

CONSUMER LIBERATION: BABY BOOMERS, HIP BUSINESSES, AND THE  
CHALLENGE TO MASS CONSUMPTION, 1968-1983

Joshua C. Davis

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a degree of doctor of philosophy  
in the Department of History

Approved by

Advisor: Peter Filene

Reader: William H. Chafe

Reader: William Ferris

Reader: Jacquelyn Hall

Reader: Jerma A. Jackson

Reader: John Kasson

Joshua C. Davis  
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED  
© 2010

## ABSTRACT

JOSHUA C. DAVIS:

Consumer Liberation: Baby Boomers, Hip Businesses, and the Challenge to  
Mass Consumption, 1968-1983  
(Under the direction of Peter G. Filene)

In this dissertation, I investigate how young consumers sought to reform America's culture of mass consumption by patronizing and founding hip businesses from the late 1960s to the early 1980s. Four major transformations of the 1960s—Black Power, second-wave feminism, the sexual revolution, and the rise of the counterculture—combined with deep discontent with large-scale institutions in business, education, and American public life to motivate young Americans to pursue what I call consumer liberation. I investigate Baby Boomer consumers (born between 1946 and 1964) who developed, expanded and partook in insurgent commercial cultures that they believed comported with the era's progressive political and cultural lessons. To this effect, this dissertation investigates black-owned record stores and radio stations, blue jeans makers and retailers, singles bars, and sellers of drug paraphernalia and marijuana. Investigating how Boomers navigated the intersection of consumption and culture represents a vital strategy for assessing how the upheavals of the 1960s transformed young Americans' daily lives through the 1970s and well into the early 1980s. Many young Baby Boomers hoped that hip businesses could provide the framework for a less bureaucratic and less alienating consumer culture that was firmly based in local communities. By patronizing hip businesses, Boomers increasingly structured their public lives around what I call social consumption.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As I wrap up this dissertation, thinking of my acknowledgments doesn't come as easy as I would have expected (although far easier than the daunting task of formatting this document correctly). I should start by thanking my friends and fellow graduate students who have read various parts of this dissertation and given me helpful feedback. That would include members of my writing group and longtime associates, namely Robin Payne, Kelly Morrow, Seth Kotch and Marko Dumančić, as well as Michael Meng and David Cline. I couldn't have written or even completed my research for my chapter on the African-American music marketplace without Jason Perlmutter's unparalleled knowledge of North Carolina's rich soul and R&B heritage. Lawrence Glickman and G. Derek Musgrove gave valuable input on panels for which I presented material from this dissertation. Of course, I should express my deep gratitude to my committee members for all the advice, encouragement, criticism and assistance they've provided me, including Bill Chafe, Bill Ferris, Jacquelyn Hall, Jerma Jackson, and John Kasson. More than anyone else, Peter Filene has had a hand in developing this work. Not only did Peter guide me through the process of writing a dissertation, but Peter believed in the value and promise of this project before almost anyone else, for which I am very, very thankful. In the final, most challenging months prior to my defense, Lauren Du Graf always made time to encourage me to keep going with the writing in spite of fatigue, dissatisfaction and even a snow storm, and she even organized a surprise party at Waffle House in celebration of submitting my dissertation. Finally, I couldn't have written this dissertation without the unwavering support of my family.

My brother John and my sister Rosemary, themselves history majors, have listened to me discuss my research at the dinner table and even braved academic conference to see me present my research. And more than anyone else, my mother Patricia and my father Jefferson deserve credit for making me the history enthusiasts that I am today. Not only did my mom and dad encourage me to study, read, and learn history from a very early age, but they urged me to act on my instincts to pursue a doctorate as a recent college graduate. Their support has just been invaluable through all the ups and downs that shaped my seven years in graduate school. Of course, without my parents' help none of this would be possible, so it is to my mom and dad that I dedicate this work.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	Consumer Liberation: Baby Boomers, Hip Businesses, and the Challenge to Mass Consumption, 1968-1983.....	1
CHAPTER ONE	The Selling of Soul: African American Consumers, Music Businesses, and Community Empowerment.....	31
CHAPTER TWO	Women’s Blue Jeans and the Repudiation of the Fashion Double Standard.....	63
CHAPTER THREE	Going It Alone: Unmarried Young Adults and the Rise of Singles Bars.....	101
CHAPTER FOUR	The Business of Getting High: The Commercialization of Pot and the Rejection of Consumer Regulation.....	139
CONCLUSION	Consumer Liberation: Backlash and Assimilation at the Close of the Twentieth Century .....	180
SOURCES CITED.....		206

## Introduction

### **Consumer Liberation: Baby Boomers, Hip Businesses, and the Challenge to Mass Consumption, 1968-1983**

“Why does youth consider Big Business ‘immoral?’” the editors of *Fortune* asked with palpable alarm in 1969 in a special report titled *Youth in Turmoil* that examined “this particular young generation [that] is by all odds the most interesting to come along in all of U.S. history.”<sup>1</sup> Speaking for many American marketers, corporations, and retailers, the writers of *Fortune* feared they might lose an entire generation of shoppers due to brewing discontent with the social and environmental costs of the country’s business enterprises. As late as the middle of the 1960s, marketers had expressed strong hopes that Baby Boomers—Americans born between 1946 and 1962—might become the most acquisitive cohort of consumers America had ever seen.<sup>2</sup> Yet by the early 1970s, young Americans’ attitudes towards businesses and capitalism appeared to have taken a worrisome turn. According to one study, while over half of teenagers were “favorably impressed with the business system” in 1951, by 1971 that figure had sunk to 35 percent. In a broad study of California high-school students in the 1969-70 academic year, over four-fifths of respondents affirmed that businesses cared “more about profit than people,” with large majorities of respondents claiming that business was not “socially minded...too impersonal” and didn’t

---

<sup>1</sup> *Youth in Turmoil: Adapted from a Special Issue of Fortune* (New York: Time-Life Books, 1969), back cover, 8.

<sup>2</sup> For a basic definition of the age cohort best known as the “Baby Boom” generation, see Susan B. Carter, “Cohorts,” *Historical Statistics of the United States: Millennial Edition, Volume 1—Population* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 691, 695-696.

“allow for individuality...[or] for self expression.”<sup>1</sup> National surveys painted a similar picture of Baby Boomers’ belief that business undermined creativity, unduly demanded conformity, and generally stifled individual expression and decision-making.<sup>2</sup> At the core of these views lay the assumption that businesses not only held their employees in low regard, but that they were generally “not concerned with what is best for the consumer.”<sup>3</sup> Widespread skepticism of the value of material goods also motivated resentment towards business, with over 80 percent of college students in one survey affirming that “they would be better off if they didn’t worry so much about what they own.”<sup>4</sup> And as the president of Conference Board, America’s leading organization of corporate executives, explained in 1976, “The immediate origins of [businesses’] difficulties lie in the social revolution of the 1960’s and 1970’s.”<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, many scholars have asserted that young Americans who partook in the upheavals of the 1960s and ‘70s instinctively rejected consumer culture, capitalism and mass culture. Theodore Roszak argued that the youth counterculture rejected technocratic society’s system of “free enterprise...dedicated to infantilizing the public by turning it into a herd of compulsive consumers,” while Terry Anderson has argued that hippies “scorned materialism and

---

<sup>1</sup> Scott Ward and Greg Reale, “Student Attitudes Toward Business and Marketing Institutions and Practices,” (Marketing Science Institute Working Paper, 1972), 3; David Ferguson Leonard, “Attitudes of Bay Area High School Seniors of Business and Current Social Problems,” (M.B.A. thesis, San Francisco State College, 1970), 23.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel Yankelovich, “A Special Report on Youth,” *Fortune* (June 1969), 58-59, 73-74.

<sup>3</sup> James Anthony Manos, “An Investigation of Student Attitudes Toward Business,” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern California, 1974), 100-101.

<sup>4</sup> Allan Jaklich, “Advertising/Marketing: Youth Continues to Sway Marketing,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 5, 1970, C10.

<sup>5</sup> Leonard Silk and David Vogel, *Ethics and Profits: The Crisis of Confidence in American Business* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), 7.



consumption.”<sup>6</sup> But while young Americans of this period found much to criticize in consumer culture, large majorities—as much as two-thirds—of Baby Boomers believed that businesses were “responsible for the progress and power of the United States,” especially the world’s highest material standard of living that they enjoyed.<sup>7</sup> These seemingly contradictory views of businesses cast doubt on common claims that many Baby Boomers, in participating in social activism or the counterculture, escaped from consumer culture and, by extension, were casting a vote of no-confidence in American business enterprise. Baby Boomers, while directing their skepticism of business practices at bureaucratic corporations and advertisers, held out hope that American capitalism was structurally sound but that reforms could render it more humane and hold it more accountable to individual citizens.

### I. Historiography of Postwar Consumer Culture

Historians have made tremendous strides in the last decade analyzing mass consumption’s crucial role in shaping the American political economy in the twentieth century, especially in explaining how consumer activism and other efforts to increase access to mass consumption proved central to the success of left-liberalism and trade unionism in mid-century America. Scholars like Lizabeth Cohen and Lawrence Glickman have shown how New Deal-era public policymakers and so-called citizen-consumers idealized mass consumption—when coupled with adequate social spending, state regulations, and protections for labor—as a leveling force that could fulfill “loftier social and political ambitions for a more equal, free, and

---

<sup>6</sup> Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and its Youthful Opposition* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1969, 16; Terry H. Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 257.

<sup>7</sup> Leonard, “Attitudes of Bay Area High School Seniors,” 24; Manos, “An Investigation,” 142-145.

democratic nation.”<sup>8</sup> In a similar fashion, Meg Jacobs has argued that for most of the twentieth century, “mass consumption was...part of a political outlook that called for fundamental redistribution of wealth and power.”<sup>9</sup> Yet these analyses, for all their merits, have overstated how inclusive and broad the American mass marketplace was at its zenith in the middle of the twentieth century. In admiring the sincere social democratic impulse of many Americans to minimize class differences through shared mass prosperity, scholars like Cohen and Jacobs have overlooked the many ways in which the system of mass consumption ignored and reinforced concrete cultural inequalities in the marketplace. Downplaying how much mass consumer culture bolstered racial, sexual and gender inequities, these scholars have exaggerated the degree to which Americans partook in a shared culture of consumption in the postwar years.

African Americans represent the most extraordinary, but by no means only, example of consumers denied meaningful recognition and access to America’s mass consumer culture. As late as the 1950s, despite corporations’ few token efforts to recognize black consumers with advertisements in a handful of magazines like *Ebony* and *Jet*, African Americans remained outsiders to the white-dominated mass marketplace. Indeed, the vast majority of advertisements in print, television and radio ignored consumers of color and rendering them virtually invisible in the nation’s commercial culture. And advertising that did depict nonwhite consumers often ridiculed and disparaged them.<sup>10</sup> Still, scholars assert that “the Consumers’ Republic, in prizing broad participation in mass consumer markets provided a wide range of black Americans...with

---

<sup>8</sup> Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers’ Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 13; Lawrence Glickman, *Buying Power: A History of Consumer Activism in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 189-254.

<sup>9</sup> Meg Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics: Economic Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 1-3, 264-265.

<sup>10</sup> Marilyn Kern-Foxworth, *Aunt Jemima, Uncle Ben, and Rastus: Blacks in Advertising, Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994), xvii-xx, 115-118.

an available and legitimate recourse for challenging racial discrimination.” Not only did “mass consumption begot a mass civil rights movement,” but the pursuit of “expanding mass consumption—getting more people to buy the same things, now in racially shared spaces—bore the burden of making postwar American more egalitarian and democratic.” While acknowledging that black consumers continued to face discrimination in the marketplace in the 1950s and ‘60s, historians have overstated the impact that consumer activism had on rectifying those inequities, and relying on sparse evidence to claim that major corporations were “incorporating blacks into mass markets” in any meaningful way by the 1950s.<sup>11</sup> Women, meanwhile, appeared frequently in advertising, but men wrote the vast majority of copy and often addressed female consumers with condescension, arrogance and outright hostility. By limiting their appeals to homemakers, wives, mothers and girlfriends, advertisers ignored women who worked or were unmarried.<sup>12</sup> In fact, mass marketers rarely acknowledged unmarried consumers of any gender, preferring to treat the nuclear family household as their primary customers. Producers, advertisers and retailers faced virtually no ill consequences for reinforcing and promoting biases based on race, gender and even marital status in the marketplace. Thus, so-called mass consumption actually excluded, ignored and demeaned large swaths of the American population. By the late 1960s, more and more Baby Boomers had come to recognize that mass consumption favored the white, middle-class family above all other groups of consumers. Consequently, mass marketers discouraged Americans from expressing

---

<sup>11</sup> Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 190-191, 325.

<sup>12</sup> Katherine J. Parkin, *Food is Love: Food Advertising and Gender Roles in Modern America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Daniel Delis Hill, *Advertising to the American Woman, 1900-1999* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2002); Scanlon, Jennifer, ed., *The Gender and Consumer Culture Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

any cultural and social identities in the marketplace that deviated from their interpretation of the normative consumer.

Historical scholarship has also privileged left-liberal activism and its impact on *discourses* of consumption at the expense of explaining the cultural messages and identities that Americans expressed through the act of *buying* goods. In response to a long tradition of Marxist scholars who excoriated mass consumption as “the coffin of class consciousness,” many historians justifiably have felt compelled to argue for consumer activists’ considerable contributions to American leftist thought.<sup>13</sup> Yet in so doing, much historical scholarship has forwarded the mistaken premise that consumption is a valuable object of study only to the extent that it articulates salient messages about the political economy. These analyses have also overstated consumer activists’ influence on hundreds of millions of American consumers’ experiences in the marketplace. As Ralph Nader himself conceded in 1973, “the consumer movement is still a feeble force in American power politics.”<sup>14</sup> In focusing on activist discourses about the political and economic implications of consumption, historians have overlooked many of the cultural messages—not only expressions of racial, gender, sexual and youth identity but also sentiments about community and public life—that Americans articulated through the act of consuming in the late twentieth century.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics*, 4.

<sup>14</sup> Ralph Nader, “The Consumer,” in *Outsiders U.S.A.: Original Essays on 24 Outgroups in American Society*, ed. Don Spiegel and Patricia Keith-Spiegel (San Francisco: Rinehart Press, 1972), 209.

