). He cites a 1981 study performed by Sigel & Hoskin, in which high school seniors were asked to define their notions of democracy. Students replied that individual freedom was of the utmost importance, thus they would only consider entering the public sphere of political debate when this right was threatened (Berman, 1997, p. 176). According to critics, this attitude stems directly from the “textbook” learning of citizenship: a process in which the simple perfunctory aspects of citizenship are over-emphasized, while more radical and active options are under-emphasized.

American politician, citizenship advocate, media pundit Ralph Nader, has written that the scope of citizenship education is limited through traditional course plans and textbooks:

Unfortunately, traditional civics courses and many textbooks define citizenship narrowly. Citizen responsibilities most often mentioned in these books are those required by law: paying taxes, obeying the law, serving in the armed forces if necessary, performing jury duty, and attending school. In addition, voting and some types of volunteer activity are listed as obligations not binding by law. These books focus on citizen

rights and pay little if any attention to the responsibilities of citizens to ensure and protect their rights and the rights of others (Nader, 1992, p. 320).

The ultimate result of this learned ideological view of the concept of citizenship is the increasingly wide-spread belief that democracy is an *established* social structure in North America. Berman warns that this framework is limited because it teaches teenagers that democracy is “something we already have rather than an ongoing experiment and an active social movement” (Berman, 1997, p. 175).

The volunteer hours: “Individual” activity

The rather vague list of volunteer activities cited as examples in the 1999 Ministry of Education and Training policy memorandum (which is intended to define the rather vague terms of the community involvement component of *The New Plan*), includes: helping a neighbourhood senior citizen, or tutoring younger children. The problem here is the way in which the idea of community involvement is learned by teenagers: volunteer activity is largely framed as a one-on-one experience in which the student is encouraged to act as an individual and perform a service for another individual. Further, this sense of limited social involvement appears as a theme as well in the previously mentioned “active” components of the civics course. The suggested choices of activities are limited in time and space, ie. attend a public hearing or write a letter to the editor, as the activity need only be engaged in once and involves a limited number of people.

Civic engagement has, for the most part for teens, become defined through the action of volunteering which occurs largely as a one-on-one experience, which results in a

generation of teenagers for which the full concept of citizenship is lost:

What is missing is an awareness of the connection between the individual, isolated 'problems' these actions are intended to address and the larger world of public policy; a sense that these problems might be addressed more systematically and (at times) more effectively through other forms of civic engagement (from joining a community group to voting); the belief that politics *matters* (Carpini, 2000, p. 346) (emphasis in original).

Education critics caution that teaching teens about citizenship in our present fashion results in the omission of the key concept of collectivity from their civic vocabulary: the idea of politics as a *collective activity* or *collective process* is lost. This emphasis on the individual, rather than the group as a whole, feeds back into the concerns cited above regarding the ideology of "citizenship textbook learning" which asserts that teenagers are being taught to be passive citizens. If in fact democracy already exists (as is taught), and it is a given state in which individual rights are already recognized (rather than an ongoing participatory process in which individual liberties are debated), then it is not surprising that youth are not participating in public political debate. Through the model created by the adult social practices presently discussed, teens learn to favour the self-interested exchange of minimal duty (ie. paying taxes) for personal ownership protection (ie. the right to hold property), as the central conception of citizenship. In the public high school environment in Ontario, the curriculum proposed by the adult world encourages students to turn inward from the space of public debate and the shaping of society, to the private sphere of consumption where an alternative conception of citizenship is played out.

Education policy is not the only way today's teenagers are learning limited-participatory democracy however. In addition to the practice of redefining the high

school curriculum, the process of privatization (which is encouraging the commercialization of North American schools) is teaching teenagers by example that their right to choice is for sale to the highest bidder. It is in this environment that teenage conceptions of citizenship are shifting further away from traditional civic republican notions, towards liberal notions of the private citizen: the consumer-citizen does not support his or her position by casting a vote into a ballot box, but by passing a dollar over the sales counter.

An overlapping practice: Privatization and commercialization – modelling poor citizenship

Across North America, numerous school boards have entered into lucrative promotional contracts with various food and product vendors. For example, in 2004, the Grand Erie District School Board in Brantford, Ontario, entered into “an exclusive, single-source agreement with soft drink giant Pepsi-Cola”; the decision was made by an amalgamated school board and applies to all high schools within the district (“The Pepsi Generation?”, 2004). Numerous school boards strapped for cash have accepted sponsorship deals for the exclusive right to fast food outlets in school cafeterias (such as Subway), athletic gear for school teams (from Nike), and computer equipment for student labs (Klein, 2000, pp. 88-91). Channel One, a television based “learning tool”, provides thousands of public schools across the United States with \$50,000 of “free” electronic equipment in exchange for a ten-minute break each day when students are required to watch a short current events and news program, as well as two minutes of commercials (Giroux, 2000, p. 95).

The process of commercialization is not restricted to the physical presence of the products however; there is also a move to employ the symbolic power of branding in the selling of products by integrating brand names directly into curriculum material. For example math textbooks present word problems citing brand name objects as learning tools (Giroux, 2002, p. 38). Text book covers feature various advertisements from popular films to candy are already widely distributed and used in 30,000 public schools in the United States (Klein, 2000, p. 90). A PBS special report – “Advertising in the Public Schools” originally broadcast in 1997, outlines an example of a free curricular program kit produced and distributed by the Hershey Foods Corporation, called “The Chocolate Dream Machine”, which is intended to teach students about “...the making of chocolate, and its place in a healthy lifestyle” (PBS, 1997). The work of educational theorist Henry Giroux is useful here in identifying the key problems associated with the practice of the privatization of public schooling systems: “Such curricula”, he explains, “have little to do with critical learning and a great deal with producing debased narratives of citizenship, suggesting to students that the only roles open to them are defined through the ethos of consumerism” (Giroux, 2000, p. 96).

Present scholarship focussing on the relationship between today’s youth culture and practices within the setting of the high school, is important to consider here because it fills the previously described gap which occurs in teen literature after 1980. Generally speaking, scholarship addressing the subject of the “teenager” written roughly between the 1950’s and 1980’s, identified this group as a cohesive mass, driving the tastes of popular culture. A break appears in the literature because the once cohesive group fragments into

many smaller identity groups, which are stylistically distinct from one another. In this way, the members of the group labelled “teenager” have much less in common with each other, and therefore can no longer act as the massive driving force behind popular cultural tastes. Some theorists suggest however, that given the dismal social situation of youth in the 1980's and into the 1990's (stemming from the neoliberal policies which greatly reduce the levels of public spending used to subsidize the social institutions of teens), the “teenager-as-victim” discourse constructed by adults becomes youth’s actual experience, a situation which effects all teenagers as a collective group.

Jonathan Epstein's *Youth Culture: Identity in a Postmodern World* (1998)

contends that recent work in the field of adolescent sociology are examples of the move towards re-thinking youth as a comprehensive social grouping in today's social world.

The work of Giroux, as well as Donna Gaines' ethnographic case study of a New Jersey town – *Teenage Wasteland: Suburbia's Dead End Kids* (1990), are cited as examples of the scholarship which repositions youth as a collective culture by reassigning a connective element which runs between the subgroupings (Epstein, 1998, pp. 14-16).

Both Gaines and Giroux are interested in addressing the way in which teenagers are negatively affected by the (social, political, economical) choices that adult culture makes in their regulation of youth's environment, and more pointedly – the refusal of adult culture to acknowledge its implicit role in the attack on today's teenagers. The work of these two scholars is important because it engages in the previously established debate (introduced in Chapter 1) regarding the current tendency to popularize images of youth as only either victims or threats to adult society.

According to both Gaines and Giroux, adult society engages in this practice in order to placate themselves: blaming the problems of youth on youth themselves resolves the guilt and responsibility that adults feel about the current poor social state of North American teenagers (and twenty-first century social life in general). The key to resolving this troubled relationship between adult culture and youth is the exposure of the social structures which cause or contribute to the problems plaguing teenagers – that is to say that, (and both Gaines and Giroux agree), adult culture must acknowledge that the choices *it* makes (both formally through its control over the social structures which govern youth, and informally through parental roles) contribute greatly to the shaping of today's teenager.

The process of privatization in North American public school systems is leading to an increasing level of commercialization in those spaces. This process has its roots in the complex social, political and economic environment of the 1980's, in which Reagan's administration applied the solution of a decrease in public spending in order to stimulate private spending. Gaines contends that these social policies stripped away the valuable resources of the welfare state, (such as affordable daycare, well funded public schooling, access to social services including welfare and social workers) which were put in place to help the parents of the nation raise healthy and well adjusted children. Combined with a period in which divorce rates were rising, and patriarchal nuclear family structures were being challenged, the result was an environment in which teenagers were “forgotten”. “The importance youth once held in the social order declined and their civil rights...eroded with it” (Gaines, 1990, p. 237).

Giroux's *The War on the Young: Corporate Culture, Schooling, and the Politics*

of *'Zero Tolerance'* (2002), constructs a picture of the actual changes occurring in the public schooling system as a result of the social environment described above by Gaines.

American youth and public schooling have not fared well in the political culture of the 1980's and 1990's...schooling has become a private enterprise rather than a public good, a new market for investment opportunities that benefits the individual consumer rather than all members of society...strapped for money, many public schools have had to lease out space in their hallways, buses, rest rooms, and school cafeterias...invaded by candy manufacturers, breakfast cereal makers, sneaker companies, and fast food chains (Giroux, 2002, p. 38).

Giroux expands upon the theoretical concepts contained within the preceding examples of commercial infiltration of the public school system in his book *Stealing Innocence: Youth, Corporate Power, and the Politics of Culture* (2000). We are currently entering a very distinct phase in the history of public education, he contends:

[Corporatization is] no longer content merely to argue for the application of business principles to the organization of schooling, the forces of corporate culture have adopted a much more radical agenda. Central to this agenda is the attempt to transform public education from a public good, benefiting all students, to a private good designed to expand the profits of investors, educate students as consumers, and train young people for the low-paying jobs of the new global marketplace (Giroux, 2000, p. 85).

Corporate culture is infiltrating the public domain of education, thus inhibiting the growth and nurturing of healthy democratic debate, and Giroux asserts that there is a direct correlation between these processes and the concept of citizenship. "Instead of providing [youth] with vibrant public spheres, we offer them a commercialized culture in which consumerism is the only obligation of citizenship" (Giroux, 2003, p. xviii). The threat of corporate culture is both the scope and reach of its power as: "...an ensemble of

ideological and institutional forces that functions politically and pedagogically to both govern organizational life through senior managerial control and to fashion compliant workers, depoliticized consumers, and passive citizen.” (Giroux, 2003, p. 158). The very danger inherent in inadvertently teaching this line of thinking to an entire generation of young people is perfectly outlined here in the following revelation from Giroux, which demonstrates the extensive reach that consumer capitalism (both inside of and outside of the public school setting) has over today’s youth:

Although it is largely recognized that market culture exercises a powerful educational role in mobilizing desires and shaping identities, it still comes as a shock when an increasing number of pollsters report that young people, when asked to provide a definition for *democracy*, answered by referring to ‘*the freedom to buy and consume whatever they wish, without government restriction*’ (Giroux, 2000, p. 99) (emphasis added).

In the context of this thesis, the work of Gaines and Giroux are of particular interest for the “snapshot” of the social context that they so painstakingly construct for their readers which illustrates the complicated interrelated factors giving rise to the image of today’s troubled teenager. This social context is important here because it highlights the factors which are present in the teenager’s world, those which help to shape the teenager’s world view. In the case of the concept of citizenship, examining the social practices of adults linked to this topic is important for understanding the social practices of teens. The discussions presented in this chapter draw out an explanation of adult practices regarding the teaching of citizenship to teens which is problematic because it exists in a different framework from that used by youth themselves. In this situation, the success of the adult practice is difficult to measure, and understanding the motivation for the teen practice is limited.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to highlight the social practices engaged in by adults in the teaching of citizenship to Canadian youth. The examination of Ontario's education policy allowed for an exploration of both the context and the components of the reforms designed to increase teenage levels of political participation. An analysis of these reforms revealed problems with both form and content which were rooted in the theoretical framework in which they were conceived. Overwhelmingly, in the context of education, adult culture's conceptions of citizenship stem from the civic republican tradition. This creates a problem in the way in which adult culture measures the success rates of the number of teenagers who are politically active; their tool of measurement is effectively inaccurate and does not include room for alternative space in which different notions of active citizenship are being practised. As the present chapter illustrates, this particular framework of adult culture's concern regarding political participation is alive and well, ascribed to by Ontario teachers and school administrators.

This attitude can be further illustrated in the early attempts that have been made to measure the "effectiveness" of the civics course and the volunteer hours on teenage notions of citizenship. The Canadian press has written several stories since the induction of these curriculum changes, documenting problems with low levels of success. In terms of the course itself, the problem has been outlined by educators as "a substantial failure rate...because expectations are too high" ("Students get with electoral program", 2004). While, the failure to log the necessary amount of volunteer hours before graduation has been cited as a clear indication that teens are no more civically inclined than before the

community service component was implemented (“Many Ontario Grade 12 students”, 2003).⁵⁴ In both cases, as is the tendency of the civic republican model of citizenship, “success”, that is the indication of the presence of the concept of citizenship, is measured statistically – using low numbers as an indication of the low level of importance of citizenship for teenagers.

The next chapter will move into the examination of the youth generated practices of active citizenship. These are further forms of social practice involving citizenship and youth, however they stand apart from those engaged in here by adults because they stem from a different ideological base. Teenagers are learning to employ the position of the “consumer-citizen” in their sense-making processes of the world around them, thus traditional forms of citizenship exist in another framework which is quite separate from their own. The result is a social environment (the high school), in which multiple social practices pertaining to the same issue or concept are taking place.

As adult culture’s control over the lives of youth increased over the twentieth-century, the spaces which youth occupied and were permitted to occupy on a daily basis were reduced. It is no wonder then that the social setting of the high school becomes both a real and figurative model of the complicated relationship between youth culture and

⁵⁴ Several studies of this topic have emerged. Alan King, of Queen’s University, is currently completing a double-cohort study which, in 2002, measured the completion rates of the volunteer component for students in Ontario (“Many Ontario Grade 12 students”, 2003) While Paulette Padanyi, of the marketing department of the University of Guelph, “is conducting an ongoing study into the impact of the provincial volunteer program” (“Volunteer ethic can’t be forced”, 2004).

adult culture: a place where the rules of conformity are both applied to teens and rebelled against by teens at the same time. As Gaines notes: "Young people are in the peculiar position of being overregulated by adults, yet alienated from them" (Gaines, 1990, p. 253). Gaines asserts that in this environment, youth challenge adult control symbolically:

...articulating their dissent culturally, in their clothes, language, music, and attitudes. They [look] for the truth in unorthodox knowledge, [creating] autonomous spaces for self-expression, [carving] out a place for themselves on their own terms...*They live in a historically specific moment of their own, making sense of the world in new ways, different from the parental generation* (Gaines, 1990, pp. 254-255) (emphasis added).

This is the space in which this thesis wishes to address the possibility for new forms of the concept of citizenship for today's teenagers: in addition to the social practices of adult culture which act upon them, youth also develop new meanings and concepts which constitute their own sets of social practices, which influence not only how they understand the world, but also how they choose to act within it.

Chapter 5 - Citizenship in our High Schools: The Teenage Practices of the "Consumer-Citizen"

In my examination of Alissa Quart's *Branded: The Buying and Selling of Teenagers* (2003) in Chapter 1, I noted that despite Quart's dismal characterization of the current social environment which produces our teenagers, there is a movement by those same teenagers to question and subvert it. Quart ends her book with a section entitled "Unbranding", a series of descriptions of examples of anti-corporate activism, launched by students themselves. She suggests that the act of "unbranding" for today's youth is linked to their identities as members of the collective social group of the "teenager"; teens choose this alternative identity because their options are limited by the social world in which they live. Quart asserts: "...the self-presentation of today's teen-brand resisters indicates something...to me. Being anti-corporate and unbranded is a much needed 'other' identity for kids who have been cast as *demographics rather than as citizens*" (Quart, 2003, p. 196) (emphasis added). These identities become the filter through which teenagers make sense of their world; thus the issues which are important to them shift as well. This results in a social environment in high schools which is much changed from that of the past. For Quart, the shift is explained through changing political agendas:

When I was a teenager in the late 1980's, teen activists directed their energies to the battle to end apartheid and in honour of abstractions like world peace. There was less of the fighting for teens' own rights, against commodification. *Now, the youth movement is very much directed at issues of youth and against the forces that oppress them in their schools and at home.* Kids may well consider youth itself something of an embattled minority- and that in turn informs their politics, the area of focus being the retention of civil rights in their classrooms (Quart, 2003, pp. 222-223) (emphasis added).

In this chapter I will address the social practice of student activism taking place in North

American high schools. Having established in the previous chapter that adult practices employed in the teaching of the concept of citizenship are clearly influenced by the framework of the civic republican style in which they are conceived and implemented, the present chapter will describe the alternative citizenship practices in which youth are engaged as anchored in a different theoretical model. For adult culture, the practice of teaching citizenship is rooted in the idea of the “public citizen”; for teens, the practice of active citizenship is rooted in the notion of the “consumer-citizen”.

Reassessing the roots of the political participation problem: A generational “worldview”⁵⁵

In dividing their voter turnout study statistics between two categories – “under 25 years old”, and “25 and older”– Jon Pammett & Lawrence LeDuc provide the reader with a snapshot of the growing difference between youth and adult opinion on the subject of non-participatory political youth practices. In asking the question: “What do you think should be done to get young people to be more interested in politics?”, the most commonly cited answer for the category of “under 25 years old”, was “more relevant

⁵⁵ The term “generational worldview” used here, as well the term “generational lens” which appears in the ensuing discussion, are intended to be applied in the broadest terms possible. Chapter Two’s historical account of the teenager asserts that a collective youth culture “disappears” into the 1980’s as it fragments into smaller sub-cultural groups. I acknowledge in that discussion that youth culture literature assumes teenage identity groups to be too diverse to be considered a cohesive culture from that point on. In that context (which I wish to apply here as well), I argue that the consumerism, though the ideology may be less visible than the mainstream popular youth culture (ie. cultural products) which united teenagers in the 1950’s, remains a common element shared by teenagers across their specific identity groups. Thus, rather than an organizing principle, I apply the term “generational” here to refer to a broader ethos.

issues to youth" at 26.7% (Pammett & LeDuc, 2003, p. 52). Clearly while adult culture sees formal education as the solution to improving the political participation rate among the youth cohort, teenagers themselves see the problem through a different lens: it is not that they do not understand the political system, rather they feel that it does not understand them.⁵⁶

Formal civic participation levels for the teen demographic are presently declining in Canada. In fact, civic participation levels among all age groups are plummeting. Further, Pammett & LeDuc acknowledge that lower turnout levels for general elections have been noted across most nations of the developed world in the past ten years, including Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. Because of this slippage they claim: "The issue of voter turnout, once a topic of interest to a small group of academics, has become a source of concern to the wider scholarly community, the media and attentive members of the general public" (Pammett & LeDuc, 2003, p. 4). The issue of low levels of civic engagement in the youth demographic, however, has become the cause of great concern because this rate is declining more quickly than any other age

⁵⁶ This lack of understanding is mirrored in the survey question itself. "What do you think should be done to get young people to be more interested in politics?" is a follow-up to the conclusion that the most popular answer to the question "why are young people less likely to vote than older people?", was "lack of connectedness" to the field of politics. Note that this study measures the presence of the concept of citizenship through evidence of active participation in the electoral process, which, as discussed previously in Chapter 4, this is a central tenet of the civic republican model of citizenship generally ascribed to by adult society. Therefore, the question assumes a narrow view of citizenship which is alienating to the respondents of the under 25 category, who do not necessarily equate citizenship solely with the act of voting.

group.

Michael Carpini offers a useful analysis of this trend in the article "Gen.com: Youth, Civic Engagement, and the New Information Environment", where he explains that the reason for increasing adult concern stems from the growing rate at which today's youth are disconnecting completely from public life (Carpini, 2000, p. 341). Civic theorists note that while it has always been historically true that young people have generally been less engaged in public life than older generations, there is a major difference in the present context – teenagers are choosing to remain disengaged from the public sphere *throughout* their lives.

It appears that young Americans are not increasing their participation in public life as they grow older at anything like the rate for previous generations. In short, the current civic malaise that has engulfed America's youth appears to be an ingrained generational characteristic rather than a stage in the life cycle that will remedy itself with time (Carpini, 2000, p. 343).

The severity of the problem is the way in which this habit of disengagement from public life has become the predisposition of an entire generation of young people. Carpini asserts that this trend stems from choices made during the teen years:

The years from early teens through early twenties are extremely important to the formation of 'civic habits'. Early socialization is critical to the development of one's political world view. Since particular age cohorts share a set of common social and political experiences, *each new generation tends to develop its own 'civic style' or set of deep-seated attitudes and practices*. While these attitudes and behaviours can change to some degree over time, new issues and events tend to be interpreted through these generationally shaped lenses (Carpini, 2000, p. 345) (emphasis added).

Concrete reasons for the rate of decline in civic participation are continually debated, although civic theorists generally acknowledge that the decline is caused by the

interaction of a number of complex factors. Recent scholarship in the field has begun to hint at the possible role that consumerism might play in the relationship between youth and citizenship. In their introduction to *Roots of Civic Identity: International Perspectives on Community Service and Activism in Youth* (1999), editors Miranda Yates & James Youniss comment on the tone of the growing body of interest in the disengagement of youth:

[Recently] much hesitancy has been expressed about the present generation of youth and its ability to carry on and help reform our political and moral traditions. Some commentators have bemoaned the universal spread of the modern 'youth culture' of MTV, jeans, and fast food around the globe. They also have criticized a rising interest in material possessions, coupling it with a fear that youth have placed hedonistic pleasure ahead of social obligation (Yates & Youniss, 1999, p. 1).

As a possible cause for civic disengagement, it is interesting to note that "consumerism", as a social movement or structure, is a phenomenon which involves its own "set of deep-seated attitudes and practices" similar to those described by Carpini, regarding the process of political socialization. If it is true that a "particular set of common social and political experiences" shape generational behaviour, then as explained in the context of this thesis – consumerism qualifies as a particular and pertinent world view for this generation, one which shapes the lens through which they make sense of their own world.

While the specific origins of this generational lens have yet to be unanimously decided upon due to their complexity, the effects of this "world-view" on today's teenagers is generally agreed upon by civics theorists. Examining a multitude of previous studies, as well as government statistics produced in the United States, Michael Carpini assembles a list of the basic assumptions which can be made regarding present

teenage attitudes towards civic engagement:

Whether compared with older Americans or with younger Americans from earlier eras, today's young adults [between the ages of 15 and 29] are significantly:

- less trusting of their fellow citizens
- less interested in politics or public affairs
- less likely to feel a sense of identity, pride or obligation associated with American citizenship
- less knowledgeable about the substance or processes of politics
- less likely to read a newspaper or watch the news
- less likely to register or vote
- less likely to participate in politics beyond voting
- less likely to participate in community organizations designed to address public problems through collective action or the formal policy process
- less likely to connect individual efforts to help solve problems with more traditional, collective forms of civic engagement

(Carpini, 2000, pp. 341-342)

The result of these attitudes, regardless of their cause, is a system in which teenagers turn away from traditional forms of civic participation, and I argue – move towards new and different forms of active civic engagement. Both Carpini and Kingsley (Chief Electoral Officer of Elections Canada) note of both American and Canadian youth, that as a group they don't "opt out of the system" because they don't care, but because they feel alienated from it. That is to say that teenagers would engage in the system if they felt it was possible:

Young Americans are not disengaged because they are satisfied with the current state of affairs, because they are apathetic, or because they do not care about their fellow citizens. Rather, they are disengaged because they are alienated from the institutions and processes of civic life and lack the motivation, opportunity, and ability to overcome this alienation (Carpini, 2000, p. 345).

Echoing Carpini's sentiments, Kingsley asserts that as a nation we should be concerned,

and in fact we should question, the general assertion that youth have disengaged because they are happy with the system. Referencing research collected by Elections Canada, Kingsley claims that quite the opposite case is true:

While it may be true that young people are less cynical about politics than are older citizens, research shows that they do feel a profound sense of disconnect from political institutions. A number of young people are engaged in civil society in a variety of others ways, including volunteering in community organizations. Some have suggested that they find the causes advanced by these organizations more worthwhile than some of the issues debated in Parliament and legislative assemblies (Kingsley, 2003, para. 12).

Thus, I suggest that the sense of alienation felt by young people today is the product of systemic inequalities between what they are taught or learn about citizenship and how they are expected to practice it in reality.

Teen citizenship practices: Examples of a trend

In the conclusion to *Teenage Wasteland: Suburbia's Dead End Kids* (1990), Donna Gaines outlines the perils of the social environment facing teens as they move into the last decade of the twentieth-century:

Now in their 'descendency', youth experience a lower status than members of this transitory caste have known since the post-World War II years. They have inflated expectations with diminishing opportunities, across the board. Young people are still the only minority without formal self-representation. They don't vote, and few pay taxes of any significance (Gaines, 1990, p. 239).

For Gaines, the forecasted future for youth lacks the formal social organization needed to protect their interests. At the close of the above quotation, she adds "As consumers, they do have some power, but that remains a *dormant organizing motive*" (Gaines, 1990, p.