<sup>15</sup> If scholarly book reviews are any indication of a monograph’s influence, the few works that do address market transactions’ impact on consumers’ cultural identities—such as historian Andrew Hurley’s *Diners, Bowling Alleys and Trailer Parks: Chasing the American Dream in the Postwar Consumer Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 2001)—have produced little fanfare in historical circles compared to the works of Cohen, Jacobs and Glickman. A survey of the *America: History and Life* database produces twelve scholarly book reviews for Cohen’s *A Consumers’ Republic*, six apiece for Glickman’s *A Living Wage: American Workers and the Making of Consumer Society* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997) and Jacob’s *Pocketbook Politics*, yet only three for Hurley’s work.

Some scholars have also mistakenly asserted that the atomized marketplaces of the late twentieth century exacerbated social fragmentation among Americans, but more often so-called market segments grew out of preexisting divisions. One historian, for instance, argues that “manufacturers, advertisers, [and] marketers” bore the primary responsibility for market segmentation in the 1960s and 1970s by encouraging “social and cultural divisions for their own profit.”<sup>16</sup> Yet niche markets typically emerged not because of business malfeasance, but rather due to powerful social divisions that had long existed without marketers’ intervention. Take the example of the network of black-owned businesses that targeted black consumers and functioned as America’s first segmented marketplace. Separate channels of black consumption had emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century out of white corporations’ neglect and disinterest in black consumers, not out of whites’ desires to carve out new markets. In fact, white marketers and corporations remained almost universally indifferent toward the so-called Negro marketplace until the 1940s, when small numbers of white businesses gradually began to advertise in black-oriented publications like *Ebony*.<sup>17</sup> While a desire for new customers motivated businesses to recognize African-American consumers, the black marketplace had existed despite, not because of, white mass marketers, and it had grown out of the larger racist logic that justified separate neighborhoods, jobs and institutions for blacks and whites. Many African Americans, rather than wait for white marketers to realize their buying power, developed their own world of business and consumption that few whites ever cared to explore. Motivated to find any merchandisers and producers who would respect and acknowledge them, consumers

---

<sup>16</sup> Cohen, *A Consumers’ Republic*, 407.

<sup>17</sup> Robert E. Weems, *Desegregating the Dollar: African American Consumerism in the Twentieth Century* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1998), 1-55.

whom mass marketers ignored for most of the twentieth century actually deserve much of credit for driving and promoting market segmentation.

Thus, historians have provided incomplete explanations of how the power of the mass market as a framework for organizing consumer culture declined beginning in the 1960s and continuing into the 1970s. Jacobs recognizes organized labor's "inability to control inflation" as the final blow against pocketbook politics; Cohen argues that the rise of the New Right, the recession of the 1970s, and resistance to giving consumers an institutional role in the federal government precipitated the downfall of the consumers' republic; and Lawrence Glickman specifically cites Congress' failure to pass legislation establishing a federal consumer protection agency in the 1970s as a critical blow to the consumer movement.<sup>18</sup> Cohen also asserts that marketers, when they realized that "reinforcing social differences [among consumers]—not emphasizing sameness—paid dividends," fabricated new market segments in the 1960s that were instrumental to undermining the mass consumer ideal.<sup>19</sup> But as young Boomers became increasingly aware of the gendered, racial and sexual inequalities of the marketplace in the late 1960s, many of them lost interest in the goal of remedying class-based inequalities through consumption. As Jefferson Cowie has noted "the very *idea* of workers in civic and popular discourse was defeated" in 1970s America.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, as the 1970s progressed, more and more Americans lost focus on the issues of class relations and working people that had shaped the national political conversation in the three decades following the implementation of the New Deal.

---

<sup>18</sup> Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics*, 10; Cohen, *Consumers' Republic*, 406; Glickman, *Buying Power*, 275-310.

<sup>19</sup> Cohen, *Consumer's Republic*, 330.

<sup>20</sup> Jefferson Cowie, "'Vigorously Left, Right, and Center': The Crosscurrents of Working-Class America in the 1970s," in *America in the Seventies*, ed. Beth L. Bailey and David Farber (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 102.

## II. Consumer Liberation

This dissertation, however, examines how young consumers rejected mass consumption for a different set of reasons. I seek to illuminate the agency of consumers and small businesses—and not merely the power of activists, marketers and producers—in ushering in the downfall of the unsegmented mass market in America. To this effect, I investigate how young consumers hungered to reform America’s culture of consumption by patronizing and founding hip businesses. Four major transformations of the 1960s—Black Power, second-wave feminism, the sexual revolution, and the rise of the counterculture—combined with deep discontent with large-scale institutions in business, education, and American public life to motivate many young Americans to seek what I call *consumer liberation*. Contrary to top-down narratives of advertisers and corporations who seamlessly co-opted the hip, countercultural impulse and applied it to their products and work culture for a few years in the late 1960s, this dissertation examines how young Americans developed and partook in insurgent consumer cultures that they believed comported with the era’s progressive political and cultural lessons in the long 1970s.<sup>21</sup> Compared to the small proportion of American college students (and the even smaller proportion of non-students) who participated in the famed protest movements of the late 1960s, many more

---

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Frank’s *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), for instance, examines how American corporate interests and Madison Avenue advertisers waged a benevolent takeover of the counterculture and absorbed its insights into their own business practices between 1967 and 1970 to produce what he dubs “hip consumerism.” Not only does this interpretation mistakenly privilege the prerogative of capitalist elites and ignore consumers’ actions and motivations, but Frank also employs overly broad criteria for assessing the influence of hip capitalism. According to Frank, any “general corporate style, phrased in terms of whatever the youth culture of the day happens to be,” qualifies as hip capitalism. Frank claims to systematically measure the degree of hip capitalism found in 1960s advertisements, for example, by counting, among other motifs, any ad that “speaks of ‘escape,’ defiance, resisting crowds, rebellion, or nonconformity”—see *Conquest of Cool*, 32, 238. On the long 1970s, which began in 1968 and ended in 1984, see Bruce Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society and Politics* (New York: De Capo Press, 2002).

Boomers found ways to carry on and act out the political and social transformations of the era in the marketplace.<sup>22</sup>

To illustrate, in my first chapter I investigate young, African-American music consumers in the Black-Power era South and analyze their relationship to local radio stations and record stores, many of which were black-owned. Following the zenith of civil rights activism in the early and mid-1960s, African-American music consumers and businesses in the 1970s South envisioned the music marketplace as a crucial arena for asserting black identity as well as for securing economic power and community control of local cultural institutions.<sup>23</sup> I have chosen to begin this study with the African-American consumer marketplace because it emerged at the turn of the twentieth century and thus qualifies as the first major segmented market to emerge beyond the confines of the mass marketplace.<sup>24</sup> Second, I examine female blue-jeans consumers during the apogee of second-wave feminism's demands for equal opportunities for women. During the 1950s and 1960s, American consumer culture prescribed that teenage and young adult women wear skirts or dresses in public settings, and many schools and workplaces prohibited women from wearing blue jeans and other kinds of pants. Starting at the end of the 1960s and accelerating in the '70s, however, jeans became popular garments for both genders, and many women rejected institutions' restrictive dress codes that enforced a sartorial double standard. In my third chapter, I look at the popularization of singles bars as an outgrowth of the

---

<sup>22</sup> *Youth in Turmoil*, 17; David Farber, *The Age of Great Dreams: America in the 1960s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994), 189.

<sup>23</sup> Examples of historical scholarship on African-American consumer culture include Robert Weems, *Desegregating the Dollar: African-American Consumerism in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), Juliet E. K. Walker, *The History of Black Business in America: Capitalism, Race, Entrepreneurship* (New York: Macmillan Library Reference USA, 1998); Ted Ownby, *American Dreams in Mississippi: Consumers, Poverty & Culture, 1830-1998* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Adam Green, *Selling the Race: Culture, Community, and Black Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

<sup>24</sup> Weems, *Desegregating the Dollar*, 7-30.



sexual revolution, amid the explosive increase in the numbers of unmarried Americans. These bars represented new public spaces where single Americans could socialize, although as the 1970s progressed, they came to symbolize not only the freedoms, but also the frustrations, that came with sexual liberation. My fourth chapter examines the transformation of marijuana, popular in the counterculture but illegal in all fifty states at the end of the '60s, into a nearly mainstream consumer commodity that one-third of young adult Boomers smoked regularly by the end of the 1970s. Widespread marijuana consumption also fueled the rise of head shops, which comprised the core of what would become a multimillion-dollar drug paraphernalia industry.

In pursuing these purportedly liberating forms of consumption, Boomers did not seek refuge from the marketplace altogether, but hoped to escape from *mass consumption*. For the purpose of this study, I define mass consumption as the system of buying and selling premised on postwar America's unprecedented industrial output as well as high levels of standardization and homogenization in production, retailing and advertising. Just as the expansion of higher education in the postwar era fueled the emergence of mega-universities, the explosive growth of the American consumer economy in the postwar years gave rise to massive retailers who far overshadowed the merchandisers who had dominated the first half of the twentieth century. The 1960s and 1970s witnessed the ascendance of large discounters like Wal-Mart, K-Mart and Target, whose success appeared to spell the decline of America's local small businesses and regionally-based retailers. Chain discounters tended to build larger stores than their older competitors, so the physical size of American retail, as measured in average floor space, also increased in this period. Another symbol of the standardization of American retail in the 1970s was found in supermarkets' embrace of the Universal Product Code, better known as the bar

code.<sup>25</sup> By the middle of the twentieth century, government, labor, economists, and industry had reached a consensus that bigger businesses produced better products, sold them better than smaller firms could, and provided more benefits to consumers than small firms could.<sup>26</sup> Yet to borrow Michael Kammen's characterization, mass consumer culture "more often than not induced passivity and the privatization of culture," which growing numbers of young Americans had come to realize by the late 1960s.<sup>27</sup> The scale and standardization in mass consumer culture had become so great that many young consumers viewed mass producers and merchandisers as comprising just another inflexible and uncaring institution in American life that treated humans as mere numbers and hindered their pursuit of "authenticity."<sup>28</sup>

In response, some advertisers and major corporations began to incorporate countercultural motifs into their marketing repertoire, hoping that such stylistic modifications could fulfill young Americans' growing desire for a consumer culture that was more socially relevant, more equitable and more sensitive to differences of identity. Seven-Up hired Jefferson Airplane to hawk its products, Coca-Cola launched its multiracial and multiethnic "I'd Like to Buy the World a Coke" campaign, and various other major American brands sought to cash in with rock music, pacifism, and psychedelic aesthetics.<sup>29</sup> People in the countercultural capitals of Haight-Ashbury, Berkeley, and Greenwich Village could see the writing on the wall: American

---

<sup>25</sup> Nelson Lichtenstein, *The Retail Revolution: How Wal-Mart Created a Brave New World of Business* (New York: Metropolitan Press, 2009).

<sup>26</sup> Stanley Buder, *Capitalizing on Change: A Social History of American Business* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 421-423.

<sup>27</sup> Michael Kammen, *America Culture American Tastes: Social Change and the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 22.

<sup>28</sup> On the politics of authenticity in the "New Left's counterculture," see Doug Rossinow, "'The Revolution Is about Our Lives': The New Left's Counterculture," ed. Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle, in *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 110-111.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Frank, *Conquest of Cool* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 7.

business interests, instead of confronting their hippie critics head on, were going to charm them into submission, gently and gradually adopting the appearance, but not the substance, of flower power so in order to co-opt the counterculture and rob it of its revolutionary potential. In actuality, however, Madison Avenue and their Fortune 500 clients did little to change young consumers' views of business enterprise in the 1970s.

Instead, consumers sought liberation from the mass marketplace in the form of more interactive transactions with hip businesses.<sup>30</sup> To wit, black-owned record stores, blue jeans sellers (and some jeans-makers), singles bars, and head shops provided a new marketplace model to young Baby Boomers who wished to carve out an alternative consumer culture in America. These businesses, along with countless health food stores, boutiques, leftist book stores, hippie restaurants, concert venues and independent movie houses, formed the backbone of the hip business community. In employing the term hip business, I am borrowing terminology that Boomers commonly used in the late 1960s and 1970s to describe businesses operated by or aimed at hippies. I am expanding the scope of hip business beyond its original meaning, however, by including African-American music businesses and singles bars, because the commonalities they shared with the marijuana and jeans marketplaces far outweighed their differences.

Hip businesses, as I define them, exhibited several core features that distinguished them from purveyors of mass consumption. The vast majority of the employees and customers at hip businesses were teenagers or young adults, in contrast to mass merchandisers' broad spectrum of customers that included many middle-aged shoppers and employees. "We're showing people that kids are really where it's at, and we're showing kids that there are meaningful ways to lead

---

<sup>30</sup> Kammen, *American Culture, American Tastes*, 22.

their lives,” one boutique owner remarked with pride. “More than anything else we do here, that feels good.”<sup>31</sup> As one portrait of hip businesses surmised, “The reason that most boutiques are started by young folks is that only people under 30 have the courage of their ignorance.”<sup>32</sup> By and large, these were small, local, and independent operations that offered consumers specialized products rarely sold by national mass merchandisers. Hip businesses targeted population segments like African-Americans or singles or hippies, and they showed little interest in attracting the consumers that major corporations designated as their key demographic, namely the white, middle-class family of four. Hip capitalists thus sought to counter what they saw as the cumbersome and oversized discount retailers, shopping malls, and department stores of their day. Ironically, the four marketplaces highlighted in this dissertation boomed as the country’s economy worsened in the 1970s, while the sales of many mass marketed goods, such as automobiles, suffered. Indeed, the 1970s were a period of considerable growth for black-owned radio stations and record stores, head shops, singles bars and jeans-sellers, almost as if their financial wellbeing was directly inverse to the health of the larger economy.