239) (emphasis added). I contend that consumerism has remained a common thread across the differences which exist between diverse groups of teenagers. Understanding the concept of citizenship through the position of the consumer-citizen, teens have taken hold of the power that they hold as consumers by changing their behaviour to reflect this ideological position. The teenage consumer-citizen exercises their rights through various practices which take place within the social setting of the high school, united through the common element of action against corporate capitalism. In what appears to be a trend that is strengthening in numbers, youth across North America are choosing to speak out against the privatization practices unfolding in their public schools, framing their reactions in a “civic language” which recognizes the importance of their “rights” against the collective whole.

The remainder of this chapter will explore the social practices in which teenagers are actively engaging in order to assert their civic rights, featuring various examples of teen initiated anti-corporate activity in North American high schools. I will focus in detail on two specific case studies in Ontario high schools, which highlight the dissonance between adult culture’s notion of citizenship (as discussed in the previous chapter through the educational policy instituted in Ontario) and teenage notions of citizenship within that same space. The first case study involves the resistance of the students of Meadowvale Secondary School to the products and presence of the Youth News Network (YNN), and the Peel District School Board which attempts to instate a private partnership deal with Athena Educational Partners Ltd., the parent company of YNN. The second case study examines student Nicholas Dodds’ legal battle with the

York District School Board to expose the contents of exclusive vending contracts with Pepsi-Cola Inc.

Before turning to the analysis of these case studies however, I want first to examine the broader context of student activism in the high school. Addressing similar incidents of student activism throughout North American high schools allows me to establish a common set of components which exists within these practices. It also allows me to suggest that the concept of the consumer-citizen exists for teenagers across various cultural differences, such as geographical location and socio-economic status. These incidents of student activism are occurring in various high school settings across North America: teens of varying ages and social backgrounds are employing a similar language of rights and engaging in similar actions, which allows me to link them and analyze them as a shared practice.

Teenage consumer-citizen practices: Different protest(s) for the same reason(s)

Mike Cameron's Coke Day stunt began the story of this thesis; a teenager who thwarted the attempts of the Columbia County Board of Education to provide a brand secure environment for its large corporate sponsor. At the time, Cameron insisted, "I don't consider this a prank; I like to be an individual. That's the way I am" ("Pepsi Prank", 1998). School officials, however, felt very differently, in media accounts of the incident they placed their justification for their disciplinary response *outside* of the framework of the corporate sponsorship narrative. The school's principal, Gloria Hamilton, handed out a one day suspension to Cameron, stating:

'I don't apologize for expecting my students to behave at school'...The punishment, she said, was not for wearing a Pepsi shirt; it was for 'being disruptive and trying to destroy the school picture.' That offense, she said, normally gets you a six-day suspension ("Pepsi Prank", 1998).

Further, Superintendent Tom Dorhmann framed the incident as a disciplinary problem, calling it a premeditated event intended to manipulate the news media: "The kid is preying on the press. He's used you" ("Pepsi Prank", 1998). Principal Hamilton mirrored this tone in further statements justifying the disciplining of Cameron.

It has to do with a student being deliberately disruptive and rude. These students knew we had guests. We had the regional president here and people flew in from Atlanta [Coke's corporate headquarters] to do us the honour of being resource speakers ("Teen Turns Coke Day Flat", 1998).

Despite the fact that part of Cameron's punishment involved a discussion with the principal regarding "how important that day was to the school and how he could have cost the school good advertising dollars", Cameron remained assertive: "In my eyes, I didn't do anything wrong" (Adbusters, 1998, p. 56).

Youth social practices involving the consumer-citizen are interesting, not only as an illustration of the way in which today's teenagers are fusing together the concepts of consumer and citizen, but also because these practices exist apart from (but alongside) adult practices pertaining to the same issues. Although both the adult and youth practices are concerned with civic participation, they are generally incompatible because they conceive of citizenship in such different ways. The ideology of each group differs; thus the way in which they understand citizenship and the ways in which they measure its presence in teen life differs as well.

The following examples are intended to highlight the different issues that today's

teens place inside the framework of their own conception of citizenship. Specifically, these examples note the presence of several recurring elements in teenage practices of the consumer-citizen: a language of “rights” and the spectacle of public protest which both reflect a particular set of values shared by those teens who participate. Their values are dictated by their perceived conception of the role of the consumer-citizen in society: their roles as citizens are mediated through their identities as consumers. Thus, student political participation in the high school takes the form of anti-corporate activism. The target may change in each example, however teens understand the reason for the protest as remaining the same: corporate presence in their public high schools places limits on their democratic rights.

Berkeley High School versus Pepsi-Cola Inc.

In January of 1998, *The San Francisco Examiner* reported that Pepsi-Cola had offered a \$100,000 deal to Berkeley High School. Among other things including sports equipment, Pepsi would pay for two new outdoor scoreboards, and in return would have exclusive rights to sell its product in the school for seven years (“Pitching to pupils”, 1998). Berkeley High School’s Athletic Director Joe Martin supported the deal, calling himself a ‘capitalist die-hard’ who believes that corporate endorsement is a social reality:

We’re not selling our souls and this is not corporate kidnapping...Our kids can walk 100 yards to Shattuck Avenue and buy anything they want. We need the money. Pepsi and Coke think Berkeley is cool and want our kids to buy their drinks. There is nothing wrong with that. I mean, really, welcome to the real world (“Pitching to pupils”, 1998).

There were a large group of students however, who disagreed with this logic. And they

recognized that their opposition was connected to something deeper than the physical presence of the soda. Karolyn Kuo, co-editor in chief of the student newspaper, *The Jacket*, explained her reasoning behind her objection to the proposal: "We're not going to all of a sudden start madly drinking Pepsi...I'm against it because it's misplaced to have commercial ads on public school property. It's a conflict of interest. And, on another level, it doesn't sit well" ("Pitching to pupils", 1998).

A month later, as consideration of the offer was still being discussed by school officials and another impending deal with Nike Inc. was circulating as rumour, concerned students staged their own debate on the issue. It was organized by the student-run Awareness Committee, and included more than 150 students, and several faculty advisors and community activists ("Berkeley High", 1998). Sophomore Sarah Church voiced her opinion to the debate's central ethical question "would the school sell its soul by accepting advertising from Pepsi-Cola and Nike on campus?": "If we give into Pepsi, they will to some extent control us because we will depend on them...We will lose some of our free-spirited, free-thinking Berkeley identity" ("Berkeley High", 1998). In response to the potential relationship between Nike and the school's sporting teams, student Karen Hilton explained that when the women's lacrosse team needed money for new uniforms they held a bake sale: "And we didn't exploit ourselves" ("Pepsi offer", 1998). Autumn Morris, co-president of the sophomore class council, echoed these statements: "You have to stand for something or you fall for nothing" ("Pepsi offer", 1998). Widening the scope of importance, student Zac Moon hinted at the role of the high school in the community and society at large: "Just think...If a left-leaning place like Berkeley caves in and accepts

ads, what does this say to the rest of the world?" ("Pepsi offer", 1998).

The public debate supported here in large part by students, effectively limited the strength of the sponsorship deal proposed by Pepsi: two months later the Berkeley school board instated a policy to limit advertising in its public schools:

[The policy prohibits] movie ads on lunch menus [and] soft drink logos on sports scoreboards...Berkeley students will not be forced to wear a corporate logo or insignia on their athletic uniforms, and they will never be required to view any commercial advertising in class or in their books ("Berkeley tones down", 1998).

"Students for Sale – How Corporations Are Buying Their Way into America's Classrooms", is a paper written by Steven Manning of the Education Policy Studies Laboratory at Arizona State University, which comments on the incident. He identifies student involvement, and in particular sophomore Sarah Church, as the central reason for the failure of the corporate sponsorship deal:

The deals were ultimately scuttled, in large part because of the efforts of a determined 15-year-old sophomore, Sarah Church. Church organized a student-led forum on whether the school should accept the deals, and then inspired her classmates to testify against them at school board meetings...Today, she is trying to launch a national student movement against in-school advertising (Manning, 1999, para. 26).

Tristan Kading versus McDonald's

Late in May 2001, students of Stonington High School in Connecticut were required to attend a mandatory assembly on employment skills in the school cafeteria. Upon entering the room however, students were confronted with McDonald's employees, students then:

...watched a film about working in a fast-food restaurant and were given

juice and cookies by company officials wearing McDonald's hats. In return for filling out job applications...students were given coupons for free meals at McDonald's ("Forced Apology", 2001).

Tristan Kading, a fifteen year old student at the school, was upset that he was required to attend the presentation sponsored by a company with which he had a moral dilemma: as a social activist and vegetarian, Kading was critical of McDonald's environmental and nutritional practices. When one of the presenters asked for volunteers for mock job interviews (after a previous student had responded to a question with a lewd comment and was asked to sit down), Kading volunteered: [in his own words]

I saw this as an opportunity to present the other side of the issue and tell the truth about McDonald's, so I volunteered to do an interview. I was called up and a McDonald's representative asked me to tell her about myself. I replied, 'I hate large corporations like McDonald's.' The representative said, 'That won't get you a job at McDonald's,' and then handed the microphone back to me. To this I said, 'Good, I don't want to work at McDonald's because they lied to Hindus and vegetarians about the beef flavouring in their French fries.' (Kading, 2002).

At this point, Kading was asked to sit down and was called "an embarrassment to the school" by a present teacher who then sent him to the principal's office. He was threatened with suspension and ordered to read a written apology over the school's public address system. A week or so later, after a meeting with Kading's parents, Principal Stephen Murphy made his own statement over the P.A. system, apologizing for 'unintentionally humiliating' Kading, but standing by "the disciplining he imposed for the boy's behaviour" ("Forced Apology", 2001). Superintendent of Schools, Michael L. McKee, spoke to the media on behalf of Principal Murphy, stating that the problem was not what Kading said, but how he chose to say it:

According to McKee... administrators can act against a student who is

'disrupting' an 'educational process' as long as the intervention is not based on the political content of the student's belief. 'It was not the belief that student had about that corporation' for which Kading was punished, McKee contends, ' but rather the disruption of a presentation of which there was education content' ("Want Fries with that", 2001).

Kading recognized the irony of the situation through the lens of democratic rights: in high school teens are taught that theoretical democratic rights exist, but at the same time they do not seem to exist within the high school. Expressing this view to a local Hartford paper, Kading asserts:

They say we have a lot of rights. Then I test that, and I don't...I thought the Supreme Court supported free speech and free expression in the school environment...We just studied protests in my American cultural studies class. And then this [incident] comes up ("Forced Apology", 2001).

Friends and peers also identified this problem of imbalance of rights in the education system as part of the ideological system which justified Kading's punishment; they contended that the right to choose when and where to voice your opinion should be respected within the institution of the public high school. Friend and junior student James Morren explains:

'If had just written in the newspaper, I probably would have read it and thought, OK, that's his opinion'...[Morren] dismisses McKee's contention that voicing his opinion in another forum would have been more effective. 'It was the best time for it. Causing controversy could bring a lot of people who hadn't heard of it to get interested not only in Tristan's issues, but they might get into animal rights or stuff like that' ("Want Fries with that", 2001).

Further, senior student Billy Ware explained that Kading actions were within the acceptable boundaries of high school behaviour as perceived by the students: "It's not like he got up there yowling and cursing. He made an educated remark about a very current event. [Beef flavouring in McDonald's fries] is something that's in the court system"

("Want Fries with that", 2001). Given the fact that the loud student who was dismissed from the mock-interview before Kading was not reprimanded for making a sexually inappropriate joke, both Morren and Ware felt that it was Kading's political views that caused his harsh punishment ("Want Fries with that", 2001). Kading agreed, noting that despite the public semi-apology from principal Murphy, the damage had been completed beforehand when his punishment was handed down: "the message to other students [was] that it's not OK to speak your mind" ("Forced Apology", 2001).

Since this incident Kading has become a member of the Youth Advisory Board of the Centre for Commercial-free Public Education, noting "My experience with my school administration and McDonald's has strengthened my determination to fight for free speech, animal rights, and the rejection of commercialism in schools" (Kading, 2002).

Philadelphia students versus Edison Schools Inc.