Many hip capitalists considered direct, honest and congenial relationships with customers and employees an integral component of their business model. “You have to offer people something different so they’ll take the time to find you,” explained one New York boutique owner. Clerks were instructed to treat each customer “as a friend—show them new things, rap with them, offer them things. If you don’t do that, you’re just like a department store, and you might as well go out of business.”<sup>33</sup> One young woman who worked in a San Francisco hash

---

<sup>31</sup> “A Rags Special Report: Boutiques and Hip Capitalism,” *Rags*, February 1971, 43.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 46

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 41; see also Curtiss Moore, interview by author, digital recording, August 1, 2007.

pipe factory described her work environment as “a free atmosphere” in which employees are encouraged “to speak out. Still, it took me a long time to get used to it all. I wrote home about the first back rub I got here.” As another employee, a long-haired, eighteen-year-old hippie, explained about the hash pipe business, “It was probably the only place I could get a job, looking and living the way I did.”<sup>34</sup> Work regulations were often few and informal; employees encouraged to dress casually and work flexible hours. Many hip businesses attracted customers by word-of-mouth and by maintaining strong reputations among local shoppers. If they advertised at all, it was often in underground newspapers or in the African-American press or with handbills. As small entrepreneurial firms that fostered close relations with their customers, many hip businesses resembled traditional mom-and-pop stores, retailers that many Boomers considered “square” but which nonetheless provided a more preferable business model than Fortune 500 companies. To this effect, many hip boutique owners sought to project an image not entirely different than that of mom-and-pop retailers. As one observer remarked, more than a few hip capitalists consciously assumed “we’re just common-folks-sittin’ here-doin-Our-Thing pose” in their business dealings.<sup>35</sup>

Many young Baby Boomers hoped that hip businesses could provide the framework for a less bureaucratic and less alienating consumer culture that was firmly based in local communities. In a similar fashion, the 1970s were marked by various progressive efforts to construct alternative institutions—such as rape crisis centers, battered women’s shelters, left-wing research centers, alternative universities and health clinics—that were more accessible and

---

<sup>34</sup> “Life in a Hash Pipe Factory,” *Rags*, September 1970, 26

<sup>35</sup> “A Rags Special Report,” 46

more sensitive to individuals' needs than traditional institutions.<sup>36</sup> Still, some voices in the counterculture expressed skepticism of hip businesses' motives. "The difference between straight and hip capitalism is roughly the same as between a butcher's knife and a switchblade. One is cruder, blunter and more of an eyesore; the other is more refined, exquisite, and insidious, and just as lethal," declared *Good Times*, a San Francisco alternative newspaper, in "The Age of Acquireous," a brilliantly titled piece from 1970. "There are long hairs selling useful items like health foods, and others selling items with no redeeming value, e.g. phony hippie jewelry," the article maintained. "Both reap huge profits... Yet hip capitalists remain largely apolitical... By doing business in the system, they perpetuate it and contribute taxes."<sup>37</sup> But as one defender of these businesses countered, the small "revolutionary underground subsection of the counterculture," in equating hip capitalism with mass merchandisers and the Establishment more generally, failed to acknowledge concrete "difference[s] between hip and straight capitalism."<sup>38</sup>

Indeed, simplistic explanations of hip businesses as opportunistic outfits merely seeking to cash in on the prevailing spirit of social and cultural change in the 1960s and '70s fall short. In fact, the counterculture, for all its criticism of consumption, would have floundered without the hip businesses that helped to support and publicize its activities. A casual survey of *Good Times*—or virtually any of the over 600 underground rags of the period that were instrumental in disseminating countercultural values—reveals extensive advertising for hip businesses.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York: Viking Press, 2000), 87-88; Robert Weir Shuford, "Anarchism and Social Action in America: A Case Study of an Alternative Health Care Facility," (Ph.D. dissertation: Northwestern University, 1974); William A. Draves, *The Free University: A Model for Lifelong Learning* (Chicago: Association Press, 1980).

<sup>37</sup> "The Age of Acquireous," *Good Times*, December 11, 1970, 10.

<sup>38</sup> "A Rags Special Report," 47.

<sup>39</sup> On the contours of the underground press, see Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties*, 245 and Abe Peck, *Uncovering the Sixties: The Life and Times of the Underground Press* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985).

Without ad revenue, many underground newspapers, which often charged nominal prices (if anything), for their issues, could not have survived as long as they did. Not only that, but hip businesses served as distribution spots for these newspapers.<sup>40</sup> “Most hip caps try to help the movement,” explained *Rags*, the only self-styled countercultural fashion magazine of the era. “In boutiques everywhere, there are donation cups for movement causes—the revolution, like everything else in the country, runs on money and it has to come from somewhere.”<sup>41</sup>

### III. Consumer History as Postwar History

In examining the consumer liberation ethos of hip businesses, I seek to illuminate how young Americans experienced and absorbed the cultural and social earthquakes of the 1960s as aftershocks in the marketplace in the 1970s. By patronizing black-owned businesses, or taking illegal substances, or wearing clothing proscribed by institutional dress codes, or even pursuing recreational sex at singles bars, consumers acted out and endorsed the major social and cultural transformations of their era. Even if they did not always recognize their actions as transformative, young Americans reshaped their society by seeking alternatives to mass consumption. Unfortunately, much of the fledgling body of historical scholarship on the 1970s has bogged down in debates over the periodization of the last third of the twentieth century and produced misleading temporal and thematic divisions between decades.<sup>42</sup> Instead, it is appropriate to understand the upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s as points on a historical

---

<sup>40</sup> *Good Times*, January 15, 1971, 17.

<sup>41</sup> “A *Rags* Special Report,” 47.

<sup>42</sup> Varon, Foley and McMillian, 5. Peter Carrol’s *It Seemed Like Nothing Happened* treated the 1970s as the years 1970 to 1979, while Bruce Schulman envisions a long 1970s that stretched from 1968 to 1984. Phillip Jenkins’s work *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America*, meanwhile, imagines the Seventies as 1975 to 1986. To complicate matters further, several historians have proposed various periodizations for the 1960s, including a dubious, twenty-one-year long Sixties stretching from 1954 to 1975.

continuum in which contemporary actors experienced cultural changes without making many distinctions between decades.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, the massive cultural transformations that we may denote simply as “the Sixties” had by no means concluded by the start of 1970. “People don’t understand that the 1960s progressed very slowly in terms of actual change,” one woman recalled about the period. “When things really crashed—in 1969 and I’d say 1970—they really crashed. The changes started seeping out from there, and there was no going back.”<sup>44</sup> As the prominent writer Edmund White recalled about his years in New York in this period, “We kept asking in 1972 and 1973 when the seventies were going to begin.” By 1979, White had come to interpret the decade as “a painful and unexpected working out of the terms the Sixties had so blithely tossed off”<sup>45</sup>

Contrary to the widely-held notion that social activism represented the most salient aspect of the 1960s, I contend that investigating how Boomers navigated the intersection of consumption and culture represents an equally valuable strategy for assessing how the upheavals of the 1960s transformed young Americans’ daily lives through the 1970s and well into the 1980s. After all, even at the height of campus activism in the late 1960s, only half of students ever participated in protests, while many polls revealed anywhere between two percent and one-third of students were involved in activism.<sup>46</sup> Consequently, scholars like David Farber and

---

<sup>43</sup> Instead of imagining decades in postwar America as discrete chronological blocks, it may make sense to envision overlapping decades, with years like 1969 or 1980 so difficult to fit into a single era. The 1960s may indeed have been longer than ten years and spilled into the following decade, but the 1970s were also long, with roots as early as 1968 and a conclusion as late as 1984.

<sup>44</sup> Betsy Israel, *Bachelor Girl: The Secret History of Single Women in the Twentieth Century* (New York: William Morrow, 2002), 232.

<sup>45</sup> Edmund White, *City Boy: My Life in New York During the 1960s and '70s* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2009), 3-4.

<sup>46</sup> *Youth in Turmoil*, 17; Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), 223; Arthur Levine, *When Dreams and*



Terry Anderson have conceded that the counterculture exerted a greater influence on young Americans and national culture than did student activism in this period.<sup>47</sup> As measured by sales figures, public polling, marketers' research and anecdotal evidence, many more Baby Boomers partook in the acts of consumption examined in this dissertation, than in the era's relatively narrow realms of "new" politics.<sup>48</sup> In consumption we find an activity from which virtually no American abstained in the 1960s and 1970s. No matter where they stood on the political spectrum, no matter their racial or ethnic background, or gender, or sexual orientation, or immigration status, virtually every American consumed. Even back-to-the-land communards, who tried to withdraw from the consumer economy altogether, still relied on rural retail outlets, mail order, and the *Whole Earth Catalog* for supplies, tools, and how-to guides that they could not themselves produce.<sup>49</sup>

As the first cohort of Americans to grow up amid the unprecedented affluence of the postwar years, young Baby Boomers make ideal candidates for exploring consumer culture in the last third of the twentieth century. The Baby Boom generation, for all its economic and cultural diversity, shared several common experiences that suggested their relationship to consumer culture differed from previous generations' connections to the marketplace. Of course, the shared experience of growing up in the postwar economic boom provided much of the basis for

---

*Heroes Died: A Portrait of Today's College Student* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1980), 4-5; Seymour Martin Lipset, *Rebellion in the University* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 90.

<sup>47</sup> Terry Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), xx, echoed by Varon, Foley and McMillian in "Time is an Ocean", 2; Anderson, xviii; Farber, *Age of Great Dreams*, 189.

<sup>48</sup> Doug Rossinow has pointedly made an observation that few scholars have been willing to concede: "Almost all those who identified with [the New Left] were white college students and recent college graduates." See "The Revolution is About Our Lives," *Imagine Nation*, 99.

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, the "Community" section of *The Last Whole Earth Catalog* (Menlo Park, Calif.: Portola Institute, 1971), 177-245 and Andrew G. Kirk, *Counterculture Green: The Whole Earth Catalog and American Environmentalism* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2007).

the Baby Boomers' generational identity. The Baby Boomers were the largest generation of consumers in the nation's history. Although poverty continued to plague America, never before had so many young people grown up among material conditions that far exceeded subsistence.<sup>50</sup> On a more basic level, young Baby Boomers simply consumed more than previous generations of young Americans. Growing up with television, which was found in 94 percent of American households by the middle of the 1960s, represented one of the most powerful shared experiences to shape Boomers.<sup>51</sup> Unlike radio or print media, television was from its beginning "clearly and always intended to be a commercial medium." Not only that, but television was alone in frequently developing national marketing campaigns targeted solely at child consumers.<sup>52</sup> All in all, the Baby Boomers were arguably influenced far more by direct advertising appeals, and consumer culture more generally, than any previous generation of American children. By participating in any of the four marketplaces addressed by this study, young consumers reinforced and asserted their differences with their parents' generation. Buying soul records, or smoking marijuana, or wearing blue jeans, or visiting singles bars were all expressions of youth, in the eyes of many Boomers and their parents; people beyond their twenties who participated in these marketplaces were often accused of refusing to admit their youth had passed. And since the 1950s, marketers had recognized and relished the growing acquisitiveness of young Americans. The Pepsi Generation advertising campaign of the mid-1960s, for instance, reflected

---

<sup>50</sup> Regina Lee Blaszczyk, *American Consumer Society, 1865-2005: From Hearth to HDTV* (Wheeling, Ill.: Harlan Davidson: 2009), 180-182.

<sup>51</sup> Cohen, *Consumers' Republic*, 302.

<sup>52</sup> Lawrence R. Samuel, *Brought to You By: Postwar Television Advertising and the American Dream* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), xiv-xvi.

marketers' newfound belief that teenagers as a cohort represented an entire market unto itself.<sup>53</sup>

By the late 1960s marketers increasingly spoke of a "youth market," which included consumers anywhere between fourteen and their middle or late twenties, instead of a mere teenage market.<sup>54</sup>

Baby Boomers' shared educational experiences also played a significant role in creating a sense of peer culture and motivating them to self-identify as young people. Because of spiraling rates of secondary and higher education that were double that of their parents' generation by the 1970s, American youth spent large parts of their daily lives segregated from their parents.<sup>55</sup>

High school enrollment for fourteen- to eighteen-year-olds in this period was nearly universal, and even college enrolment rates were far higher than some historians suggest, as a sizable three-fifths of America's graduating high school seniors enrolled in college by 1962.<sup>56</sup> Educational institutions doubled as peer-oriented social settings for the vast majority of young Americans, where they not only associated with people their own age, but also fostered bonds based around shared experiences of public consumption. Marijuana smokers, for instance, often gained access to pot through classmates, and it was not unusual for high school and college students to attend classes while under the influence of illegal substances; black-owned record stores were often located close to historically-black college campuses, and black radio deejays frequently visited high schools or included high school students in programming; both secondary and higher educational institutions served as venues for students to experiment with fashions like blue jeans;

---

<sup>53</sup> Stanley Hollander, *Was there a Pepsi Generation before Pepsi Discovered It? Youth-based Segmentation in Marketing* (Chicago: American Marketing Association, 1992).

<sup>54</sup> Ian Brailsford, "Ripe for Harvest: American Youth Marketing, 1945-70," (Ph. D. dissertation: University of Auckland, 1999), 1-21.

<sup>55</sup> *Historical Statistics of the United States: Millennial Edition, Volume 2—Work and Welfare*, Bc 7-18 and Bc 523-536.

<sup>56</sup> Grace Palladino, *Teenagers: An American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 207.

and even singles bars, as descendants of college mixers, owe a significant debt to higher education. Although their stated mission was to educate young people, institutions of secondary and higher learning often facilitated market transactions for young consumers, in the process bolstering young people's self-perception as participants in the marketplace.

#### IV. Social Consumption and Commercial Public Life

Growing dissatisfaction with organized public life in the long 1970s also motivated many young Americans to search for community in the marketplace. Many scholars have ascribed primary responsibility to consumer culture for what they perceive as the decline of American public life since the 1960s, asserting that consumer culture erodes meaningful communities whenever it comes into contact with them, as though the two are embattled in a zero-sum contest. Robert Putnam, for example, has argued that increased television-viewing combined with factors like suburbanization to trigger a remarkable decline not only in Americans' organizational participation since the 1970s, but in their social capital and public-mindedness overall.<sup>57</sup> Problematic, however, is how Putnam focuses on factors external to associational life and in the process ignores organizations' deficiencies. In searching high and low for outside forces that killed American public life, Putnam refuses to scrutinize the many disadvantages of formal organizations in the 1950s and 1960s. Organizations' rigid leadership hierarchies on the local level, their blind adherence to the directives of central offices, their superficial and overly materialistic understanding of quality of life, their heavy emphasis on conformity, and their elitist and discriminatory membership practices understandably frustrated many Baby Boomers.

---

<sup>57</sup> Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York, 2000), 48-64; see also Theda Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003); Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic*, 407.

Not surprisingly, these bureaucratic and impersonal tendencies of many organizations were often the same features exhibited by schools, universities, corporations, and other institutions that so alienated and disappointed Baby Boomers in their quest for personal fulfillment. In sum, Boomers' retreat from organizational and civic participation reflected not only narrower individual focuses and self-absorption, but also associations' inability and unwillingness to provide them a public life that adequately recognized individuality, creativity and cultural differences.

In turning away from formal organizational life in large numbers, however, Baby Boomers did not reject all forms of community, but chose more and more to structure their public lives around what I call *social consumption*.<sup>58</sup> As the sociologist Ray Oldenburg has argued persuasively, *informal* public gathering places, which he calls "third places," function in many local communities as important sites of public social activity. The vast majority of informal gathering places are oriented towards both socializing *and* consumption: bars, cafés, coffeehouses, even the small town's "main street" commercial districts. Ironically, while many scholars have invoked Jürgen Habermas' ideas on the decline of the public sphere in their criticisms of consumer culture, few have acknowledge how the coffeehouses that Habermas celebrates were themselves public sites of social consumption.<sup>59</sup> Although these spaces flourished in the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century in America, in the postwar era suburbanization and highway expansion rarely took into consideration informal

---

<sup>58</sup> For a similar approach, see Sharon Zukin, "The Social Space of Shopping: Mobilizing Dreams for Public Culture," *Public Cultures: Diversity, Democracy, and Community in the United States*, Marguerite S. Shaffer, ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 199-218.

<sup>59</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991).

public gathering and frequently undermined and eliminated existing sites of public consumption.<sup>60</sup>

But by the 1970s, as more and more middle-aged Americans restricted the majority of their activities to just two places, work and home, some young Americans were starting to rediscover the joys of informal public gathering based around consumption. One magazine instructed young singles “how to find a small town in a big city” in 1973:

Your neighborhood is your home. Its real conveniences are those little after-hours havens that provide the same feeling of nurturance and leisure that your living room does: bookstores, walk-in newsstands and candy shops where you can browse; small coffee shops and cozy pubs where you can sit and unwind with a drink,...even one of the asphalt, tiny grocery stores that many not sell 14 brands of salad dressing but sells fresh daisies and will cash a personal check.

Especially for young adults who lived on their own, these businesses functioned as commercial venues that not only offered products for sale, but also spaces where consumers could develop relationships with merchants and clerks, or socialize with other consumers and friends, or even just enjoy being by themselves but *among* others. These small businesses provided consumers feelings of community, a sense that they belonged in the neighborhood where they lived, and the chance to interact with others. “Keep your priorities straight...[and] patronize local business,” the same article told readers, arguing that small, independent businesses managed to serve the social needs of their customers much better than the larger outfits of American retail. “Big five-and-dimes, chain outlet drugstores, banks, large supermarkets—these are conveniences of time and economy, not of soul and spirit.”<sup>61</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> Roy Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Community Centers, Beauty Parlors, General Stores, Bars, Hangouts and How They Get You Through the Day* (New York: Paragon House, 1989), ix, xv-xvi.

<sup>61</sup> Sheila Weller, “Love Thy Neighborhood (Or How to Find a Small Town in a Big City),” *Single*, October 1973, 84

In patronizing hip businesses, Baby Boomers strived to form local communities in and around commercial spaces that provided them the means to express identities other than those that the mass market promoted. Many Boomers believed that Cold War America's large-scale institutions, its industrial organization, as well as mass consumer culture and suburbanization had estranged Americans from each other and severely undermined communities that nurtured real human bonding and sharing.<sup>62</sup> With head shops, black-owned music businesses, clothing boutiques, and singles bars, entrepreneurs offered young consumers gathering places that represented more culturally expressive and socially diverse alternatives to mass society's civic-oriented and homogenized forms of public community; even young women who wore blue jeans to school and work challenged conventional social etiquette that governed how they should express themselves in public settings. Granted, young Boomers did not always improve American public life by consuming socially, but their efforts to seek liberation from the strictures of mass consumption did expand Americans' options for public life. Informal public gathering places like hip businesses were more accessible and more welcoming to many young Americans than traditional, institutional public spaces, but they also demanded less of their patrons. Social consumption may well represent a lesser form of public life than civic participation, but to dismiss it merely as an exercise in self-absorption is to deny the ways in which commercial spaces strengthened community bonds in the 1960s and 1970s. While we must concede that social consumption, as a form of public life, did not always serve communities' greater good as much as volunteer organizations or civic clubs did, we must also avoid the trap of asserting that organizational life unfailingly enhanced civic connectedness.

---

<sup>62</sup> Rossinow, "The Revolution is About our Lives," 110.

Some scholars have also argued that the increasingly fractured and atomized marketplaces of the late twentieth century exacerbated divisions among Americans, but more often segmented markets grew out of preexisting social divisions that developed without marketers' intervention. Lizabeth Cohen, to the contrary, argues that "manufacturers, advertisers, [and] marketers" bore the primary responsibility for market segmentation in the 1960s and 1970s as they encouraged "social and cultural divisions for their own profit."<sup>63</sup> Niche markets did not emerge from marketers' wishes as much as from more powerful and very real social divisions that already cut through American life. Indeed, the network of black-owned businesses that targeted African-American consumers functioned as America's first segmented marketplace. Separate channels of black consumption had emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century out of white corporations' neglect and disinterest in black consumers, not any desire on their part to carve out new markets.<sup>64</sup> In fact, white marketers and corporations remained almost universally indifferent toward the so-called Negro marketplace until the 1940s, when they gradually began to advertise in black-oriented publications like *Ebony*. While recognition of the African-American marketplace did reflect many businesses' wishes to attain new consumers, the black marketplace had existed for years, and had grown out of the larger racist logic that justified separate neighborhoods, jobs and institutions for blacks and whites. Motivated to find any merchandisers and producers who would respect and acknowledge them, consumer groups whom mass marketers ignored for most of the twentieth century deserve much of credit for driving and promoting market segmentation.

---

<sup>63</sup> Frank, *Conquest of Cool*, 24; Cohen, *Consumers' Republic*, 407. See also Joseph Turow, *Breaking Up America: Advertisers and the New Media World* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1997).

<sup>64</sup> Weems, *Desegregating the Dollar*, 1-8.



#### IV. Theoretical Foundations

This dissertation's main arguments rest on several key theoretical premises about the nature of consumer culture. Rather than interpreting consumer culture as a simple, unidirectional process in which hegemonic corporations dictate buying habits, I treat consumption as a dialogue and exchange in which goods and ideas flow in multiple directions between consumers and many different kinds of producers and retailers, not just Fortune 500 companies. This conceptualization of consumer culture and business enterprise requires a consideration of transactions that take place beyond the realm of major corporations and traditional, family-owned small businesses, including not only hip businesses, but also illegal transactions such as the marijuana trade. And understanding consumption requires more than just focusing on goods; we also have to examine services, especially in the period this dissertation examines, since the number of white-collar workers surpassed blue-collar workers in America for the first time ever in 1965.<sup>65</sup> Finally, we cannot limit our view of consumption to the point of purchase, but must also consider how consumers used those commodities after they bought them.

With this dissertation I seek to move beyond the unrealistically bipolar interpretation of consumption that has characterized many scholarly interpretations of market relations. Marxist analysis, for all its contributions to our understanding of economic systems, social identity and class conflict, has distorted scholarly understandings of consumption for years by totalizing it and reducing it to a bludgeon for enforcing the reified hegemony of capitalism.<sup>66</sup> In recent years,

---

<sup>65</sup> Blaszczyk, *American Consumer Society*, 183.

<sup>66</sup> For examples of scholarship in this tradition, see Max Horkheimer and Theodore W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (London: Verso, 1979); Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertizing and the Social Roots of Consumer Culture* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976); William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993); and a number of the essays in Richard Wightman Fox and T.J. Lears, *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983).

scholars have moved beyond dismissing consumption as merely a capitalist tool for narcotizing citizens and have come to recognize consumption's expressive, and even bonding, potential for shoppers.<sup>67</sup> Meanwhile, some historians argue that scholars have overcompensated for years of academic disinterest in consumer culture by overestimating the affirming and liberatory benefits of expressing identity through consumption.<sup>68</sup> In fact, consumption does not simply represent businesses' efforts to impose their will on buyers, nor is it the sum of individual consumers' unrestricted choices and self-expression in the marketplace. Rather than divide the experience of consumption into binaries of exploitation and expression, co-optation and resistance, this dissertation builds on the insights of economic sociologists and treats consumption as the intersection of economic decision-making, social interactions, and cultural choices of consumers, producers, retailers and advertisers.<sup>69</sup>

Indeed, consumers and businesses were able to claim both victories and set-backs in the 1970s in all four markets this dissertation explores. Over the course of the decade, young consumers did attain significant freedoms to express cultural identity and to construct more meaningful social spaces through the marketplace, but by no means did they escape from mass consumption's influence entirely. Furthermore, despite many scholars' insistence on dividing the market into discrete groups of buyers and sellers, many of the "capitalists" who tried their hand at hip businesses were themselves consumers, who got their starts by selling products they already enjoyed themselves. As Joynt Venture, a Milwaukee company specializing in marijuana accessories, cajoled would-be buyers in an advertisement in *High Times*, "Purchase your

---

<sup>67</sup> Daniel Miller, *A Theory of Shopping* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998).

<sup>68</sup> David Stiegerwald, "All Hail the Republic of Choice: Consumer History as Contemporary Thought," *The Journal of American History* 93 (September 2006): 391.

<sup>69</sup> Viviana Zelizer, "Culture and Consumption," in *The Handbook of Economic Sociology*, ed. Neil J. Smelser and Richard Swedberg (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 332.

paraphernalia from those who use it and know it!”<sup>70</sup> And even among hip businesses in this study that achieved long-term success, many of them never grew beyond their local, independent roots, remaining quite close, geographically and culturally, to their local customers. The entrepreneurs and employees who transformed independent head shops, record stores, jeans sellers and singles bars into successful operations cannot be dismissed as purely exploitative and faceless agents of capitalism—as photographs of hip capitalists clearly demonstrate. And as I will show, co-optation can run both ways; many of the hip businesses in this study exerted considerable influence on larger corporations and introduced new products and services to the marketplace in the 1970s that large firms would not have touched a decade earlier. Just as traditional businesses selectively adopted elements of the counterculture they saw as beneficial to their cause, countless hip consumers and entrepreneurs borrowed strategies from traditional businesses in their efforts to reform American consumer culture. And as my conclusion shows, even when those businesses ultimately failed, they still played a role in redefining key American notions of entrepreneurship and retail, capitalism and consumption.

In short, by scrutinizing how young Baby Boomers bought and sold goods and services from hip businesses, I seek to uncover how the cultural upheavals of the 1960s forced young Americans to forge new relationships to the marketplace in the 1970s; I also intend to illuminate how the rise of hip businesses reshaped Americans’ understandings of community and public life. Yet I will not explain how young Americans attained new freedoms to express themselves through consumer marketplaces in the 1970s. I will also explore the complications and disappointments that consumers faced, not only in the form of the unfulfilled promises of consumer liberation, but also in the unforeseen difficulties and challenges that came with those

---

<sup>70</sup> *High Times*, Fall 1974, 2-3.

freedoms that hip consumption provided them. In conclusion, I hope to present a compelling argument in this study for adding consumer liberation to our inventory of cultural and social upheavals that transformed the fabric of young Americans' daily lives in the 1960s and 1970.

## Chapter 1

### **The Selling of Soul: African American Consumers, Music Businesses, and Community Empowerment**

“Records is a market that can be used to brighten the future of lots of black people with jobs and higher prestige all over the country,” Jimmy Liggins announced to the readers of Durham, North Carolina’s most prominent African American newspaper, the *Carolina Times*, in June 1976. Liggins, an erstwhile rhythm and blues star of the 1950s, had produced a series of advertisements and articles for the *Times* in order to publicize his Duplex National Black Gold Record Pool, headquartered in Durham. Black Gold offered African American musical performers the chance to “participate in the million dollar enterprises of tomorrow,” namely a musical cooperative and “self helping program” that enabled aspiring hit-makers to record and release music for public consumption.<sup>1</sup> Although Liggins’ Black Gold program was modest in its scope, it illustrates deeper messages about African American music consumers, record-store owners, and radio personnel in the South after the 1960s. While desegregation measures in the 1970s significantly altered the racial make-up of some areas of Southern society, such as schools, African American radio personnel, record dealers, and consumers thought little of assimilating into white-dominated pop music marketplaces. Instead, they pinned their hopes on local, black-oriented music businesses as vehicles for pursuing economic self-sufficiency and for sustaining black

---

<sup>1</sup> “Jimmy Liggins Reports...”, *Carolina Times*, June 26, 1976, 13; hereinafter cited as *CT*; Yolanda Mitchell, “Black Gold Music Program-Review,” *CT*, January 17, 1976, 10; *CT*, February 7, 1976, 10.

public life.<sup>2</sup> Following the zenith of civil rights activism in the mid-1960s, African Americans' relationship to predominantly black consumer markets in the South took on new meanings. African American activists in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s often sought expanded access to white-controlled markets and businesses, but in the long 1970s black consumers and businesses owners increasingly asserted the need for self-sufficient African American marketplaces, thus promoting the tradition of black-owned businesses within the new context of a desegregating South.<sup>3</sup> Black-owned businesses had long operated in the South, especially in the region's so-called "separate cities," semi-autonomous black neighborhoods in small and large urban areas, while most white-owned businesses enforced Jim Crow by ignoring, excluding and belittling black consumers.<sup>4</sup> It might seem that desegregation would have decreased African Americans' enthusiasm for black-oriented business enterprise. But Black Power ideology, with its support for black economic nationalism, and a deep desire to preserve

---

<sup>2</sup> Southern schools, for example, had been the most segregated schools in the nation for African American students in 1968, but by 1980 they had become the *least* segregated in the nation—see James T. Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 230.

<sup>3</sup> Key works on African American consumers include Robert E. Weems, *Desegregating the Dollar: African American Consumerism in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1998); Juliet E. K. Walker, *The History of Black Business in America: Capitalism, Race, Entrepreneurship* (New York: Macmillan Library Reference USA, 1998); Ted Ownby, *American Dreams in Mississippi: Consumers, Poverty & Culture, 1830-1998* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Adam Green, *Selling the Race: Culture, Community, and Black Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); William L. Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965-1975* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Davarian L. Baldwin, *Chicago's New Negroes: Modernity, the Great Migration, & Black Urban Life* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003); Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998); D. Parke Gibson, *The \$30 Billion Negro* (New York: Macmillan, 1969); Alan R. Andreasen, *The Disadvantaged Consumer* (New York, 1975); George Joyce, Norman A. P. Govoni and Joint Comp, *The Black Consumer: Dimensions of Behavior and Strategy*, 1st ed. (New York, 1971); and Raymond O. Oladipupo, *How Distinct is the Negro Market?* (New York, 1970). On the notion of the long 1970s, which stretched from 1968 to 1984, see Bruce Schulman, *The Seventies* (New York, 2001), xvi-xvii,

<sup>4</sup> Christopher Silver and John V. Moeser, *The Separate City: Black Communities in the Urban South, 1940-1968* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1995), 54; Walker, *History of Black Business in America*, 213-217.

black institutions and reinforce community power in the face of state-mandated desegregation revived support for black-owned businesses in the 1970s South.<sup>5</sup>

One area in which black-owned businesses had found particular success since 1945 was popular music. By 1970, Barry Gordy's Motown Industries was earning higher annual revenues than any other black-owned business in American history.<sup>6</sup> In her groundbreaking examination of Gordy's record label, *Dancing in the Street*, Suzanne Smith however expresses a highly critical outlook on black-owned businesses' capacity to provide economic benefits to African American communities, arguing that Motown's labor practices, corporate aspirations and general neglect of Detroit revealed that the "promise of black capitalism...was more myth than reality."<sup>7</sup> In the tradition of E. Franklin Frazier, Earl Ofari Hutchinson and Manning Marable, Smith rightly questions claims that black-owned businesses provided a panacea for their communities' economic ills in the postwar United States.<sup>8</sup> But Smith's analysis of the most exceptional of black-owned businesses, a multi-million dollar corporation located in the North, does not consider the experiences of thousands of much smaller, local black music businesses, many of which were located in the South. *Dancing in the Streets*, like most studies of African American

---

<sup>5</sup> This essay understands "Black Power" as any movement that "attempted to radically redefine the relationship between blacks and American society...[and] placed black identity at the soul of a new radicalism," based on Peniel E. Joseph, *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* (New York, 2006), 1-3. On the roots of black economic nationalism, see John N. Ingham, "National Business League," in Nina Mjagkij, ed., *Organizing Black America: An Encyclopedia of African American Associations* (New York, 2001), 427-430.