The battle between the students of Philadelphia's public schools and city and state education administrators culminated in a full fledged street protest during the last week of November 2001. In August of that year, then governor Tom Ridge had paid Edison Schools Inc. \$2.6 million dollars to perform an assessment of the state's "failing" public schools ("Privatizing the Classroom", 2001). From that point on, the general community became concerned with the prospect of Edison Inc.'s privatization model being adopted into sixty of Philadelphia's poorest public schools, and this fear was fuelled by succeeding Governor Mark Schweiker's announcement that negotiations would proceed. The opposition launched by the local community, students included, stemmed from their

understanding of the socio-economic factors which often underlie the political choice to institute private schooling programs. Students, parents, social activists, and mayor John Street himself, objected to Edison Inc. because it was being forced upon certain schools which were classified as belonging to low income neighbourhoods, composed of racial minorities. It was large groups of students from these schools who launched the most successful protests of the policy however; an article from the newsletter of the non-profit activist organization *Rethinking Schools*, gives much credit to the youth involved in this opposition movement:

Student and youth organizations such as Philadelphia Student Union, Youth United for Change, and Asian Americans United have organized the most vocal opposition to the privatization moves. High school students have denounced the lack of public input into the plans and have hammered home the message, 'We are not for sale!' (Socular, 2001, para. 16).

Students first showed high levels of support when a group of one thousand marched to the state capital of Harrisburg to protest the potential take over: "[wearing] giant fluorescent stickers on their jackets, reading 'We do not have a price tag'" ("Privatizing the Classroom", 2001).

They continued to demonstrate their support in a series of protests which took place in the days leading up the policy decision scheduled for midnight on Friday November 30, 2001. On the Thursday, students marched to City Hall, some "forming a human chain around the school administration building", while others demanded to speak to Mayor Street in person ("Students form human chain", 2001). Five students, members of Youth United for Change, were allowed to meet with the Mayor; they presented him with alternatives to Edison Inc's private model:

'We figured that if we don't want Edison (Schools Inc.), we have to come up with something that we do want', Lanese Hilton, 14, said before she and four other students were allowed to see Street...they gave the mayor their own ideas about how the schools should run, including a technology plan for each school, one counsellor for every 250 students, after-school homework help rooms, a ban on private companies managing public schools and a new state formula for paying for schools. Street promised to share their ideas with his education aides ("Students walk out", 2001).

Students also organized massive walkouts the following day, which involved more than eight hundred students across the city ("Students form human chain", 2001). What is most interesting about the student involvement in the organized protests are the comments made by the teenagers to the media, justifying their desire or need to participate. They appeared to understand that the issue is larger than the simple presence of Edison Inc., rather it is about the equal individual right to a quality education:

- Kevin Talbert, 14, "[My school] only got books for 12 in a class of 30...we share books - four to a book. I don't know if [Edison is] going to do anything about that or not. They may just take the money" ("Students walk out", 2001).
- Mike Syrnick, 16, "We're not guinea pigs, and that's what Edison wants to do to us. If they fail us, we're done" ("Students form human chain", 2001).
- Shereen Davis, 15, "[School administrators are] not looking out for our best interest. It's a struggle at our school already and they're making it worse" ("Students form human chain", 2001).
- Michelle Brown, 16, "We walked out of school to keep the schools public...We're fighting for our rights. We're fighting for our future. ("Students walk out", 2001).

The opposition between local community and school administration continued well past the November 30 deadline, as the policy decision was pushed back to December 21 of that year. Again, protests were waged on the eve of the decision, with local high school students involved:

The day's boldest anti-takeover note was struck by 11 students [and

others]...who began a sit-in protest at the school district administration building...about an hour before the large protest rally began outside. The students - members of Philadelphia Student Union - and the others gained entry by telling security officers that they had meetings with a school board member and the president of the Philadelphia Home and School Council. They did. But once the meetings ended inside a fifth-floor conference room, the group stayed put. They hung a cloth banner outside the window that read 'Not for Sale' ("11th Hour Desperation", 2001).

Once again, students displayed a comprehensive understanding of the issue at hand; it was about more than Edison having control, it was a question of who had to give up that control to the private enterprise. At the site of the protests, Jacob Winterstein, 15, justified the role of the demonstrators: "We're letting it be known that this is our school district, our schools, and we're willing to suffer the repercussion to keep the schools under our control" ("11th Hour Desperation", 2001).

Despite the massive organized opposition from the community, Governor Schweiker overruled Mayor Street's objections using the policy enacted by the previous Governor Ridge which Street had been trying to abolish for four years previous, which allowed the deal to proceed without City Hall's approval. On April 16, 2002, the Philadelphia public school was opened up to private for-profit companies: Edison Schools Inc. secured the contracts of at least 20 schools in the city. The next day, on April 17, 2002, Philadelphia high school students reasserted their commitment to the protest of privatization by blocking the entrance to a school district building in protest of the previous day's corporate takeover ("Philly Students Protest Edison", 2002).

Despite this defeat, Paul Socolar of the independent education newspaper *Philadelphia Public School Notebook*, reports that the community battle to reclaim control of Philadelphia's schools continues today. Speculation that the School Reform

Commission would extend the “experimental” project of privatized school management into the 2003-2004 school year, prompted reaction from one of the newly targeted high schools which was able to reverse the decision after protests were launched by teachers and students (Socolar, 2003, para. 24).

Students versus Sweatshops

The nation wide youth movement against clothing manufacturers linked to sweatshops used in Canadian educational institutions was solidified in 2000, as University of Toronto students led a 10 day sit-in in the university president's office to demand that a “code of conduct” policy be adopted and applied to the university's garment suppliers (“Teen works to crush sweatshops”, 2001). The students were successful, the University of Toronto was the first educational institution in the country to adopt such a code, and since the event, many others in the country have followed suit. As such, student movements against sweatshop labour have for the most part become formalized organizations at the university level, such as the group *Students against Sweatshops*, which consists of individual chapters across the country's university campuses – which both lobby for policy change and monitor those changes once they take place.

The formal organization of this movement extends further than university campuses however; the Toronto based *Maquila Solidarity Network* (MSN) is a national anti-sweatshop movement which often involves teenagers in its campaigns. For example, MSN led a high school campaign called “Cut it Out”, which encouraged teenagers “to cut

off the labels from their clothes and send them to Industry minister Allan Rock, urging him to enact disclosure laws" (MacAdam, 2003, para. 10). Unlike the previously discussed examples of student led activism, the movement against sweatshop involvement in Canadian high schools is formally organized by an adult led coalition; however student involvement in these initiatives remains an important point of focus here as the movement "trickles down" to the high school level, because teenagers are making connections between this clothing as consumers goods and their "rights" to manufacturing information.

'People are always asking if their clothes were made in a sweatshop,' says Toronto student Rosie MacAdam, active in the Cut It Out effort since age 13. 'It would make a tremendous difference if people were able to make the choice of which companies they want to buy from' (MacAdam, 2003, para. 11).

In this context, teens are behaving in much the same way as they did in their opposition to Pepsi, McDonald's, and Edison Schools Inc.; they recognize the dissonance inherent in a system which both promises them the right to choose, while at the same time imposing a system of forced monopoly upon them. These are the social conditions which encourage them to engage in practices of protest.

On August 31, 2001, local high school students, supported by MSN, led a leafleting campaign outside of RJ McCarthy's Toronto store. McCarthy is Canada's largest school uniform supplier, drawing line-ups hours long as local teens and their parents assemble before the start of the school year to purchase mandatory school clothing ("High school No Sweat Campaign", 2001). Seventeen-year-old Alykhan Velshi, along with a dozen other students, handed out leaflets, and collected signatures

for a petition which asks McCarthy to release the exact locations of its manufacturing factories ("Teen works to crush sweatshops", 2001). As well: "[students] set up a sweatshop clothesline listing common sweatshop violations in countries where RJ McCarthy clothing is made" ("High school No Sweat Campaign", 2001). Velshi explained his involvement in the protest through the politics of manufacturing. A *Toronto Star* article paraphrased Velshi's concerns:

Velshi...wants to know if his purchases [several hundred dollars a year for mandatory school uniforms] are supporting [unethical] practices...Velshi says he's not accusing McCarthy of doing anything wrong. On the other hand, he says, he has no way of proving it's not. All he knows from reading the labels in his school uniforms is that some of the items are made in Thailand, India or China, countries where sweatshop conditions are rampant. 'I'd like the company to disclose the addresses of the factories where they make their clothing so they can be independently monitored' said Velshi ("Teen works to crush sweatshops", 2001).

This article also notes that Velshi and the others involved in the leafleting action were not alone in their interests, high school students in Toronto, Oakville, Hamilton, Oshawa, Whitby, Cobourg, Sault Ste. Marie, Waterloo, St. John's, and Halifax have all launched similar campaigns in their respective communities ("Teen works to crush sweatshops", 2001).

A paper produced for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives in 2003, recognizes the RJ McCarthy store protest as a sign of increasing high school level involvement in the campaign against sweatshops. In exploring the personal politics of high school student Jennifer deGroot, who is active in the anti-sweatshop movement in her Winnipeg high school, the paper touches on a knowledge or a particular set of values that teens have acquired which inform their participation in such acts of anti-corporate

activism. "I'm involved because of my interest in making links between my life and the lives of people around the world...I can use the power I have as a consumer to demand fair treatment of workers around the world. It's an issue that shows real signs of progress" (MacAdam, 2003, para. 29).

Increasingly, teens are displaying a sophisticated understanding of the processes affecting their daily lives within the social institution of the high school. As the above examples illustrate, the context of student activism in the high school is broadening. Exploring multiple examples of these practices allows me to argue that despite their specific corporate targets, the aim is the same. Whether teens object to the presence of Pepsi-Cola in their cafeteria or the privatization policies of Edison Schools Inc., teens are also at the same time protesting their distaste for the doctrine of corporate capitalism. The students of these examples share common traits in their activist activities: they employ a language of "rights" (ie. the right to free speech, and the right to freedom of expression), as well as the act of public protest to express their values to the adult world. Teens see their civic rights as mediated through their roles as consumers, thus the answer to solving the problem of stifled civic rights is through their roles as consumers. This view of consumer-citizen practices as active forms of political participation exists for multiple groups of teenagers, despite attempts by adult culture to instil a different definition of citizenship. The two following case studies will illustrate that the teenage notion of the consumer-citizen exists alongside the adult practice of citizenship education, within the same time and space of the Ontario high school. They remain very separate practices however, as the "success" of one cannot be measured in the terms of the

other because while adult culture continues to develop education policy which ascribe to the model of the civic republican tradition, the framework teens use to understand citizenship is based upon a set of values which is shaped by the liberal tradition and its relationship with consumption.

Ontario teens and privatization: A battle for the public space of the high school

Chapter 4 drew out the social practices that adults engage in pertaining to the teaching of citizenship in Ontario high schools. I noted that citizenship education aimed at youth was identified as an area of concern for adult culture, and that their proposed solutions were framed within the traditional civic republican view of citizenship which emphasizes the citizen's duty to the state, for example the moral obligation to participate in the electoral process. As it has been my aim to explain that the teenager's relationship with consumerism has changed their concept of citizenship (from that traditional view held by adult culture), it is no surprise that adult attempts to both "solve" the problem as well as measure the effectiveness of their solutions have fallen flat. Adult culture's solution of "teaching" citizenship in the high school setting identifies a "good citizen" as one who votes and pays taxes, while conversely, the teen conception of citizenship stems from the liberal tradition which places more emphasis on rights owed to the individual by the state.

Teenagers are framing their understanding of citizenship through the "consumer-citizen", a position which equates freedom and liberty with the right to ownership of material goods. Using a different framework to define what it means to be a "good

citizen", teenagers in Ontario are becoming active citizens, exercising their rights by protesting private corporate presence in their public high schools. Apparently unrecognized by most high school officials, teachers, and parents; students *are* behaving as "good citizens" according to their generational world view which seeks to challenge the corporate threat to freedom of choice. In Ontario, teenagers are taught the complex concept of citizenship through history and theory, and the curriculum's effectiveness is often gauged by examining voter turnout levels for youth. However, despite curriculum changes this number is not increasing because voting does not fit neatly into the teenager-consumer-citizen's understanding of active participation. Instead, teens are engaging in alternative activities; they are participating in social practices which exist alongside adult culture's practices but remain separate, embedded in different theoretical premises.

The following section will use archival research to examine two case studies which illustrate the practices of the teenager consumer-citizen in Ontario high schools. The stories of student activism are taken from various Canadian news sources including *Maclean's*, *The Toronto Star*, *The Globe and Mail*, as well as other local and regional papers and the *CTV News* archives. Information regarding these case studies is also located in public papers which include, in the case of Meadowvale students and YNN-policy papers written by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, as well as public reports produced by the Peel District School Board. In the case of Nicholas Dodds and Pepsi, additional information and documentation is provided by a public web-site maintained by Dodds and his father.

Specifically, I am interested in examining the events of the protests (the smaller

actions of which it consists) and the explanations given by teens which they use as justification for their involvement. I focus, not only on the actions of protest themselves, but also on the “voices” of the teens cited in the media accounts of these events. The language teens use to express their feelings about the practice of anti-corporate activism is important because it reveals the set of values which drives their participation in the protest. The “voices” of these students are taken from sources mediated by adult culture in an attempt to suggest that teen opinions do in fact exist in mainstream media, but it is the way in which these comments are framed which gives them meaning. Central questions in the analysis of these practices consist of the following: is there any discussion of their “rights” being violated by the offending party? Is this word mentioned or alluded to? Why do they participate in acts of public protest? And what meaning do those acts of protest hold for them?

Using both the retelling of the events that make up these practices, as well as documented student testimonies, I will argue that the actions of the teenagers are driven by a particular set of values. These values are connected to the teenage understanding of the role of the consumer-citizen in today’s society, which differs greatly from the traditional definition of political participation stemming from the civic republican model of citizenship. As the case studies are examined and analysed it will become evident that citizenship has not disappeared for youth, it has merely shifted towards a new form.

The students of Meadowvale Secondary School versus YNN and the Peel District School Board (1998-2000)

The Youth News Network (YNN) has a decade long history in Canada, an

unsuccessful history which for the most part consists of wide-spread community opposition and large-scale fiscal failure. YNN met with controversy across the nation, where some school boards and parents vehemently opposed it, while others welcomed it with open arms. One particular chapter of the YNN story stands out from the rest however, and is worth exploring here.

The YNN experience at Meadowvale S.S. is especially significant because [it] was the pilot site for YNN and was featured prominently in the company'' literature...[and] *Meadowvale was also the site of the most organized student opposition to the program* (Shaker, 2000, p. 24) (emphasis added).

The students of Meadowvale Secondary School were vigilant in their attack on YNN, which spanned a period of three years, and which met with much opposition from school administrators. The students' views on the issues at stake in the battle to cancel YNN programming in their school emphasizes their understanding of the role of "rights" in a democratic society: corporate presence was infringing on "free" public space.

YNN first appeared at Meadowvale in the fall of 1998, as principal Laurie Pedwell prepared to enter into a deal with Athena Educational Partners Ltd. (AEP) to become the site of a YNN pilot project. Youth News Network existed as a division of AEP, a jointly owned partnership between original creator Rod MacDonald, and the Montreal-based production company Telescene.⁵⁷ MacDonald had modelled YNN on a

⁵⁷ YNN actually began in 1992 as the sole project of Youth News Network Inc., a program which supplied television equipment to poorly funded schools, in exchange for a captive teenage television audience. MacDonald had trouble finding funding for the project which included a broadcasting centre in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Maritime provinces then began to oppose the idea of the program in public schools, and the

similar U.S. program called Channel One:

...a popular U.S. broadcast service owned by the New York based conglomerate Primedia. Channel One now pumps out a commercial loaded current-affairs show to more than eight million U.S. high school students every day and makes big money: 450 million in its first year, or more than CNN (Nikiforuk, 2001).

Channel One was founded by Chris Whittle in 1989 and it was designed to provide poorly funded schools (often overcrowded rural institutions) with television and computer equipment in exchange for "program time, or the equivalent of seven instructional weeks over a period of six years" (Nikiforuk, 2001). Despite both national and local contestation, it has been adopted into 40% of American high schools. Understandably, given its huge audience (a lucrative demographic guaranteed to be watching due to high school attendance laws), "the station can charge advertisers about US\$200,000 for a 30-second spot..." (Nikiforuk, 2001). Despite the promise of this business model, MacDonald met with little success in convincing Canadian schools to sign contracts with AEP. Critics cite higher levels of government spending and timing as a factor in YNN's low success rate:

MacDonald has always walked uphill with his version of Channel One. For starters, Canadian schools are much better funded than their U.S. counterparts. They're not as vulnerable to commercial temptations. [And] Whittle's high-profile school invasion also put Canadian educators on full alert (Nikiforuk, 2001).

There remained groups however who shared MacDonald's vision: the Peel District

organization disappeared in 1996. It reappeared three years later under the production umbrella of Athena Educational Partners Inc., this time with increased levels of funding which allowed for electronic equipment such as high-end computers to be added into YNN contracts. For a detailed description of this history, see Andrew Nikiforuk's article

School Board for instance; in 1998 they voted 9-3 in favour of opening up partnerships between its schools and YNN on a voluntary basis. They valued the “gift” of \$200,000 in audio-visual and electronic equipment as too good to pass up, seeing the 14 ½ minutes of “news programming” (2 ½ minutes of which consisted of commercials) to be broadcast daily to students, as fair exchange.

As such, after seeing a sample program (showed to all 1,700 students in November 1998), Meadowvale signed on in February of 1999 (with 14 other schools across the country) to become a test site for the program. All of the equipment provided by the contract (a television in each classroom, a satellite dish, numerous computers and broadcasting equipment), was installed in the school, without school officials ever having held a public forum to debate the signing of the contract, or to explain the presence of the program (“Group meets to oppose YNN pilot”, 1999).

Opposition to the program began instantly: parents of Meadowvale’s students organized public meetings, and along with them many students protested the deal at a school meeting, in which Principal Laurie Pedwell reportedly became aware of 100 angry parents and promptly “adjourned the meeting and walked out” (“Let’s signal ‘no’”, 1999). Explaining her presence at the meeting, 17-year-old Stephanie Lake asserts: “Watching [YNN] was pretty much like selling out our brains for computer equipment. Why should we have to do that?” (“Group meets to oppose YNN pilot”, 1999). “Let’s signal ‘no’ to

in the May 1, 2001 edition of *National Post Business Magazine*.

TV network in schools”, published in the *Toronto Star*, reported that some Meadowvale students, labelled “inside agitators”, were quickly joining teacher-parents groups to oppose the presence of YNN (“Let’s signal ‘no’”, 1999).

An independent study conducted a year after the pilot project – “YNN Evaluation Report” (2000), written by the Peel District School Board, was designed to “measure the effect” of YNN on Meadowvale and the surrounding community. It cites a list of concerns which students held at this early point in the process of YNN’s implementation:

- students were concerned that the pilot project wasn’t presented to them and parents until after it had been approved.
- there were no school-wide opportunities to discuss the project.
- students noticed that teachers who opposed YNN ‘felt uncomfortable expressing their views’.
- information meetings for students and parents were cut short when YNN was brought up.
- ‘Students felt that they were being inappropriately singled out for their opinions rather than being encouraged to stand up for what they believed in’ (Shaker, 2000, pp. 24-25).

It would appear that students of Meadowvale first questioned the presence of YNN through the appropriate avenues: attending public meetings, requesting a public forum within the school, and asking teachers for explanations. School administrators attempted to defuse the growing dissension by offering a structured alternative: the opt-out.

Although YNN’s contracts stipulated that their programs were mandatory viewing for all students, technically their requirement that 90% of students watch the news-casts 80% of the time (allowing for absences, sick-days, etc.) left room for a small number of students

to be excused from the 15 minute daily session.⁵⁸

Student reports of the “opt-out” alternative however, describe a rather complicated bureaucratic process:

Students who exercised their right to ‘opt-out’ of YNN and its commercial content...were put in the position of being outsiders at best, and troublemakers a worst. According to students who did opt-out, they were not allowed to do group work, but were forced to sit at library carrels and work singly in complete silence, while students who remained in class were allowed to talk and work together (Shaker, 2000, p. 24).

The Peel Board’s report extensively examined the views of the students who participated in this practice: statements from students revealed that they felt that the opt-out system was designed to be complicated in order to discourage their participation. In the words of one student:

When YNN arrived at Meadowvale, the more politically-minded students chose to go to the opt-out room. The first group of students that did so had to go for an interview with the principal. When more began to demand their rights, they had to write a paragraph explaining their reasons for opting out, get their parents to sign it, and wait a couple of days for the paperwork to go through (Shaker, 2000, p. 26).

The opt-out alternative was eventually revoked, and whether it was because too many students were engaging in the option which threatened the specifics of YNN’s contract regarding the donated equipment, remains speculation. In order

⁵⁸ YNN’s contract with Meadowvale agreed that students were allowed to opt-out of the viewing session, however the school must provide alternative supervised activity. And, if opt outs surpassed a certain percentage of total viewers, then AEP is legally allowed to reclaim the equipment installed in the school (which it had already permanently donated, through the terms of the pilot program agreement) (Shaker, 2000, p. 13).

to appease the growing opposition from students, parents and community groups, whose centrally cited concerns appeared to focus on objections to the commercials included in the broadcasts, MacDonald decided to replace them with public service announcements.⁵⁹ Both YNN and Principal Pedwell saw this content change as a legitimate reason to revoke the opt-out alternative; students however were angered.

I went to the office to try and opt out of YNN...The secretary would not give me an opt-out sheet because we're no longer allowed to have that option. We're forced to watch the broadcasts now, simply because there are no longer commercials in the episodes. The commercials are obviously a big problem, but that's not the whole problem. I do not want to watch the mind-numbingly ridiculous broadcasts– commercials or no commercials. There are many students who are very upset at the fact that we're no longer allowed to opt out; that's not fair. Part of the deal has always been that we were never forced to watch YNN– they simply cannot withdraw that (Shaker, 2000, pp. 33-34).

It is evident from this first person account, that student opposition to the broadcasts was rooted in a complex understanding of the potential threat of YNN. The above student emphasized that the commercials are not “the whole problem”, rather the news stories themselves are deemed “ridiculous” and without merit; thus it is the entire package was an ideological threat. The student acknowledges a framework of fairness, which assumes that the wishes of the student should be honoured over the wishes of the corporate “guest”; if YNN “always” promised that an opt-out was a contractually guaranteed

⁵⁹ Thus shifting his main source of funding from the lucrative private sector, to what MacDonald would later discover was a more limited pool of government funding. The consensus seems to be that this was one of the main reasons for YNN's ultimate failure as a broadcaster (Nikiforuk, 2001).

possibility for each student, then they are committing a wrong when they revoke that option.

In this environment of “control”, where the school administration attempted to monitor student protest of YNN, the Peel Board report states: “tensions between anti-YNN students and the school administration may have escalated because the students felt oppressed” (Shaker, 2000, p. 25). And it was in this environment that students turned toward open protest in the hallways and classrooms of their school.

According to a number of sources, 18-year-old Lindsay Porter began the unsanctioned protest by producing a one-page handout which specified the “problems with watching YNN”: “That’s time that we could be learning. Instead, we’re at the hands of YNN for five years of our life for 12 minutes a day” (Schofield, 1999). A background paper produced by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), entitled “Youth News Network and the Commercial Carpet-Bombing of the Classroom”, identified Porter as an early agitator. Citing an interview Porter gave on CBC Radio Montreal, author Erika Shaker explained the fallout which occurred after the one page zine was distributed around the school:

Lindsay Porter, a student at Meadowvale Secondary, decided to exercise her right to free speech and began an underground paper criticizing YNN. For this, she was threatened with suspension. Although she took great pains to write, print and distribute the paper off campus. In an interview on CBC Radio in Montreal, she explained that the principal, Laurie Pedwell, told her that, even if the publication was distributed off campus (and therefore on public property), Lindsay would still be suspended because there were ‘my [Pedwell’s] students’ (Shaker, 1999, p. 13).

The exact contents of the one-page hand-out are unavailable, however it may be assumed that Porter’s objections cited elsewhere in the media reflect her overall position on the

issue of YNN. In a *Canada AM* interview, which aired June 2, 2000 (near the end of the pilot project), anchor Dan Matheson asked Porter to explain her distaste for YNN, and her response identifies several issues which are central in the debate over YNN:

MATHESON: You don't like this idea? [YNN in schools]

PORTER: Not so much, no. I feel that there are other ways to get the information that's out there right now. For instance, newspapers and the other broadcasts that are out there right now, instead of getting a corporate broadcast...I guess the focus should be put on creating a new education system in which that's brought into the curriculum – like a World Issues.

MATHESON: So, what's wrong with this product, though? Why are you anti-this product?

PORTER: The commercials is a big part of it, although they have dropped – it's more public service announcements now. But just the fact that a public school system is being able to sell public school time is very –

MATHESON: It's bothersome to you.

PORTER: Yeah, quite ("Students debate merits of In-School News Broadcasts", 2000).

The practice of student protest against corporate infiltration of public space suggests that teenagers tied together the notion of their rights as consumers with their rights as citizens.

In the above quote, Porter points out how these two concepts interact: the effect of the commercials on students is one concern (ie. the immediate product in tangible form), on another level however, the effect of YNN as a whole (ie. the ideology behind the privatization of public schools) is equally as troubling. And it is this understanding of the products of YNN which prompts the students to hold a walk-out and demonstration even *after* the pilot project period has ended: through their conception of YNN as a multi-layered problem, the students are able to forecast the potential threat of a long term contract between Meadowvale S.S. and AEP.