<sup>6</sup> Kenneth Meeks, "Berry Gordy," *Black Enterprise* (October 2005), 28; Brian Ward, *Just My Soul Responding: Rhythm and Blues, Black Consciousness, and Race Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 268.

<sup>7</sup> Suzanne A. Smith, *Dancing in the Street: Motown and the Cultural Politics of Detroit* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 227.

<sup>8</sup> E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1957), 153, 167-173; Manning Marable, *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America: Problems in Race, Political Economy and Society* (Boston: South End Press, 1983), 133-168. Earl Ofari Hutchinson, *The Myth of Black Capitalism* (New York, 1970).

popular music, largely ignores the role of music consumers.<sup>9</sup> Most misleading, however, is how Smith and other scholars have indicted black businesses without adequately assessing the full range of their impact—economic, social *and* cultural—on African American communities.

Indeed, because African Americans typically consumed music on the radio and from record stores in their local communities, a study of the black music marketplace in one state—in this case North Carolina—answers important questions about black music businesses’ relationship to African American consumers in the late twentieth century that studies of major corporations cannot address. First, what did black-owned music businesses offer to African-American consumers in the 1970s, a time not only when major corporations showed growing interest in blacks’ dollars but when desegregation was accelerating in other areas of Southern society?<sup>10</sup> Second, how and why did many black-owned record stores and radio stations prosper in the 1970s, weathering new competition for black dollars better than prominent black-owned businesses in insurance, cosmetics, and hospitality that succumbed to white competitors?<sup>11</sup> Third

---

<sup>9</sup> The primary work on black popular music to examine black music consumers, although only sporadically, is a collection of essays: Norman Kelley, ed., *R&B, Rhythm and Business: The Political Economy of Black Music* (New York, 2002). Works that address African American music in the 1960s and ‘70s more generally include Nelson George, *The Death of Rhythm & Blues*, 1st ed. (New York, 1988); Mark Anthony Neal, *Songs in the Key of Black Life: A Rhythm and Blues Nation* (New York and London, 2003) and *What the Music Said: Black Popular Music and Black Public Culture* (New York, 1999); Craig Werner, *A Change is Gonna Come: Music, Race & the Soul of America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006) and *Higher Ground: Stevie Wonder, Aretha Franklin, Curtis Mayfield and the Rise and Fall of American Soul* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2004). On African American music consumers since the 1980s, see Nelson George, *Post-Soul Nation: The Explosive, Contradictory, Triumphant, and Tragic 1980s as Experienced by African Americans* (New York, 2004); Mark Anthony Neal, *Soul Babies: Black Popular Culture and the Post-Soul Aesthetic* (New York, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> On white corporations’ growing interest in black consumers in this period, see Weems, *Desegregating the Dollar*, 70-72, 76-78, 92-94.

<sup>11</sup> On the decline of black-owned hotels and insurance companies, see Walker, *History of Black Business in America*, 254-258 and 312-313. See also Minority Enterprise and Expanded Ownership: Blueprint for the ‘70s—Submitted to President Richard Nixon and Secretary of Commerce Maurice H. Stans by the President’s Advisory Council on Minority Business Enterprise, June 1971, Folder “Office of Minority Business Enterprise (2),” (Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Mich.); Weems, *Desegregating the Dollar*, 90-95. On the success of the national record industry, see Stan Cornyn, “Platinum Rising,” in *Rolling Stone The Seventies*, ed. Ashley Kahn, Holly George-Warren, Shawn Dahl, 244-249 (Boston, 1998); Scott R. Schmedel, “The Trend Buckers: Record



and finally, how did black music businesses remain among the most accessible and interactive areas in the marketplace for young black consumers, while much of American retail became increasingly oriented around chains and national mass merchandisers? Taken altogether, this analysis will reveal the central role popular culture and consumption played a central role in shaping young African American consumers' and business owners' attitudes towards economic self-sufficiency, public space, and local community through the 1970s.

### I. The Black Music Marketplace and the Quest for Commercial Community

Throughout the twentieth century, advocates of African-American consumption, including black marketers, black media and consumer-activists, focused most of their efforts on persuading white marketers and white-owned corporations to recognize blacks' buying power.<sup>12</sup> Organized efforts among African-American consumers in the mid-twentieth century, including the "Don't Shop Where You Can't Work" campaigns of the 1930s, and boycotts and lunch counter sit-ins of the 1950s and 1960s sought equal access to white-controlled goods and jobs.<sup>13</sup> Marketers and media also commonly employed the metaphor of a foreign country to promote the collective power of African-American consumers. *Jet* magazine, for instance, informed readers that when their income was placed in international comparison, "blacks would rank 12<sup>th</sup> among

---

Firms Spin to Sweetest Music They Ever Heard—The Sound of Money," *Wall Street Journal*, April 16, 1970, 38; hereinafter cited as *WSJ*.

<sup>12</sup> Susannah Walker, "Black Dollar Power: Assessing African American Consumerism since 1945," in *African American Urban History Since World War II*, ed. Kenneth L. Kusmer and Joe W. Trotter (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 376-403.

<sup>13</sup> Ownby, 149-157; Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic*, 41-53; Matthew Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 83-119; Gary Jerome Hunter, "'Don't Buy from Where You Can't Work': Black Urban Boycott Movements during the Depression, 1929-1941" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1977); Weems, *Desegregating the Dollar*, 56-69.

the top 20 countries.”<sup>14</sup> By depicting African Americans as comprising their own “national” economy, advocates of black consumption hoped to emphasize blacks’ buying power and persuade white-owned corporations that they should increase their efforts to appeal to them through products and advertising. Yet the metaphor of a black “national” market also reinforced the notion that African American consumers existed outside the American mass market. While some historians have viewed the concept of an African-American marketplace as the artificial construct of advertisers and corporations, the idea grew more out of preexisting racial segregation than it did out of marketing machinations.<sup>15</sup> After all, African Americans were by most measures more geographically segregated from white Americans by 1960 than they had ever been.<sup>16</sup> With the decline of downtown shopping districts and significant growth both in white suburbanization and black urbanization, whites and blacks increasingly shopped in different stores and commercial districts. By and large, African-American consumers felt that the white-dominated mass market failed to recognize them, while white and black marketers considered black shoppers something akin to a foreign, even inscrutable, national economy. In short, few people considered black consumers as full participants in the nation’s mass consumer economy, making the African-American market perhaps America’s first niche market.<sup>17</sup>

Indeed, the idea of an autonomous African-American marketplace gained further credence with the growing popularity of Black Power sentiment in the late 1960s.<sup>18</sup> Civil rights

---

<sup>14</sup> Walker, “Black Dollar Power,” 391.

<sup>15</sup> See the introduction to this dissertation, 4-7.

<sup>16</sup> Walker, “Black Dollar Power,” 381.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 380-382

<sup>18</sup> The author traces the Black Power movement’s start in the United States to 1966, as articulated in V.P. Franklin, “Introduction—New Black Power Studies: National, International, and Transnational Perspectives,” *The Journal of African American History* 92 (Fall 2007), 464.

leaders such as Jesse Jackson coupled their quest to expand black access to white businesses with a renewed push to bolster black-owned businesses. “Our money [should] remain within our community,” Jackson insisted, “instead of quickly entering and leaving at an acute angle. We have the power, nonviolently, just by controlling our appetites, to determine the economic fortunes of our neighborhoods.”<sup>19</sup> The magazines *Black Business Digest* and *Black Enterprise* both premiered in 1970 and leavened their advocacy of greater black representation in American corporations with Black Power rhetoric and demands for community control.<sup>20</sup> Selected buying, or “buy black,” campaigns proliferated in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In Durham, a “Black Christmas” boycott of white businesses in 1968 and 1969 included a holiday parade led by a black Santa Claus that drew 20,000 onlookers.<sup>21</sup> In Winston-Salem, Johnny X. Williamson, a local nightclub owner and black Muslim, founded a local Black Business League and led efforts to establish a food cooperative for black consumers.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, support for “buying black” was quite strong in this period, as a fifteen-city survey from 1968 revealed that 70 percent of blacks “felt that Negroes should patronize Negro-owned stores whenever possible.”<sup>23</sup>

Nonetheless, scholars have failed to reach a consensus on the value of black-owned businesses’ contributions to the larger welfare of African-American communities. In his

---

<sup>19</sup> Marshall Frady, *Jesse: The Life and Pilgrimage of Jesse Jackson*, 1st ed. (New York, 1996), 253; Barbara A. Reynolds, *Jesse Jackson: The Man, the Movement, the Myth* (Chicago, 1975), 137.

<sup>20</sup> For example, Don H. Alexander, in “What do you want, Mr. Black Businessman,” *Black Business Digest*, August 1971, understood African American consumers who supported black-owned businesses as practicing “economic black power...[by] keeping the profits in the black community where they will have a multiplier effect.”

<sup>21</sup> Christina Greene, *Our Separate Ways: Women and the Black Freedom Movement in Durham, North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 165-167, 173-175, 179-180.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Eller, “Black Businesses Form to Solve Mutual Problems,” *Winston-Salem Chronicle*, September 6, 1975, 1; “Co-Op Set Up To Aid Black Area Residents,” *Winston-Salem Chronicle*, September 27, 1975, 1.

<sup>23</sup> Angus Campbell and Howard Schuman, “Racial Attitudes in Fifteen American Cities,” in *Supplemental Studies for the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (New York: Praeger, 1970), 20.

pioneering 1955 work, *The Black Bourgeoisie*, the sociologist E. Franklin Frazier wrote of the “myth of black business,” arguing that black firms were so undercapitalized and underpatronized that they could never cure African Americans’ economic woes, much less compete with white business enterprise in any meaningful way. Although Earl Ofari Hutchinson and Suzanne Smith have echoed Frazier’s cries of the “myth of black capitalism,” other scholars, while agreeing that black capitalism alone could never function as an economic panacea for African Americans, have argued persuasively that black entrepreneurial activity does deliver a range of benefits to black communities.<sup>24</sup> As Wayne J. Villemez and John J. Beggs asserted in their study of black-owned businesses in the 1970s, sociological, not economic, metrics are most appropriate for gauging the overall effect of black entrepreneurial activity. In fact, Villemez and Beggs identified that “the black share of business firms in a city seems to have a substantial impact on the relative well-being of blacks in that city.” In most municipalities with considerable concentrations of black-owned businesses, African Americans figured prominently in both local politics and in public sector employment.<sup>25</sup>

Among the many black-owned enterprises to thrive in postwar America, few enjoyed more success than those in the popular music business. According to one African-American record distributor, “every black man thinks that the first business they could go into are records, because that’s something we all know, and that’s the thing that’s closest to us.”<sup>26</sup> In 1976,

---

<sup>24</sup> Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie*, 153, 167-173; Marable, *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America*, 133-168. Hutchinson, *The Myth of Black Capitalism* (New York, 1970), 1-3.

<sup>25</sup> Wayne J. Villemez and John J. Beggs, “Black Capitalism and Black Inequality: Some Sociological Considerations,” *Social Forces* 63 (September 1984), 117-123, 137-138, 141. Villemez and Beggs drew data from from nearly 200 American municipalities with 100 or more black-owned businesses apiece, twelve of them located in North Carolina.

<sup>26</sup> Sidney Miller, “Calvin Simpson: Total Merchandiser,” *Black Radio Exclusive*, March 28, 1980, 13; hereinafter cited as *BRE*.

African Americans launched two trade publications devoted to black radio and black music retail, *Mello Yello* and *Black Radio Exclusive*, as well as the first organization for black owners of broadcast facilities.<sup>27</sup> Although magazines like *BRE* may have initially seemed like little more than African-American alternatives to the white pop and rock-oriented *Billboard* magazine, before the year's end, the fledgling publication had begun to promote a more ambitious agenda of black economic and community empowerment through popular music.

The R&B industry is made up primarily of black people; so therefore, we cannot talk about the needs of the industry without talking about the needs of black folk. And what the industry and black folk need most today is POWER! There are many types of power that are included in these needs, the most obvious of which is a type of economic power.<sup>28</sup>

African Americans who patronized black-owned music businesses and listened to black-format radio, the writers of *BRE* argued, enriched their communities and stimulated local black economies. "We want to establish that the black consumer cannot be massed together under the auspices of a general market," Eddie Gilreath, a prominent black member of the National Association of Record Merchandisers told *BRE*, claiming that anyone who hoped to sell music to black buyers had to recognize they had different needs than white consumers.<sup>29</sup>

Since the 1950s, black consumers had favored radio over both television and black-oriented print media, especially in the South, a region marked by low rates of both literacy and television ownership.<sup>30</sup> Black-oriented radio, by creating new channels for advertisers to reach

---

<sup>27</sup> Kristal Brent Zook, *I See Black People: The Rise and Fall of African American-Owned Television Radio* (New York: 2008), 1.

<sup>28</sup> "Editor's Notes," Jerry Boulding, *BRE*, October 4, 1976, 3.

<sup>29</sup> Tim Collins, "Retail Corner," *BRE*, May 2, 1980.

<sup>30</sup> Brian Ward, *Radio and the Struggle for Civil Rights in the South* (Gainesville, 2004), 5-7; see also Kathryn L. Alexander, "The Status of Contemporary Black-Oriented Radio in the United States," (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1981), 8.

black consumers, reinforced marketers' notion of the "negro market" as separate from the white mass market.<sup>31</sup> Surveys showed that over 70 percent of African Americans counted listening to radio as one of their preferred leisure activities, and 90 percent of African Americans listened to black-format radio daily—proportions far exceeding the rates for white Americans in those categories.<sup>32</sup> By the end of the 1960s, there were seventy-eight black-oriented radio stations nationwide, with forty-eight of them in the South and six of them in North Carolina.<sup>33</sup>

Black radio deejays had solidified their position as key gatekeepers of black communities in the North and South, joining ministers and a rising black political class. Many black deejays and even a few (mostly white) station owners across the South promoted and facilitated civil rights activism, albeit cautiously. In cities like Memphis, deejays at black-oriented station WDIA appealed for peace over the air and helped to diffuse street violence in the wake of Martin Luther King's assassination.<sup>34</sup> And by the end of the '60s, opportunities for black employment in black-oriented radio, although still inadequate, were far superior to African Americans' prospects for employment in any other media outlet. Efforts by the black disc jockey organization NATRA to ameliorate work conditions in the late 1960s produced limited results, but job opportunities for African Americans in radio did begin to improve in the 1970s. In fact, a

---

<sup>31</sup> Weems, *Desegregating the Dollar*, 41-46; Kathy M. Newman, "The Forgotten Fifteen Million: Black Radio, Radicalism, and the Construction of the 'Negro Market,'" in Squier, *Communities of the Air*, 109-133; Green, *Selling the Race*, 80-91.

<sup>32</sup> R. Dwight Bachman, *Dynamics of Black Radio: A Research Report* (Washington, D.C., 1977), 51-52; Ward, *Radio*, 6-7; William Barlow, *Voice Over: The Making of Black Radio* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), 10.

<sup>33</sup> *1968 Broadcasting Yearbook* (New York, 1968), D-32.

<sup>34</sup> Ward, *Radio*, 149-181, 210-248; Barlow, 218; Louis Cantor, *Wheelin' on Beale: How WDIA-Memphis Became the Nation's First All-Black Radio Station and Created the Sound that Changed America* (New York, 1992), 227. For general overviews of the history of black-format radio, see Barlow, *Voice Over*; Mark Newman, *Entrepreneurs of Profit and Pride: From Black-Appeal to Radio Soul* (New York, 1988); Gilbert Anthony Williams, *Legendary Pioneers of Black Radio* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1998).

survey of black-radio staffs in 1977 revealed that 63 percent of the industry's employees were African American, and 83 percent of black staffers worked in "higher paying job categories" such as managers and technicians, at a period of industry growth that also augmented the overall number of jobs in black radio.<sup>35</sup>

In terms of retail trade, very few businesses enjoyed greater popularity among African American consumers as record stores. One study of businesses in the heart of Harlem's commercial district on 125<sup>th</sup> Street, for instance, listed six record stores within a stretch of three blocks, outnumbering all retailers in the area except for general merchandisers, "lunchrooms," and beauty supply stores.<sup>36</sup> Black-oriented record stores were just as plentiful in the South, which accounted for more than half of the country's sales in black music.<sup>37</sup> North Carolina in the 1970s boasted at least fifty record stores that specialized in soul, R&B and gospel, and a number of the state's cities were home to several stores that catered to black music consumers.<sup>38</sup> Extrapolating from this data, it can be estimated that at least 400 black-oriented record stores were open for business in the South in the 1970s.<sup>39</sup> Several qualities distinguished records from other goods—such as clothes, groceries, or automobiles—that were in high demand in African

---

<sup>35</sup> Alexander, "Status of Contemporary Black-Oriented Radio in the United States," 202. On NATRA, see Ward, *Radio and the Struggle*, 289-294.

<sup>36</sup> George E. Northcroft, "Marketing Interactions between Consumer and Retailer in the Black Consumer Market" (PhD diss., St. John's University, 1970), 29 and table 9.

<sup>37</sup> NPD Research, Inc., *Consumer Purchasing of Records and Pre-recorded tapes in the United States: A Three Year Trend Report—1979-1980-1981* (New York, 1983), 14.

<sup>38</sup> List of North Carolina's black-owned and black-oriented record stores in the 1970s (in author's possession) based on interviews, *Black Radio Exclusive*, *Music Retailer*, African American newspapers, as well as Jason Perlmutter, webmaster of <http://www.carolinasoul.org>, email message to author, June 24, 2008.

<sup>39</sup> The above calculations and population figures for African Americans in North Carolina indicate that each of the state's fifty black-oriented record stores served a population of about 22,529 African Americans, which suggests the total number of 400 black-owned record stores in the region. See also *The Statistical Abstracts of the United States*, 93<sup>rd</sup> edition (Washington, D.C., 1972), 28.

American communities. Records, according to the famed music merchandiser Sam Goody, were a “poor man’s luxury.”<sup>40</sup> They were relatively inexpensive: singles cost a dollar or less, while LPs usually sold for five to seven dollars. Shopping for music, unlike the stress of buying a car or the mundane act of buying the weekly groceries, was enjoyable; even the act of browsing and selecting records was itself a leisure activity. As one record-store chain executive explained,

Buying a record is fun. Who enjoys buying toothpaste? Part of the enjoyment is in the selection: that is why records, in my opinion, cannot be successfully merchandised on the fifth floor of a department store behind the furniture displays.<sup>41</sup>

Buying music was an interactive, sensory experience that involved listening to the product before purchasing it, inspecting album art and liner notes.

Although black music entrepreneurs in the North like Barry Gordy were far better known than their smaller, Southern counterparts, the soul music scenes in North Carolina and other Southern states, though they depended on local music consumers, were not unknown to the national black music industry on the coasts. “Black radio and black music have far more facets to them than the view offered by life in New York, Philly, and L.A.” the “Mid South Report” for *BRE* declared in 1979. “There’s such a wealth of fresh talent in towns like Birmingham, Durham, Memphis and the rural areas that...major producers [should be] coming down checking things out with a contract in pocket.”<sup>42</sup> In North Carolina alone, well over 100 small, independent record labels released soul or R&B 45-singles—sometimes no more than one or two apiece—from the late 1960s to early 1980s.<sup>43</sup> Of North Carolina’s seventeen black-oriented

---

<sup>40</sup> Steve Chapple, *Rock 'n' Roll is Here to Pay: The History and Politics of the Music Industry* (Chicago: 1977), 262.

<sup>41</sup> “Hartstone Puts Words to Music,” *Music Retailer*, July 1972, 16; hereinafter cited as *MR*.

<sup>42</sup> Dr. Lance, “Mid-South Report,” *BRE*, November 16, 1979, 3.

<sup>43</sup> Carolina Soul, “North Carolina,” <http://www.carolinasoul.org/north.htm>, (accessed January 28, 2008).



radio stations, nine were black-owned and operated by 1979, more than in any state except for California. In the South as a whole, the number of black-owned and operated radio stations jumped more than sixfold, from just seven in 1970 to forty-four by 1979.<sup>44</sup>

Although the 1970s were an exciting time for black music consumers and businesses in the South, they also challenged young African Americans who had to navigate the unfamiliar landscape of a desegregating society. Black Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964, comprised the first generation of African Americans to experience adolescence during the dismantling of Jim Crow. They had witnessed the Civil Rights Movement vicariously through their siblings, parents, or television, but most black Baby Boomers were too young to have participated directly in the movement at its height from 1955 to 1965. In North Carolina, as in the rest of the South, desegregation in the late 1960s and early '70s required countless black schools to close their doors, forcing black students to abandon their schools' mascots, traditions, and teachers, all in order to attend majority-white schools. Over 3,000 black teachers in North Carolina—roughly 21 percent of the state's total—lost their jobs as result of desegregation, the highest such total for any Southern state except Texas. In 1963, North Carolina had 209 black school principals, but ten years later that number had shrunk to just three. Many African American parents noted a decline in their children's "motivation, self-esteem and academic performance" at desegregated schools.<sup>45</sup> The initial years of desegregation were confusing, bewildering and even frightening for young African Americans, many of whom for the first time

---

<sup>44</sup> "Black Radio: The Big, Rich Sound at the End of the Dial," *Black Enterprise*, November 1970, 31-33; "The 100 Stations Controlled by Blacks," *Broadcasting*, October 15, 1979, 47-48, lists eight black-owned and operated radio stations for North Carolina, but excludes one station, WVSP -Warrenton—see Barlow, 289. For a national list of black-oriented stations, see "Radio Stations Regularly Scheduling Negro/black Programs," *Spot Radio Rates and Data*, July 1, 1979, 19.

<sup>45</sup> David S. Cecelski, *Along Freedom Road: Hyde County, North Carolina and the Fate of Black Schools in the South* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1994), 1-11. On desegregation's impact on African American teachers, see also Adam Fairclough, *A Class of Their Own: Black Teachers in the Segregated South* (Cambridge, Mass.: 2007), 393-395.

had to attend classes taught by whites and compete with white classmates. Many African Americans noted that race relations in those institutions remained uneasy for years after desegregation. As Benjamin Payton, the prominent African American educator, stated in 1973:

It was amazing, the number of dismissals, of suspensions of black students that began to occur throughout the South on the heels of school integration. And this wasn't just four years ago; this still happens today... the very process of integration in the South has led to the humiliation of hundreds and thousands of black people.<sup>46</sup>

Black students of the era often faced outright resentment, frequent outbursts of interracial fighting with white students, and high rates of suspension. These factors combined with the decline in black educators to make black students' transition to majority-white schools not only challenging, but quite dispiriting at times.<sup>47</sup>

With the demise of so many black leaders and institutions, black record stores and radio stations remained among the few institutions in the post-Jim Crow South to offer black-oriented public spaces and black role models to young African Americans. Claude Barnes, a prominent African American activist in Greensboro in the late 1960s and early 1970s, vividly remembers how he spent his earnings from part-time jobs as a teenager. "We used to get paid once a week, and we would take the bus downtown, and one of the first places we would spend our money was the record shop—keeping up with the latest music was critically important."<sup>48</sup> Yet many

---

<sup>46</sup> Benjamin F. Payton, "The Other Side of Integration," in *When the Marching Stopped: An Analysis of Black Issues in the '70s* (New York, 1973), 154.

<sup>47</sup> Fairclough, *Class of Their Own*, 396-399; Howard Burchette, interview by author, digital recording, May 25, 2008. See also interview transcripts for Beverly Jones, April 5, 2005, U-0121; Valerie J. Miller-Cox, April 10, 2005, U-0123; Heshima Pugh-Du Ewa, February 18, 2005, U-0127, all housed in the Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>48</sup> Claude Barnes, interview by author, digital recording, October 16, 2008. On Barnes' political activities in Greensboro, see Claude W. Barnes, "Bullet Holes in the Wall: Reflections on the Dudley/A&T Revolt of May 1969," in *American National and State Government: An African American View of the Return of Redemptionist Politics*, edited by Barnes, Samuel A. Moseley and James D. Steele (Dubuque, Iowa, 1997) 193-201 and William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (Oxford, 1981), 185-188.

teenage and young adult black consumers faced economic hardships that challenged their ability to purchase recorded music. In 1970, a whopping 34.9 percent of African American teenagers and 19 percent of black twenty- to twenty-four year olds were unemployed, while only 15 and 8 percent of whites in those respective age groups were unemployed.<sup>49</sup> As George Bishop, owner of the Mr. Entertainer store in Greensboro in the mid-1970s, explained, “Black kids didn’t have the kind of money [the needed to buy albums]—it was the mommies and daddies who had the disposable income, so the kids were buying the less expensive 45s,” if anything.<sup>50</sup> Although they did not purchase recorded music as much as older African Americans did, countless black teenagers patronized records stores frequently and also consumed music by listening to it on the radio—more than any other demographic, in fact.<sup>51</sup>

Despite their precarious economic status, young African Americans in the long 1970s held black-owned businesses in high esteem and believed that they had a vital role to play in facilitating African American progress. Regardless of income, roughly two-thirds of black high-school juniors believed that governmental authorities “were unaware of black problems,” according to one survey.<sup>52</sup> A majority of those students, however, affirmed that black entrepreneurs were able and obliged to advance black communities’ economic and social interests. Black teenagers in the South, more than African Americans in any other region, expressed the dual desires to “be successful in business” (57.6%) and to “help black people”

---

<sup>49</sup> Sar A. Levitan and Robert Taggart, *The Job Crisis for Black Youth: Report on the Twentieth Century Fund Task Force on Employment Problems of Black Youth* (New York, 1971), 3-4, 28-29.

<sup>50</sup> George Bishop, interview by author, digital recording, August 12, 2007.

<sup>51</sup> “Arbitron Radio Analysis,” 2.

<sup>52</sup> *A National Profile of Black Youth: The Class of the 1971* (New York, 1972), 13.

(90.7%).<sup>53</sup> Although American teenagers' views of capitalist enterprise had worsened steadily since the 1950s, one survey from 1971 reported that more than half of black teenagers, compared to just over one-third of white teenagers, viewed American business in positive terms.<sup>54</sup>

Renewed interest in black-owned businesses in the late 1960s and 1970s flourished within the larger context of black citizens' organized campaigns for community control of local institutions, such as schools, city councils, and hospitals.<sup>55</sup> Although these campaigns borrowed elements of Black Power rhetoric that emphasized African American self-determination, even moderate black leaders like Whitney Young described community control in 1969 as "the most crucial issue right now...Institutions have failed because control isn't in the hands of the people who live in the communities."<sup>56</sup> As Claude Barnes recalls, in Greensboro "the black business community was ours."<sup>57</sup> Black consumers could influence black business owners—many of whom were well known local figures dependent on the good will of the black community for their survival—in ways that they could not as easily influence white shopkeepers, by making suggestions about inventory or by expressing displeasure with customer service or store policies. Even though *Black Enterprise* cautioned that independent black-owned shops "may not represent the optimum business operation," the magazine noted that they "often served to tie neighborhoods together...were favored as meeting places and message drops," and were among

---

<sup>53</sup> Robert J. Panos and Penny L. Edgert, *Black Youth: Characteristics Related to Geographical Location* (New York, 1972), 32 (drawn from the same set of data upon which the *National Profile of Black Youth* was based).

<sup>54</sup> Scott Ward and Greg Reale, "Student Attitudes Toward Business and Marketing Institutions and Practices," (Cambridge, Mass.: Marketing Science Institute Working Paper, 1972), 3.

<sup>55</sup> Alan A. Altshuler, *Community Control: The Black Demand for Participation in Large American Cities* (New York, 1970), 1-14; Douglas Glasgow, "Black Power Through Community Control," *Social Work*, 17 (January 1, 1972), 59-64, and Matthew J. Countryman, "From Protest to Politics: Community Control and Black Independent Politics in Philadelphia, 1965-1984," *Journal of Urban History*, 32 (September 2006), 813-861.