Unsanctioned protest against YNN continued in an incident involving senior student Dave Brand. At a yearly school event called "Meadowstock 2000", in which

students are invited to perform musical acts for the student body, Dave Brand and his band mates were disqualified from the competition due to anti-YNN comments made during their performance. Brand tells the story of the incident in his own words:

I walked onto stage wearing a white shirt that read 'YNN Stinks!' I had shown my shirt to the president of SAC and to the other staff sponsor, Mr. Pavelich. They both said it was fine to wear. After we had finished our first song, I asked the crowd 'So, what does everyone think of YNN?' the crowd booed. The bassist in my band, Andrew McArthur quoted the WWF's DX and said, 'I have two words for that.' An audience member then yelled out, 'It Sucks!' I then said, 'That's what I thought,' and we continued our set...at the beginning of our second song, the power was cut on the bass and one guitar amplifier. I assumed this was an accident and continued singing...After we were done our set, I walked backstage and was informed by Mrs. Furzer, the staff sponsor of the event, that we had been disqualified and that we were to pack up our equipment and leave the school immediately (Shaker, 2000, pp. 27-28).

Although Brand claims that the school administration refused to specify the exact reason for his band's expulsion from the competition, he nonetheless understands a connection between his actions as a form of free speech, and his punishment as tied to the regime of corporate control in his high school.

All I did was ask the students what they thought about something that directly affects them. I asked the students' opinion on a project that involves their time being sold to advertisers by their school...*It seems to me that I was perfectly within my rights when I said what I did. Even if I had said something bad about YNN, which I didn't, I still would have been within my rights.* What angers me is that, when Mrs. Furzer disqualified us because I spoke my mind on something controversial, she demonstrated to every student in that room that they will be punished for voicing their opinion. Tomorrow, when the other students hear about what happened, the same message will be conveyed to them: School is not the place to have an opinion (Shaker, 2000, p. 29) (emphasis added).

For Brand, the issue clearly revolved around his conception of free speech as an entitlement afforded to citizens of a democracy: if the consumer-citizen's choices of

participation are narrowed to the choice to buy a product or not to buy a product, then the choice of the latter by default also involves the right to speak out against the product.

Brand places the issue of YNN at Meadowvale in a larger context, this is what informed him in both his comments during the concert, as well as how he processed and understood the outcome of his actions.

What happened to me today...has made me realize that the damage this project is causing reaches far beyond having to watch a dumb news program with 2-and-a-half minutes of stupid commercials every day. It is affecting our schooling, our extra-curricular activities, the lives of every student, staff members, or anyone else who has anything to do with our school (Shaker, 2000, p. 28).

In assessing the punishment he received, Brand situated it within a larger framework; he identified the effects of YNN which extend beyond the actual product of the classroom news-casts into the general space of the school's environment.

Student protest continued until the close of the school year 2000. On May 26, one hundred students walked out of class at 9:45 for fifteen minutes to protest both the potential further threat of an extended YNN contract, as well as to celebrate the "progress" of the 6 previous months of student-led opposition. Organized by OAC students Lindsay Porter and Stephanie Crocker of the group Students Against Youth News Network Organization (SAYNNO), students wearing red shirts "emblazoned with the anti-YNN symbol across their chest and 'Not For Sale' silk-screened across their backs...marched around to the sounds of up-beat music and ate the anti-YNN cupcakes" (Shaker, 2000, p. 27). Speaking to the media, Crocker proclaimed "We need teachers, not television", while Grade 12 student Dave Brand added: "We're happy the broadcasts have ended for the year. But we have to continue our student protests to convince school

trustees that we don't want it back next September" ("Pull Plug on YNN, students urge", 2000). While the Meadowvale students appeared happy with the walk-out, Principal Pedwell was less impressed: participants were reportedly threatened with suspension, and had letters sent home informing parents of their actions (Shaker, 2000, p. 27).

Despite the organized student revolt against YNN's presence at Meadowvale, on July 25, one month after the close of the school year, trustees voted 9-3 to continue the school board's partnership with Athena Educational Partners Inc. Although the new contract's stipulations had been modified given the "results" of the pilot project (public service announcements would permanently replace the original commercials, individual schools were allowed to decide their own level of involvement, and schools could cancel the contract any time after an initial 3 month period), the Meadowvale community continued to question the board's involvement with YNN. Student Stephanie Crocker, who learned about the renewed contracts at the school board meeting, appeared confused by the decision: "[The YNN program] doesn't make sense; it is just sitting us in front of TV. It is not education" ("Peel schools to decide on airing show in class", 2000).

The Meadowvale protests would not be in vain however, as they gave strength to a larger national movement against YNN which eventually resulted in the failure of AEP Inc. A short two years after the decision of the Peel District School Board to allow YNN in its schools, the media began to report that MacDonald along with AEP had disappeared: "[YNN] has vanished...behind a receding scrim of mysterious and temporary company names- phones disconnected, calls unanswered, Web sites non-functional" ("YNN creeps out of schools", 2002). The descent of MacDonald and YNN is in part

attributed to AEP's lack of funding, the decision to replace lucrative commercials with government funded public service announcements appears to have damaged the company's income much more than MacDonald had readily admitted (Nikiforuk, 2001). The decision to change this policy however, grew directly from the public challenging of YNN's format, thus the ultimate extinction of YNN can also be attributed to the "vigilant students, brave teachers, outspoken parents and furious media literacy activists [who]...stopped cold...the campaign to bring commercial TV into Canadian classrooms" ("YNN creeps out of schools", 2002).

Nicholas Dodds versus Pepsi-Cola Inc. and the York District School Board (2001-2003)

On November 13, 2003, it was reported that 15-year-old Nicholas Dodds had won a request submitted to the Ontario Privacy Commission to force two Toronto school boards to release detailed information regarding their exclusive contracts with Pepsi and Coke. Although it appeared through most media accounts to be an immediate victory, Dodds had in fact been locked in a battle with the school administrators and members of the York district School Board for the previous two years.

A web-site maintained by Dodds and his father, documenting the process of the legal proceedings, explains that Dodds was first "curious about the Pepsi machines that had appeared in his school", and decided to write an article about the presence of cola in his school in his zine "The Subterranean Free Press" ("Vending Machines in Ontario Schools", 2003). He asked both the school and the District School Board for information pertaining to the contracts: they told him that an agreement existed between the Board

and Pepsi, but gave no other information. Dodds then decided to “file a request under Ontario’s Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection Privacy Act for the tender documents, bidder’s lists, and the contract” (“Vending Machines in Ontario Schools”, 2003). The York District School Board did not supply the contract (they claimed a written version did not exist), so Dodds (with his father’s help) filed an appeal of the Board’s decision with the Ontario Information and Privacy Commissioner.

In November of 2003, as media attention turned toward the decision of the Information and Privacy Commission to force the school board to release the documents, Dodds was repeatedly asked to explain his desire to explore the issue of commercialism in his high school. He often mentioned that his initial interest stemmed from the question of exactly how much money his school retained from Pepsi vending machines (“Cracking the tab”, 2003). And although at one point he explained his involvement in the public debate with a rather flippant air: “I’m a kid who just decided to get interested in something. It was more for kicks. I don’t think I’m an extraordinary person. I may be a little more opinionated”, Dodds reveals an increasingly complex understanding of the issues at stake in his battle with the school board as the story progresses in the media (“Cracking the tab”, 2003).

When asked about his involvement in the litigation to force the contracts to become public, he displayed a clear understanding of how the issue of personal rights and freedoms is involved:

‘I thought that’s not right,’ he said of the secret Pepsi deal with his school board. ‘Students are not in schools so that they can be used as a captive audience for Pepsi. They’re not there to be marketed to. I go to a public school. I’m affected by this deal between the board and the company, but

somehow I'm denied the right to know what's fully happening in the schools' ("Teen topples soda giant", 2003).

Further to that point, Dodds made the connection between the duty of the individual and the obligations of the state; he believes that he has a right to that information: "I go to that school. My parents pay taxes and they're telling us we can't have access to these [soft drink contracts]" ("Cracking the tab", 2003). The provincial commissioner agreed with Dodds' position (presented in written briefs prepared by Dodds and his father Jack), rejecting the legal arguments made by the school boards and the cola giants, which both claimed to be protecting the marketing strategies of Pepsi and Coke; who argued that publicizing the terms of their deals "would put them at a competitive disadvantage in the marketplace" ("Teen topples soda giants", 2003). The Commissioner informed both the school boards and the cola companies that they had until December 1, 2003, to release the details of their contracts in a public forum or seek a judicial review in court. Both the York and Peel school boards indicated that they would not appeal the decision, and slightly later, Pepsi and Coke announced that they would support the release of the contractual documents. One article noted the rarity of the occurrence: "Only a handful of contracts in Canada between public schools and cola giants have ever been made public in their entirety, usually after lengthy legal battles" ("Teen topples soda giants", 2003).

Media coverage of the event reoccurred several weeks later, as the contracts were made public on November 25, 2003. The media consulted Dodds for his opinion on the details of the lucrative cola deals, asking again why he had fought to expose the contents of the contracts:

Dodds...said he didn't like 'being a sheep'. 'I don't like being marketed

to...in a place where I'm supposed to be safe and have a fair, balanced education...By exposing this, I think I've exposed what schools have stooped to so that they can get money for programs they need' ("Schools land lucrative pop deal", 2003).

A news segment on *CTV News*, which aired November 25, framed Dodds' involvement as a health concern, running the headline "A health conscious teen canned a deal with Pepsi and his school", adding only one quote from Dodds: "I worry that years down the line we're going to be seeing this great big block of, this generation that has all of these health issues" ("A health conscious teen", 2003). For the most part however, media accounts of Dodds' involvement emphasized his concern as centred on the process of commercialization: he identified a conflicting relationship between the limited choice enforced by exclusive corporate presence and the general right to freedom of choice. In fact, in his justification for pursuing the legal injunction Dodds had proclaimed "the secret deals are undemocratic" ("Pepsi is good for schools", 2003).

Commenting generally about the public presentation of the contract details, Dodds identified the root of the problem of allowing private commercialization in a public space:

Mr. Dodds said his suspicions have been confirmed. 'Students are blatantly being turned into zombies so they can be marketed to,' he said. 'It makes me mad. What they've done on paper is quantify us...There are the people and here are their weaknesses and how we can attack them. We won't have any trouble sucking money out of them' ("Student uncaps details", 2003).

Along with the right to market Pepsi products exclusively in the public schools of the York Region School Board, the contract also revealed that the cola company placed quotas on each school involved, requiring that a certain amount of Pepsi products be sold

in order for schools to gain further monetary rewards. One article explained that the York Region School Board received \$1 million from the cola company directly, however further funding of about \$3.5 million was tied directly to how much Pepsi was consumed in the schools ("Student uncaps details", 2003). Dodds recognized not only the corporate threat to students inherent in imposing a consumption quota, but also the stress placed upon the school's administration: "Mr. Dodds...said the agreement will ensure that the board and its students have to pay more in the end. 'It's set up so that schools will fail and have to pay more money to get students to drink more cola'" ("Student uncaps details", 2003). Dodds' understanding of the issues inherent in the process of commercialization broadened in scope as he commented on the entrepreneurial role forced upon the individual institution of the public school by cuts in government funding:

Mr. Dodds said after looking at the York region deal and all the cash it promises, he does not blame the school boards for signing the deal. He also said he's not opposed to having vending machines in schools. Mr. Dodds said the government should give the boards more money so they can avoid making these deals. 'I do have a lot of sympathy for the schools...They can't just decide to stop buying textbooks. It's kids, it's people's educations. They should not have to enter into these contracts' ("Student uncaps details", 2003).

Here, Dodds is negotiating his own role as a citizen within a larger social context. His comments indicates that despite his acute knowledge of the complexity of educational politics which govern the high school, he still chooses to exercise his right to access to the information which governs the social institution which most affects him.

Dodds further reflects this depth of understanding of the complexity of the contracts in a *Canada AM* interview, aired November 26, 2003, in which he appeared alongside Ontario's Minister of Education, Gerard Kennedy. Anchor Seamus O'Regan,

asks Dodds why he set out to expose the contracts, and Dodds explained the troubling presence of product loyalty which is a desired by-product of commercialization:

O'REGAN: Nicholas, first of all, you set out to do this, you've been two years working at it. And you did it. What drove you?

DODDS: I think what drove me was the fact that when I heard about this I thought it's very strange for a school board to be, in essence, selling its students to large corporations. And, frankly, I don't like being sold to...

O'REGAN: When you say selling of students what you're saying it's not really about the \$1.25 I put into the machine, it's about branding and getting me while I'm young.

DODDS: Definitely, Well, it's the commercialization coming into the schools. And they're [the cola companies] not making very much money off of this at all. So, obviously, there has to be something in it for them. They're giving money to the school board. And that means that what they're getting out of it is brand loyalty from the students. ("Student says cola maker made deal", 2003).

Later in the interview, when O'Regan asked about the possibility of reducing the effect of the cola on students by removing the product from high school vending machines, Dodds' reply reflected his complex understanding of the cola as double threat through both the brand and the product itself.