<sup>56</sup> *New York Times*, July 6, 1969, Section I, p. 32.

<sup>57</sup> Barnes, interview.

the few places where black families could purchase on credit.<sup>58</sup> At the end of the '60s, comparable campaigns for community power spread to black radio. Across the South, citizens pushed for greater coverage of black issues on the air and demanded that black-oriented stations employ more blacks, or even be sold to blacks.<sup>59</sup> In 1971, a group of student-activists at North Carolina Central College were so dismayed when WSRC, Durham's sole black-oriented station, ceased broadcasting, that they launched the nation's first community-based, black-oriented public radio station, WAFR.<sup>60</sup>

In fact, the growth in black-oriented radio stations in the 1970s suggested increasing racial segregation of American music audiences, contradicting modest forms of desegregation taking place in other areas of Southern society.<sup>61</sup> While one scholar has described the late 1950s and early 1960s as having "the most racially integrated popular music scene in American history," research from 1970s reveals that young white and black music consumers' tastes, especially in the South and in the latter part of the decade, contrasted sharply.<sup>62</sup> Although some white music consumers continued to listen to black-oriented radio in the 1970s, according to deejays at black radio stations, the overwhelming majority—ninety percent or more—of their

---

<sup>58</sup> Pat Patterson, "A New Look at 'Mom and Pop,'" *Black Enterprise* (November 1972), 7.

<sup>59</sup> Such campaigns took place in Atlanta, Nashville, Richmond, and various towns in Mississippi. See Hennessee, interview; Fred Ferreti, "The White Captivity of Black Radio," *Columbia Journalism Review*, 9 (Summer 1970), 39; Ward, *Radio*, 281-301.

<sup>60</sup> Community-based radio stations like WAFR were not based at educational institutions, in contrast to most public radio stations. See Ward, *Radio*, 281-314, 334-337; Paul F. Vandergrift, "Comparison of Two Approaches to Public/Noncommercial Radio in Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill, North Carolina," (M.A. thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1977).

<sup>61</sup> See note 2 and Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education*, 230.

<sup>62</sup> George, *Death of Rhythm and Blues*, 157; Werner, *Change is Gonna Come*, 213, 215-216; Paul Hirsch, *A Progress Report on an Exploratory Study of Youth Culture and the Popular Music Industry* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Survey Research Center, University of Michigan, 1970), 33-35, 47-49; Harvard University Graduate School of Business Administration, *A Study of the Soul Music Environment Prepared for Columbia Records Group*, May 11, 1972, 14-15 (in author's possession); Ward, *Just My Soul*, 124.

listeners were black.<sup>63</sup> To generalize broadly, young African Americans in the South preferred soul, funk and R&B, and beginning in the middle of the 1970s, disco.<sup>64</sup> The decade's biggest sellers included James Brown, the Jackson Five, and Al Green.<sup>65</sup> Meanwhile, rock, especially by the mid-1970s, drew an overwhelmingly white following.<sup>66</sup> Although some observers hailed events like Woodstock as proof of a new, inclusive American community based on music, rock festivals also demonstrated to marketers and advertisers the enormous economic power of a new generation of white music consumers.<sup>67</sup>

Unfortunately, the predominantly white, rock-oriented "Woodstock Nation" offered little space for African American music consumers and performers. At massive outdoor multi-act rock festivals in the late 1960s and '70s, the vast majority of attendees and performers were white, except at very rare black-oriented festivals like Los Angeles' Wattstax in 1972.<sup>68</sup> Black

---

<sup>63</sup> Alvin Stowe, interview by author, digital recording, August 9, 2007; Hennessee, interview; Johnson, interview.

<sup>64</sup> Hirsch, *A Progress Report*, 47-49; Curtiss Moore, interview by author, digital recording, August 1, 2007; Wayman "Slack" Johnson, interview by author, digital recording, August 8, 2007. Throughout the 1970s, black-owned record stores sold mainly rhythm and blues, soul and disco—see "20 City Report—Rhythm and Blues: Strength in Singles and Sales Gains in 8-Track," *MR*, November 1973, 24 and 30. According to Michael Erlewine, *All Music: The Experts' Guide to the Best Recordings from the Thousands of Artists in All Types of Music* (San Francisco, 1997), soul artists, such as those on Motown, reshaped black, Southern rhythm and blues of the '50s into music that would appeal to urban audiences in the 1960s and '70s more easily. Funk, by contrast, was the "rawest, more primal form of rhythm and blues," that primarily emphasized drums and bass, as exemplified by Parliament-Funkadelic and James Brown in the late '60s and '70s. Disco grew out of funk, but had fewer vocals, emphasized danceable beats even more, and often added soft strings; successful disco artists included Barry White and Chic. For sales figures of black performers in the 1970s, see Joel Whitburn, *The Billboard Book of Top 40 R&B and Hip Hop Hits* (New York, 2006), 783.

<sup>65</sup> Joel Whitburn, *The Billboard Book of Top 40 R&B and Hip Hop Hits* (New York: Billboard, 2006), 783.

<sup>66</sup> Werner, *Change is Gonna Come*, 213-216.

<sup>67</sup> On Woodstock and other rock festivals as new inclusive communities in America, see Abbie Hoffman, *Woodstock Nation: A Talk-Rock Album* (New York, 1969); Michael J. Kramer, "The Psychedelic Public and Its Problems: Rock Music Festivals and Civil Society in the Sixties Counterculture," in *Media and Public Spheres* (New York, 2007), 149-161.

<sup>68</sup> Of Woodstock's thirty-three acts, for example, only four included any black performers and photographs of the crowd reveal an audience that appeared to be at least 90 percent white. Robert Santelli, *Aquarius Rising: The Rock Festival Years* (New York, 1980), 134-35.

musicians received far fewer opportunities to perform for their fans outside small clubs, and because black acts rarely played with white acts at major concerts, white audiences were “seldom exposed to live soul performances.”<sup>69</sup> When whites heard black music on the radio, it was usually on pop or rock stations, not black-oriented stations, and they bought black performers’ music typically from white-owned music stores. The fledgling rock press showed minimal interest in black music, and the biweekly *Rolling Stone* featured black artists on its covers just one to three times a year.<sup>70</sup> Finally, progressive rock radio, a nascent FM format in the late ‘60s that billed itself as radio for open-minded music consumers, favored white rock and folk acts heavily. Consequently, few black consumers showed interest in the format.<sup>71</sup> Major record labels did not hide their preference for affluent, white consumers, either. As one record executive explained, “The long-haired kids have made us a lot of money.”<sup>72</sup>

By the early 1970s, even some major record labels began to realize that American music audiences had become more racially segregated in the previous decade.<sup>73</sup> In 1972, Columbia Records, a label with extensive experience in rock, commissioned Harvard University’s Business School to produce a report on the black music marketplace. The resulting *Study of the Soul*

---

<sup>69</sup> *Study of the Soul Music Environment*, addendum.

<sup>70</sup> “The Complete Covers 1967-1987,” *Rolling Stone*, November 5–December 10, 1987.

<sup>71</sup> According to Susan J. Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination: From Amos 'n' Andy and Edward R. Murrow to Wolfman Jack and Howard Stern*, 1st ed. (New York, 1999), 271, listeners of progressive radio “were usually also the fans of new rock and folk groups such as Richie Havens, Big Brother and the Holding Company, the Grateful Dead, and Cream.” On black listeners’ indifference towards progressive rock radio, see Michael C. Keith, *Talking Radio: An Oral History of American Radio in the Television Age* (Armonk, N.Y., 2000), 119-120.

<sup>72</sup> R. Serge Denisoff, *Solid Gold: The Popular Record Industry* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1975), 208. See also Werener, *Change is Gonna Come*, 213.

<sup>73</sup> George, *Death of Rhythm & Blues*, 106-107; Lester Bangs, “The White Noise Supremacists,” and Darrell M. McNeill, “Rock, Racism, and Retailing 101: A Blueprint for Cultural Theft,” in *Rip it Up: The Black Experience in Rock n’ Roll*, ed. Kandia Crazy Horse (New York, 2004), 103-114 and 145-164, respectively.

*Music Environment* found that black music had “never been important to Columbia,” or any other white-owned major labels (save for Atlantic), and that the majors knew “little about Black consumers, Soul artists, and Black professionals” in radio and music retail. Black consumers tended to buy at independently owned, black record shops. Even more important, the study confirmed that African Americans and white music fans listened to different radio stations.<sup>74</sup> Black-format radio, more than any other medium, exposed African Americans to popular music and was the most powerful factor to motivate young black consumers to purchase recorded music.<sup>75</sup>

## II. Black Radio and Virtual Music Consumption

No other medium spoke to young black consumers the way black radio did—respectfully, directly, and in local, accessible terms. By the early ‘60s, transistors had become so inexpensive that even poor consumers could afford to purchase a radio and, if they wished, could consume music without buying records.<sup>76</sup> Black radio—save for six daily black newspapers in the U.S.—was the only medium to target African Americans every day of the week. Furthermore, black consumers rated black-oriented radio as more honest, entertaining, and empathetic than the black press.<sup>77</sup> Through the 1970s, few television programs regularly featured African Americans, and the black press aimed for middle-aged and middle-income African Americans readers, not black teenagers and young adults. Thus, black radio was the

---

<sup>74</sup> *Study of the Soul Music Environment*, addendum; “Industry Speaks: Curtom’s Marv Stuart—‘Black Music Market Still Untapped,’” *MR*, November 1976, 50.

<sup>75</sup> Moore, interview; *Study of the Soul Music Environment*, Appendix B.

<sup>76</sup> Douglas, *Listening In*, 226.

<sup>77</sup> Bachman, *Dynamics of Black Radio*, 51-52.



primary medium to seek young African Americans as its main audience. Rita Joyner, an African-American woman who grew up in the eastern North Carolina town of Kinston in the 1970s, remembers how she and her siblings “always had music on [in the house]...just as much, if not more than TV. We’d have everything on in the house playing the radio,” so that it would almost “make the house [sound like a] stereo.”<sup>78</sup> Stations played many records daily, if not several times a day, allowing listeners to hear songs repeatedly, just as they could have if they owned a copy of the record. Black stations provided a vital service to young African Americans, many of whom were hard-pressed to purchase records, by allowing them to consume music without having to buy it.

Black radio stations even allowed black consumers to play a small, but concrete, role in their day-to-day operations, as loyal listeners frequently called stations to make requests. Wayman “Slack” Johnson, a deejay who worked at WEAL-Greensboro and WGIV-Charlotte, recalls that “the phone never stopped ringing in the stations, and if it wasn’t ringing, you were in trouble. People [who called into the station] loved hearing their name announced over the radio.”<sup>79</sup> When deejays granted song requests or even announced callers’ names over the air, it gave listeners the feeling that they were participating in radio, not just passively consuming it, as they would a film or television show. Although there were a handful of black radio programs with regional and even national audiences, most black radio stations depended on local listeners for their survival. Charlotte’s WGIV, for instance, described its station philosophy as “informing, entertaining the community. We try to establish a positive black image.” Another

---

<sup>78</sup> Rita Joyner, interview by author, digital recording, June 8, 2008

<sup>79</sup> Wayman “Slack” Johnson, telephone interview by author, June 10, 2008.

advertisement hailed the station as “Charlotte’s only black consumer station.”<sup>80</sup> The R&B station WAAA similarly commended “the black community in Winston Salem [that] has been responsible for our existence during the past twenty-nine years.”<sup>81</sup>

Black radio played a modest role in offering young black consumers shared community spaces oriented toward young African Americans.<sup>82</sup> As more and more predominantly Southern black public schools closed their doors for desegregation, the need for such public spaces had become even more acute. Black radio provided African American listeners electronic, public forums in which they could consume music collectively. Black music consumers across cities and towns simultaneously heard the same songs and deejays’ talk-sets, as if they were congregating to take part in a shared conversation with other African Americans in their community. “White listeners were not as dedicated to their [rock and pop] stations as blacks were to their stations—this was the case in every town,” recalled Bill Hennessee, a deejay at WIDU in Fayetteville, North Carolina from 1965 to 1987. “Black listeners knew all about the black jocks, they know all about their families, they knew everything about them.” One of the first lessons Hennessee imparted to newly hired deejays at WIDU was their obligation to cultivate close relationships with Fayetteville’s black community. “Anytime people ask you to come out to an event, you show up,” he advised new deejays. “It’ll make you popular in the community, and it’s a service we do.”<sup>83</sup> Maintaining a close relationship with fans was not only a form of good customer service, it was black deejays’ “best job security,” Hennessee explained.

---

<sup>80</sup> Sheila Rogers Allen, “Sunny Side Up—Market Spotlight: Charlotte, N.C.,” *BRE*, August 31, 1979; *Television/Radio Age*, February 13, 1978, A-17.

<sup>81</sup> Sheila Rogers Allen, “Sunny Side Up—Market Spotlight: Greensboro, NC/Winston-Salem, NC,” *BRE*, September 21, 1979, 21.

<sup>82</sup> On young African Americans’ radio listening habits, see note 13.

<sup>83</sup> Bill Hennessee, interview by author, digital recording, April 26, 2007.

When WIDU launched its black-oriented format in 1965, “there was probably not a black kid in town who had been inside a radio station,” Hennessee recalled. By the end of the decade, however, Hennessee had launched and was supervising an hour-long radio show on Saturdays that high-schoolers wrote, produced and announced. A group of mostly black students from Fayetteville and surrounding Cumberland County volunteered to play records and report on happenings at their schools and in their neighborhoods. On other occasions, black teenagers would arrive unannounced at WIDU’s studio, asking to tour the facilities and meet their favorite deejays. Deejays at WGIV-Charlotte offered teenage listeners free, weekly block parties at low-income housing complexes in the summer.<sup>84</sup> “In Charlotte, we could move thousands of people,” “Slack” Johnson explained about his days as a deejay at WGIV. “It was scary what we could do... We could ask them to come down” to the station or somewhere else in the community, “and they would come, almost immediately.” Black radio stations all over the South regularly organized free or inexpensive concerts, parties, picnics and other events that drew thousands, even tens of thousands, of black consumers in the ‘70s.<sup>85</sup> Claude Barnes describes how “Slack” Johnson, who started his radio career at Greensboro’s WEAL,

Helped us make that transition from negro to black...He helped contribute to the political climate in Greensboro and African-American community, because he was playing that conscious music. James’ Brown’s “Say It Loud (I’m Black and I’m Proud),” he’d play that over and over again...WEAL talked about our events. When [activists] had meetings to discuss controversial issue in our community, we could also get information about where to meet by listening to WEAL.