O'REGAN: ...we were looking on the news earlier, Scott Laurie reporting, you know, talking to students, they just said 'Listen, I could just go down to the cafeteria and get my pop. I can just go around the corner to a store and get my pop', So, is this really just about the principle itself? I mean, won't kids find soft drinks somewhere else?

DODDS: Well, I actually asked a lot of people in my class that. And I said, 'Well, if there were no pop machines what would you do?' And they said, 'Oh, I wouldn't go down to the store. You know, walk all that way.'

O'REGAN: So it is convenience.

DODDS: It is convenience, totally. ("Student says cola maker made deal", 2003).

It is this point of "convenience" which seems to drive the Minister of Education's involvement in the issue. Throughout the interview, Gerard Kennedy makes multiple references to the conflicting relationship between teaching teenagers good choices in the

classroom (ie. how to have a healthy diet) while providing them with bad ones in the hallways (ie. junk food in vending machines). Kennedy acknowledged that Dodds' involvement in the fight with the cola companies has called attention to multiple issues affecting the students involved in these deals, the various levels of which need to be addressed in turn.

O'REGAN: ...you've got the Minister of Education sitting here, Nicholas. What do you say to him?

DODDS: Well...I'm not quite sure about bringing all these machines out of the schools. But I would like to see an end to the contracts.

KENNEDY: ...we're going to make it that contracts, if they exist, have to be about healthy food and reduce the amount of branding. There's some other issues that Nicholas raises around commercialism, around what we need to do in terms of overall funding. But I think we can get a start with the machines, or at least the junk food products, in elementary schools. And we're proud of Nicholas as somebody in the Ontario education system – for bringing this to the front (“Student says cola maker made deal”, 2003).

Kennedy's position on the issue of cola in public schools resulted in a decision to remove soft drinks from elementary and junior schools across Canada, as reported on *CTV News* on January 6, 2004. The story notes that the soft drink industry pulled the drinks due to public concerns regarding obesity, but it also adds that numerous school boards had made the choice themselves to eliminate or restrict soda in their schools (“Soft drinks to be removed”, 2004). Whatever the reason, Dodds – returned to again for comment – remained sceptical of the motivation of both the cola companies and the school boards. Given his response in the *Canada AM* interview, that his ultimate goal was to see “an end to the contracts” in *high schools*, Dodds framed the decision as relatively small in the grand scheme of the battle: “It's kind of like someone saying well I'm going to give the entire contents of my bank account to charity when their account balance is 33 cents”

("Soft drinks to be removed", 2004).

And it appears that Dodds' scepticism was well founded, as only five months after this decision, on June 23, 2004, *The Globe and Mail* reported that the neighbouring Toronto District School Board was involved in a public debate to drop a Coke contract and begin a five-year, \$6 million dollar deal with Pepsi. Although adult administrators seem to have quickly forgotten the battle of ideals waged by Nicholas Dodds, it appears that other teens were picking up where he left off. Allison Elwell-Shallhorn, 16, chair of the Toronto independent student's group – Students United – joined this new debate, she asked the School board to delay the decision and reconsider approval of the contract ("School board urged to stop the pop", 2004). Explaining her interest in the debate, Elwell-Shallhorn asserted: "School boards are relying on corporate money in order to fund education, I don't want that stuff in my school" ("School board urged to stop the pop", 2004).

Recognizing the practices of the teenage consumer-citizen: Student activism as a model

The actions of the students of Meadowvale Secondary School, and those of Nicholas Dodds, represent new ways of approaching the concept of citizenship as it has become redefined for today's teenagers. The adoption of the role of the consumer-citizen relates a particular ideological view to those who ascribe to it: it is no mistake that the hybrid role is first described as belonging to the sphere of consumption, and secondarily to the sphere of political debate through the role of the citizen. It is important however to stress that both elements are equally important in the formation of the hybrid concept.

The key to understanding the role of the consumer-citizen is the way in which this concept borrows elements from *both* consumption and citizenship theory to create an entirely new concept which holds new meaning. The acts of protest launched by the students explained in this chapter are understood through the framework of consumption, however they are also just that – acts of protest: voices engaged in the encouragement of public debate. Interestingly, the act of the protest itself is an element of the very traditional model of the civic republican style of citizenship; however this irony appears to elude adults within the education system who are quick to label the student anti-corporate activism as a “misbehaviour” first and foremost.

This is a perfect example of the theories which I described in Chapter 1 pertaining to widely held societal views of youth. We have in our culture, a certain set of social attitudes which we apply to teenagers: we would like to protect the innocent ones, and punish the problematic ones. With either action however, teenagers are framed as “other”, something which we have created and thus are connected to, but at the same time, often feel are outside the sphere of our influence. This is the ideology which governs the attitudes and actions of the adults within the education system, not just those school administrators mentioned in this chapter who must deal with the student protests, but also the policy makers mentioned in Chapter 4 – who create the social practices governing the teaching of citizenship to today’s youth. There is a clear division between the values of that group, and those of the teenager engaging in new practices of citizenship.

The discussion leading into the case studies, as well as the brief analysis of the shorter examples provided beforehand, identified the common elements contained within

the practices of the teenage consumer-citizen. These are the elements which express the attitudes and behaviours of the group, and when added together, form a set of values for that group. For the students of Meadowvale, as well as for Nicholas Dodds, the practices of the consumer-citizen consist of two interrelated elements: a language of “rights”, and the act of public protest. Speaking out, in the literal sense, about corporations in the high school, is a way for teenager to express their attitudes towards issues of commercialization. Acting out, in the literal sense – engaging in action to raise awareness about an issue in the mind of the public, is simply another way for teenagers to express their distaste for consumer culture. The “speaking out” and the “acting out” join together to form an expression of the set of values held by the teenage consumer-citizen. Within these practices, teens are protesting two interrelated things: one, I have a right in the decision to allow or restrict corporate presence in my high school, and two, I have a right to speak out against the very existence of privatization practices in a public space. In the above cases, the teenagers recognize that these debates are as much about having the universal right to a good education, as they are about having the right to chose what to drink in the hallways of their schools.

Conclusion

In a democratic society engaged in a neo-liberalist framework for understanding the world, choices open to citizens are diminishing, while those open to consumers are multiplying. This is the reality in which teenagers today are negotiating their existence: rights come in the form of consumer choice, and duties are mediated by that choice, or lack of choice. The duties of the traditional civic republican model of citizenship are

changing. No longer is voting or volunteering viewed as a civic duty, rather teenagers today negotiate their responsibilities to society through battles with the global brands, like Pepsi, Coke and McDonald's, which infiltrate their "public" spaces, such as the high school. We can see this new understanding of civic duty mediated through consumer choice in a number of instances: when the students of Berkeley High School challenge a potential contract with Pepsi-Cola Inc., when Tristan Kading challenges the presence of McDonald's representatives in his school cafeteria, when the high school students of Philadelphia join together to protest the threat of privatization of Edison Schools Inc., as well as when Toronto high school students stage a street protest to question their school board's use of clothing manufacturer R. J. McCarthy.

The battle between the students of Meadowvale Secondary School and YNN, as well as Nicholas Dodds' fight against Pepsi and his school board are not only concrete examples of teen practices related of citizenship in Ontario high schools, they also exist as indicators of the way in which youth conceptions of citizenship have diverged from adult culture's conceptions of the same idea. Recall from Chapter 4, that adult culture's solutions to the problem of an absence of civic duty in today's Ontario youth both stem from, and find their solutions in, the civic republican model of citizenship which stresses duty to the state. And note now, here in chapter 5, that the teenagers of these same schools are behaving as active citizens – however their "action" exists within a different framework, it cannot be measured statistically as voting can. The influence of consumerism changes how youth see their roles as citizens, the emphasis is no longer placed on what they owe to the state, but rather what the state owes to them. In this

sense, in the protestation of corporate presence, they are essentially saying – if our central right is the right to choose what we purchase, then equally important is the right that we may also choose *not* to purchase that same product. And further, if our guaranteed civic rights include the right to education, then we should not have to make this choice at all in the “free” public space of our high schools. If the presence of the concept of citizenship in the lives of today’s youth were measured within this framework, rather than simply tallying the rather low voter turnout numbers for the under 25 age group, the results would be immensely different – indicative of the presence of a whole new generation of “active” citizens.

Chapter 6 - Conclusions: The “global teenager” revisited

A background paper produced for the Library of Parliament in 1993 describes the context in which citizenship has regained national attention in the last decade of the twentieth-century. The paper, “Citizenship Education in Canada”, provides both an historical account of this topic, as well as ruminations regarding possible causes for the need to reconsider the role of citizenship education in Canadian society.

Education for good citizenship is important not only for its effects on politics and government, but also in relation to community and voluntary activities, and social and international harmony. While always a general goal of educators in Canada, this aspect of education did not receive a great deal of formal attention in the past. Reliance was placed on the home and church, as well as the school, to instil in young people the principles of loyalty and adherence to duty that were considered the main components of good citizenship. *In today’s rapidly changing world, however, the adequacy of this traditional approach to citizenship preparation is being questioned and there is evidence of renewed interest in the topic both in Canada and abroad* (McKenzie, 1993, p. 1) (emphasis added).

In many ways, the tone of this report echoes the tone of the documents produced by the Ministry of Education and Training explored in Chapter 4. Both emphasize the need to redefine the notion of citizenship as it exists within the changing context of “today’s world”. Both this document, as well those examined in Chapter 4, view the *practice* of teaching good citizenship as premised upon ideals contained within the civic republican model, which emphasize the importance of the role of the individual in relation to the nation-state. Interestingly however, the *context* which produces those new practices is much more broad in scope than the adult practices themselves: the need to readdress the issue of citizenship comes not just from concern over the role of the citizen *within* the state, but also from the emerging notions of the possible role of the citizen *beyond* the

boarders of the nation. An excerpt from the opening page of “Citizenship Education in Canada” explains this context:

Historically, the idea of citizenship was based on the concept of membership in a homogeneous cultural group, and focused on duties pertaining to the well-being of that group. In the modern world, however, immigration patterns and improved international transportation and communications *have brought about closer relationships among different cultural groups within the global community*. With growing heterogeneity of populations and interdependence among nations, new notions of citizenship are developing and citizenship education has become an increasingly complex issue (McKenzie, 1993, p. 1) (emphasis added).

While the idea of a growing connection to the global community appears to threaten the traditional idea of citizenship for adult culture, it is this same cultural movement across borders which informs the creation of the category of the “global teenager”. The connection between the teenagers from different geographical locations and social spaces stems from a common consumer culture that they share. This shared culture of consumption figures so prominently in their identity formation processes as members of modern “youth culture”, that it becomes an ideological position which influences their world view. As such, the concept of citizenship is affected: it is mediated through the framework of consumer behaviour.

Traditional elements of civic participation do not disappear however, they merely shift into other forms; teenagers are speaking out about the threat of commercialization (which stems from the liberal model), however they are using, in part, traditional notions of public debate (from the civic republican model) to engage in their acts of protest. The fact that teens engage in civic participation through the ideological framework of consumer society should not be read as negative; teens do not chose this model, rather it

is often the only path open to them in a world which characterizes them as consumers very early in their lives.

Despite the tendency to label the position of the consumer-citizen as negative, (as discussed in the works of Scammell, Barber and Dobbin in Chapter 4), the practices of the teenage consumer-citizen explored in this thesis demonstrate an awakened awareness of the concept of civic participation for teens. In their protests of corporate presence in their high schools, these teenagers display an understanding of both the immediate and pressing issue of the placement of corporate *products* in their hallways and classrooms, *as well as* the threat of the *ideology* of corporate capitalism which threatens their basic civic freedoms of expression. It is this second level of awareness which emphasizes the importance of the “citizen” element of the “consumer-citizen” role. More than simply a question of the right to choose what products to buy, teenagers recognize that these practices are also about protecting their rights to a quality education. And perhaps this awareness emerges as the largest gain from the application of the practices of the “consumer-citizen” to these issues of commercialization: the way in which the high school becomes a site of contestation, in which teenagers learn to shape their own ideas of democracy according to the realities of their own worlds.

Andrea Townsend, a senior student at Franklin High School in Portland, Oregon, engaged in a battle with Jostens Inc. in 2001, over the company’s refusal to release information regarding the geographic location of the production of their graduation gowns. Townsend acknowledged that although other students were concerned with the issue as well, there were “snickers from the audience” as she questioned a Jostens Inc.

representative at a school assembly, which she claims indicated to her that a number of students did not agree with her political positioning. "I knew what they were thinking", she says of the bystanders: "There goes Andy, up on her anti-sweatshop soapbox again." (Townsend, 2001, para. 6).

The Jostens Inc. representative assured Townsend that the gowns were made in South Carolina, which was true, however it was also discovered that they were made there by cheap prison labour. As the issue of the school's exclusive contract with Jostens Inc. grew into a debate for the senior class about whether to encourage school administrators to find an alternative supplier who did not exploit its workers, those student activists at the centre of the debate argued themselves over about the best way to encourage the general student body to take interest in the issue. Townsend asserts that the student activists became divided into two camps, those who wanted to frame the issue in relation to larger problems such as globalization and unfair labour practices, and those who felt that "students would only respond if it was made into a pocketbook issue and an issue of false advertising" (Townsend, 2001, para. 16). A student of the latter camp claimed that this was the best approach because "Students don't like to be manipulated, and they really don't like to get ripped off" (Townsend, 2001, para. 16).

After several meetings with the school's principal, one which included the formerly mentioned Jostens Inc. representative who now claimed that the garments were not fabricated by prison labour as all production had been moved to Mexico, it was determined that Jostens Inc. would retain the supply rights to Franklin High School's graduation gowns. Townsend however, did not see this outcome as a loss. She framed

the public debate which took place over the gowns as part of a larger narrative within the social space of her high school: "At this point we can't claim a victory against Jostens Inc., but the Student Union is a stronger organization for taking action against this corporation" (Townsend, 2001, para. 27). Continuing to engage in debates which centre around these issues of commercialization, she says "...is helping us understand the power and potential of our Student Union. We are finding allies we didn't know we had and building leadership among our members" (Townsend, 2001, para. 27). Above all however, Townsend is aware of the positive effects of the graduation gown debate, despite the inability to change the policy with school administrators.

We are cultivating a culture of resistance at Franklin, giving students an option that wasn't there before, making activism an acceptable school activity. Students are beginning to see the impact that their voice has when we make collective demands. And no one who has tasted the thrill of solidarity can ever go back to fighting alone (Townsend, 2001, para. 28).

This is where we can see the interplay between the two elements of the hybrid concept of the "consumer-citizen"; the issues for teens may be framed through a consumerist lens, but they are protested through their roles as citizens. The marriage of elements of these two concepts into a new hybrid concept illustrates that teenagers are learning complex frameworks for understanding the world around them.

Becoming the consumer-citizen: Teenagers in the twenty-first-century

This thesis has outlined the way in which teenage conceptions of citizenship are changing for today's youth. The examination of this shift occurred in both theoretical and practical forms. Chapters 1, 2, and 3 presented the key conceptual ideas which were

central to my argument: the idea of social construction, the “teenager”, and the “consumer-citizen”. Chapters 4 and 5, explored these ideas through practical examples; addressing both the practices of education policy makers, as well as those of the teenage consumer-citizen which exist simultaneously within the social institution of the high school. Together, these chapters present a comprehensive examination of the notion of teenage conceptions of citizenship, as it pertains to their identities as members of a consumer group. It is the way in which these multiple conceptual tools fit together which gives meaning to the “consumer-citizen”.

Chapter 1 acts a general introduction to the conceptual themes presented in the overall thesis. This chapter outlines the central concepts which are explored in subsequent chapters, and suggests through a short discussion that these concepts are linked together. The introduction of the idea of connection between the key concepts of the “teenager” and the “consumer-citizen” is important because it suggests that these concepts borrow meaning from each other. The idea of a link between youth, what they are taught, and what they learn, is the thread which runs through each of the individual chapters, joining them together into one cohesive argument. The central claim of the thesis involves *youth’s* practices of citizenship and the assertion that they are not visible to adult culture, and so Chapter 2 moves on to a discussion regarding possible explanations for adult culture’s oversight.

Chapter 2 explores the idea of “social construction” as a system of categorization for youth created by adult culture. Through the examination of the social history of “childhood”, as well as the invention of “adolescence”, “youth culture”, and the

“teenager”, I suggest that Western culture has repeatedly experienced time periods in which young people as a group required the imposition of behaviour control mechanisms, the most important of which in this context is the institution of the public high school. I argue as well that, the reasons for employing these varying levels of control stems from adult culture’s concerns about societal problems, rather than those of the actual young people themselves. Illustrating the existence of such an ideological system, provides the space in which to argue that the issue of citizenship has been characterized in the same way: the concern of a lack of civic virtues in today’s youth is an adult concern. In fact, once this framework is stripped away, it is possible to see that youth are engaged in their own civic practices of which adults are not aware. And it is in the next chapter that I explore the theoretical frameworks which allow teenagers and adults to hold such different notions regarding the concept of citizenship.

Chapter 3 presents the idea of the “consumer-citizen”, a theoretical social role which I claim teenagers adopt through their historical associations with consumption practices. Because the “teenager” is a product of consumer culture, and lives within in a neoliberal state which encourages the perpetuation of consumer practices, I argue that young people’s attitudes and identities are shaped by these social circumstances. The result of undergoing a process of identity formation within an ideological system which encourages the equation of political participation with the act of consumption, is the production of a generational shift in the idea of the role of the individual in society. It is this change in youthful notions of “the collective”, which I claim both inform the implementation of adult culture’s practices regarding the teaching of citizenship

(examined in Chapter 4), as well as the creation of teenage practices of anti-corporate activism (examined in Chapter 5). Through the examination of the ideological systems which produce both adult and teen culture's views of the concept of citizenship (examined in this chapter, as well as Chapters 1 and 2 before it), it is possible to see how these two attitudes, and the sets of practices that they produce can exist alongside each other in the same time and space. As such, Chapters 4 and 5 describe the actual practices which take place in the high school: looking at the different sets of actions of both adult culture and teen culture demonstrates the way in which two groups of people occupying the same social space construct meaning for their group in very different ways.

Chapter 4 explores the social practices of adult culture in relation to citizenship education in Ontario high schools. Given the argument explored in chapters 1 and 2 that adult culture often projects its own concerns about the world onto youth; the purpose of drawing out the social practice of teaching good citizenship is to illustrate that this educational policy is derived from a particular "adult" framework. The practices of teaching citizenship in the high school explored here consist of two components (mandatory course work and community volunteer hours), which belong to a civic republican conception of citizenship. As well, practices unrelated to teaching, such as the process of privatization within the public schooling system (leading to increased levels of commercialization), teach teenagers that their right to choose is reduced, running counter to the basic civic rights being taught in their classrooms.

The problem with this approach is the framework through which citizenship is taught, as well as that fact that "success" (in this case – and according to the civic republic

model of citizenship– a rise in the voter turnout level for the under 25 demographic), becomes a matter of numbers. The point of this chapter within the overall context of my argument is to point out that adult culture's framework of citizenship which is premised upon civic republican model of citizenship are predisposed to overlook alternative models of citizenship which exist within different frameworks. It is the purpose of Chapter 5 then, to set up the practices of teenagers as oppositional to those described here.

Chapter 5 reveals the alternative practices of active citizenship which teenagers employ within the high school. These events of anti-corporate activism illustrate the way in which teenagers filter the idea of active citizenship through a model of consumer behaviour. The context of this civic movement is presented through evidence of several examples of this student activism, and is exemplified through two cases studies which take place in Ontario high schools. The students of Meadowvale Secondary School and Nicholas Dodds both engage in protests of corporate presence within the classrooms and hallways of their high schools with great effect: the Meadowvale students are able to drive the Youth News Network out of their school, and Dodds is able to require the release of the contents of sealed school board documents. As the conclusion to Chapter 5 emphasizes however, the fight against corporate bodies within the space of the high school is about more than the consumer goods themselves, it is about the presence of the doctrine of corporate capitalism which infiltrates public space. These students understand their rights to include the protection of public space, which in the context of their high schools translates into the right to a quality education. For teens today, there is more at stake than claim over their sometimes fickle consumer tastes, the battle as they

understand it, is over the existence of their basic civic rights as understood and valued by them.

Looking ahead: A civic-minded future for teens

As the first section of this closing chapter points out, the relative “success” or “failure” of these incidents of student activism cannot be measured according to their immediate outcomes. Both the students of Meadowvale, as well as Nicholas Dodds, achieved the goals they set out for themselves (whether it was the elimination of corporate presence, or the reduction of corporate power in their respective schools), however, the real “success” of their endeavours stems from their ability to stimulate public debate in their high schools, as well as in the larger community. As Andrea Townsend’s experience challenging Jostens Inc. revealed to her, the real value of engaging in these debates is the stimulation of public discussion which follows. For teenagers today, learning how to be an active participant in the choices and processes which shape the characteristics of your social world, is also the practice of participating in and shaping a democracy.

Approaching this idea of “success” from another angle, if it is to be measured by the sheer number of teens involved in these practices, perhaps there is a question of the overall prominence of the role of the “consumer-citizen” in the social conscious of today’s youth. I would argue however, that looking at these practices in this way limits both the scope of the action as well as its effects. Engaging “numbers” as a form of evidence for action in this case, is the same danger that adult culture faces when political participation becomes narrowly defined as increases or decreases in electoral turnout rates. Although

the activist teens mentioned within this thesis are a smaller part of the collective whole of today's young people, I would suggest that the framework for the spreading of the ethos of the consumer-citizen already exists among young people: it is possible through the idea of the 'global teenager'.

As discussed in Chapter 3, teens do not necessarily understand their civic duties as framed within a national context because the consumer culture which socializes them and defines their role as a member of the social category of the "teenager", takes place first at the personal individual level, and second (with the growth of the neoliberal state), on a global scale. They are connected by consumer practices, but also by something larger: an understanding of the system which governs them, as well as knowledge of the elements in that system which challenge and reduce their basic rights. Despite cultural (and subcultural) differences, this connection between teenagers is defined by their membership in the same social grouping. Discussing the shift toward fragmentation within youth culture which begins in the 1980's, Donna Gaines asserts that one single uniting element remains for youth after that decade. "By the beginning of the 1990s, young people began to demand some recognition as a social category, to present themselves as a self-identified collectivity, aware of their many differences, but bound together by one thing: age" (Gaines, 1990, p. 255). The connection provided by age can perhaps be equated back to the idea of "generational worldview" or "generational lens" which I presented in the opening pages of Chapter 5, as a loosely based term to describe the way in which young people share the similar experience of consumer culture in the modern Western world. If teens are united as a group through their experiences as

“passive” members of a consumer society, then they are strengthening the ties of their group through their actions as “active” civic participants questioning the very definition of their “passive” roles.

Advocating the importance of teaching citizenship to a nation's youth, Ralph Nader asserts that in the past citizenship education has prepared youth to participate in large-scale political movements which changed Western culture.

Some people forget that students have been key organizers or backers of the major American social movements of the past two decades: the civil rights movement, the anti-war movement, the cultural movements of the 1960s, the women's movement, the welfare rights movement, and the environmental and antinuclear movement. And still today they have the time, energy, idealism, and resources at their disposal to act on the movements of today and the future (Nader, 1987, p. 331).

Nader's conception of citizenship does not stem from an idealized “adult” model of the civic republican tradition; rather he approaches the concept from his long-time position of consumer activist, acknowledging the important role that consumer practices play in the definition of modern western life. And perhaps he does not mean to suggest that consumer activism as a social movement should be added to the above list, nor do I. I would like however to assert, that ideological frameworks for examining the world are powerful tools which have the potential to influence the viewpoints of many people. And the “teenager”, with its tendency to share the opinions and attitude of its peers, holds promise for the continuation of present and the development of new forms of citizenship as they apply and are adopted by new generations.

In her assessment of the “silent” youth cultures examined in *Teenage Wasteland*, Gaines ruminates about why teenage voices are so seldom heard in popular mainstream

culture. For Gaines, it is a question of age: there is an irreparable gap between the experiences of each generation, which isolates them from each other. Gaines laments the effect of this gap upon the most recent generation of the 1980's and 1990's, because in her opinion, those young people have become the most heavily regulated and least understood group of young people in the history of the "teenager". However, this extensive degree of social alienation is also the cause of a re-solidification of a more cohesive "youth culture". The current members of the broad group of the "teenager" are united together through very specific and extenuating social circumstances which shape their collective view of society. This group shares a common alternative understanding of the world which exists apart from the established adult culture.

Margaret Mead once described our culture as 'prefigurative' because she believed that it was the child– not the parent or the grandparent– that represented what was to come. In such a culture, *one's peers must predominate because they are the only carriers of new understandings of the world* (Gaines, 1990, p. 257) (emphasis added).

Teens turn toward other teens for recognition and reassurance of their world views, and in light of the above quotation, this should not be regarded as a negative or limiting process. This is a process in which adult culture should be informed and interested, for teenagers are in fact behaving just as adults want them to: they are acting as informed citizens. The ultimate importance of the practices of teenage consumer-citizen is not limited to the immediate action taken against corporate capitalism in the name of individual rights. It stems, as well, from the larger way in which teenagers are creating and encouraging the circulation of new conceptions of democracy for modern Western society.

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