---

<sup>84</sup> “Promotions,” *BRE*, August 8, 1977.

<sup>85</sup> On major festivals, concerts, and charity drives hosted by black radio stations in cities like Memphis, Raleigh, Savannah and Columbus, Georgia, see “Festivals,” *BRE*, March 27, 1978, 4 and “Talent Show at WOKS,” *BRE*, February 2, 1977, 6; “Happenings: WGIV Draws 5.1 Million Responses,” *BRE*, circa July 1977; “Happenings—Festivals: ‘The Spring Affair’ held in Raleigh, N.C.,” *BRE*, March 27, 1978.

Many young listeners not only tuned into black radio, but felt that local stations belonged to the their community. As Barnes recalls, “we thought WEAL was *our* radio station.”<sup>86</sup>

### III. African-American Record Stores and Retail Public Spaces

Black record stores also served communities as public spaces where African American consumers, even ones young and poor, could congregate. In North Carolina, black-owned stores like Mr. Entertainer and Curt’s Records in Greensboro, Wood’s in Fayetteville, the Soul Shack in Raleigh, and Zeigler’s in Maxton thrived in the 1970s. Each of these stores’ clientele consisted primarily of black consumers from surrounding residential neighborhoods, as well as some students from local, historically black colleges and visitors from surrounding towns. At successful record stores like Curt’s, which operated from 1962 to 1989, “business was just booming” in the 1970s. On weekends, especially Saturdays, customers came from all over those cities and even from surrounding towns to shop at stores like Curt’s and Woods’. “Every weekend there were a few new hits—and they were hot,” Moore recalled. As a record store owner, “You thought you were doing it, but you weren’t really doing it. You were just riding the tide” of consumers’ unquenchable thirst for new records.<sup>87</sup> Indeed, from the late 1960s to the late 1970s, the national record industry as a whole experienced a boom period, in which consumers’ appetite for new records seemed nearly insatiable.<sup>88</sup>

Black record store owners employed several strategies to attract customers to their stores, but their primary advantage over white-owned, and usually larger, record stores was that they

---

<sup>86</sup> Barnes, interview.

<sup>87</sup> Moore, interview; Hennessee, interview; Zeigler, interview; Bishop, interview.

<sup>88</sup> Cornyn, “Platinum Rising,” in *Rolling Stone The Seventies*; and Schmedel, “The Trend Buckers,” *WSJ*, April 16, 1970.

specialized in music by black performers, mostly soul and R&B, but also jazz and gospel. Chain record stores and white independent shops did not sell certain records by black performers, or they might stock a record by a black performer only after it had become a hit on white-oriented pop radio. Staff members at some white-owned record chains openly admitted how little they knew about black music.<sup>89</sup> At black-owned record stores, if a customer had “heard a song he liked on radio or at a club, they often don’t know its name,” a reporter for *Billboard* wrote. Instead, the customers would often “sing a bit or hum the melody, so the retailer has to know his stock if he wants the sale.”<sup>90</sup> African-American record dealers took great pride in their knowledge of the whatever music was currently popular in their communities. As Moore’s motto suggested, customers could “find the hits first at Curt’s.” Some customers would even order records from Moore and wait days for them to arrive, rather than patronize other record stores. Store-owners’ advertisements on black radio stations and their personal connections to deejays provided them ties to labels and distributors, since deejays often maintained close relationships with record companies. In-store advertising was important, too. Moore’s store was located in a busy commercial strip home to several other businesses that received considerable customer traffic. In addition to playing “the top records, the new stuff” inside the store, Moore mounted speakers on his store’s façade to play music to outside passersby. People in the adjacent stores, in the strip’s parking lot, and in passing cars could hear the music, so that “even when they were trying to go home, they’d still have a song in their heads.” Customers

---

<sup>89</sup> “Emerald City Corp. Recognizing Importance of Black Sales,” *BRE*, May 4, 1979, 11.

<sup>90</sup> Nelson George, “Little Credit for Hitbreakers: Black Retailers Fight Industry Double Standards,” *Billboard*, June 5, 1982, BM-6.

commonly decided to go into Moore's shop on a whim and purchase a record after hearing it on his speakers outside.<sup>91</sup>

Almost all African-American owned record stores in the South were independent shops operated by local entrepreneurs and located in downtown commercial districts or black neighborhoods, areas where young black consumers, many of whom had little or no access to private automobiles, could easily reach them by foot or public transportation.<sup>92</sup> White-owned chain stores dominated American retail more and more in these years, and the number of shopping centers in America—most of them suburban, dominated by white shoppers, and far from black residential areas—skyrocketed from less than 4,000 in 1960 to over 17,000 by 1977.<sup>93</sup> In an age when shopping centers, discount stores and supermarkets proliferated, self-service was quickly becoming the norm for American consumers. Because many black record shops stored their merchandise behind counters that were inaccessible to shoppers, they kept alive the increasingly elusive face-to-face transactions between consumers and shopkeepers that had characterized American retail for the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>94</sup> Not surprisingly, activists and cultural commentators aimed criticism of American consumer culture more at mass

---

<sup>91</sup> Moore, interview; Hennessee, interview; Barnes, interview.

<sup>92</sup> Almost half of all black record shops were "located in downtown," according to "The Anatomy of the Music Industry: Black Music Dealers Serve a Broader Range," *MR*, June 1980, 14. As late as 1983, roughly one-third of African American households were without access to automobiles. See Eric T. Hill, *Assessing Travel Behavior by Blacks in the United States: A New Perspective* (Tampa: University of South Florida, Center for Urban Transportation Research, 1994), 36.

<sup>93</sup> Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic*, 266; "ICSC Presents: The Many Aspects of Shopping Centers," *New York Times*, May 2, 1977, 472; Nancy E. Cohen, *America's Marketplaces: The History of Shopping Centers* (Lyme, Conn., 2002), 56-57.

<sup>94</sup> Mansel G. Blackford, *A History of Small Business in America* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2003), 144, 171; see Miller, "Calvin Simpson," *BRE*, 13.

merchandisers and major corporations than at small, entrepreneurial operations like black-owned record stores.<sup>95</sup>

Unfortunately, many black-owned record shops, in contrast to their larger chain and mass merchandiser competitors, faced significant challenges in providing consumers with a sizable selection of low priced music. African-American record dealers frequently suffered from insufficient credit, so they often had to buy stock with cash, preventing them from offering for sale as many releases as better-funded, white-owned chain stores did.<sup>96</sup> Small record stores also tended to pay higher rents per square foot than larger record stores did.<sup>97</sup> The economies of scale available to larger white-owned record stores allowed them to offer consumers lower prices than small record stores could. Disruptions in the supply chain plagued black-owned record stores and their customers. Moore, like many other black record dealers, “could hear a hit record [on the radio] and not know where to get it” for days, even weeks.<sup>98</sup> Distributors and record labels frequently neglected small record stores and black radio stations in smaller Southern markets, leading some stations and stores to publish notices in trade magazines desperately pleading for major labels to supply them with their products.<sup>99</sup>

Nonetheless, black-owned record stores, as small operations with high levels of customer service, felt welcoming to even the unlikeliest of shoppers. Almost by definition, black-owned

---

<sup>95</sup> Daniel Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence: Critiques of American Consumer Culture, 1939-1979* (Amherst, Mass., 2004), 162-166, 203-206.

<sup>96</sup> Bishop, interview; “Black Music—The Dealers’ View,” *MR*, June 1979, 15-18; Tim Collins, “Retailers Are Urged to Buy More Selectively,” *BRE*, January 19, 1979, 11.

<sup>97</sup> Blackford, *History*, 172.

<sup>98</sup> Moore, interview; “Retail Requests,” *BRE*, October 26, 1979, 8; *BRE*, October 12, 1979, 8.

<sup>99</sup> “Retail Corner,” *BRE*, July 6, 1979; “Retail Requests,” *BRE*, May 5, 1979; “Letters to the Publisher,” *BRE*, February 29, 1980; “Retail Corner,” *BRE*, January 18, 1980.

retail businesses were small businesses, and in North Carolina, they employed just three employees on average.<sup>100</sup> At black-owned retail operations, owners and sales clerks were often on familiar terms with many of their customers, providing them with friendly and personable environments that were hard to find at chain merchandisers. In a similar fashion, Claude Barnes tells how

We'd go into Curt's, try to listen to the music that was playing, look at everything in there that we possibly could. We might not even end up with one record, cause we didn't have a lot of money, but it was a weekly ritual [starting at age 12, 13] to go down there, hang out...and listen to older people talk about the music...Everyone felt comfortable there.

Outlining his philosophy of customer service and salesmanship in a small motivational pamphlet titled *How Poor People Can Increase Their Income*, Moore offered aspiring entrepreneurs the following advice: "Regardless [of] what you are selling, you must first sell yourself...You must make people like you and not just tolerate you."<sup>101</sup> As Moore recalled:

We would put up with people a lot. Some people came in popping their fingers [at us], and we would still be nice to them. Customer service was very important, and we trained employees to be very nice and thankful to customers.

Observers of the overall music industry echoed Moore's recollection of his store's customer service, too. "The interaction between [the black record-store] owner and customers is crucial both to his profit—and to the record industry in general," wrote one reporter for *Billboard*. "Unlike the huge retail chains who offer volume and no personal contact, the best black retailers advise and cajole customers."<sup>102</sup> Even when kids like Barnes lacked money to buy records, they

---

<sup>100</sup> U.S Bureau of the Census, *Minority-Owned Businesses: 1969, MB-1* (Washington, D.C., 1971), 92.

<sup>101</sup> Curtiss D. Moore, *How Poor People Can Increase Their Income* (Winston-Salem, N.C., 1967), 20, copy in author's possession.

<sup>102</sup> "Little Credit for Hitbreakers," *Billboard*, June 5, 1982, BM-6.



still visited record stores, because Moore and other independent record storeowners created climates in which customers of all means could feel comfortable.<sup>103</sup>

Indeed, black, independently owned music businesses provided young African Americans a culture of consumption in which they received respect and felt a sense of belonging that many white businesses in the South still did not offer them in the 1970s. Fears of demeaning shopping experiences with discriminatory retailers motivated African American consumers to place higher value on shopping with familiar and personable merchants than white consumers did.<sup>104</sup> Howard Burchette, a lifelong soul and funk fan, recalls avoiding white-owned mom-and-pop record stores in Raleigh in the '70s, because "being a teenager and black, people in those stores would watch me and make me uncomfortable...[as though] I was going to steal stuff." Claude Barnes remembers that until the very end of the '60s, black shoppers felt truly welcome in only a handful of white-owned stores in Greensboro, and certainly not in the town's major chain outfits like Kress and Woolworth's.<sup>105</sup> Clerks and shop owners at successful black-owned record stores were financially stable adults, but they seemed hipper than parents or teachers, especially with their colorful stories from nightclubs and live performances by the era's hottest black musicians (which were usually off limits to teenagers). "Streetwise, opinionated, slightly cynical, mentally tough; most established black [music] retailers are respected in the community," *Billboard* told readers.<sup>106</sup> Even the most cash-strapped teenagers were welcome to participate in music consumption at these retailers' stores. Young consumers could read and examine album covers and liner notes, admire photographs taken of performers with the store's

---

<sup>103</sup> Moore, interview; Burchette, interview.

<sup>104</sup> Andreasen, *The Disadvantaged Consumer*, 88-91.

<sup>105</sup> Burchette, interview.

<sup>106</sup> Little Credit for Hitbreakers," *Billboard*, June 5, 1982, BM-6.

owners, ask clerks for their opinions on the newest hits, chat with other patrons and even listen to records in the store. By doing all these things, young African Americans could consume music without having to purchase it.

\*       \*       \*

Black music businesses provided young African Americans the chance to congregate and express themselves without worrying about how whites might judge them. This was critically important in the late 1960s and 1970s, when an asymmetrical desegregation process was closing many of the key institutions in which black youth had traditionally found community, African – American public schools. Although they could not make up for the loss of other black institutions, successful Southern black music businesspeople served young African Americans as models of community pride and economic stability in this period. In a consumer culture dominated by national corporations that catered to white consumers, young African Americans, regardless of their financial means, could feel that they were wanted and respected, and not merely tolerated, as patrons in black-oriented, local music spaces. In fact, the quest to maintain and expand a predominantly black music marketplace mirrored other efforts in the 1970s by black Southerners who, in hoping to secure economic and community power, established new African American institutions.<sup>107</sup> Indeed, African American music businesses prospered in the 1970s, demonstrating that the desegregation of markets alone did not kill all forms of black-owned enterprise.

Interestingly, many young African Americans in the South, who had never really enjoyed full access to the fruits of their country's consumer culture, looked favorably upon black-owned

---

<sup>107</sup> See Timothy J. Minchin, "'A Brand New Shining City': Floyd B. McKissick Sr. and the Struggle to Build Soul City, North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review*, 82 (April 2005), 125-155; Devin Fergus, *Liberalism, Black Power, and the Making of American Politics, 1965-1980* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009), especially chapters on Malcolm X Liberation University and Soul City, 54-90 and 196-231, respectively.

businesses. Black youth especially admired radio deejays and record-store owners for reinforcing community bonds and pursuing economic self-sufficiency in the wake of desegregation. This contrasts with significantly higher levels of white, affluent Baby Boomers who expressed displeasure with American capitalism and materialism through rock music and other countercultures in the late 1960s and 1970s.<sup>108</sup> Granted, many people have oversold the economic benefits of African American-owned businesses, but scholars who have condemned black business have overreacted to the unfounded idealism of business boosters, in turn further skewing our understanding of black entrepreneurship. But by widening our view of African American enterprise to include independent, black-owned record stores and radio stations in the 1970s South, we can see how some local black businesses, despite facing grave economic challenges, produced social and cultural benefits for young African Americans, bringing them together to forge vibrant communities based around public music consumption.<sup>109</sup> If anything, the resilience of the black music marketplace in the 1970s casts doubt on how inclusive the American mass market of the mid-twentieth century ever was. The success of the black music marketplace in the 1970s demonstrates how some African-American consumers and businesses, who had long been ignored and excluded from the nation's white-oriented mass consumer society, found inspiration in Black Power's endorsement of racial pride and economic self-sufficiency to reassert their autonomy.

---

<sup>108</sup> The audience for "social protest" records at the start of the 1970s was "drawn disproportionately from white, upper middle class teenagers"—see Hirsch, *A Progress Report*, 51. See also David Farber, *The Age of Great Dreams: America in the 1960s* (New York, 1994), 169-170; Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle, "Introduction: Historicizing the American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s," in Braunstein and Doyle, eds., *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s* (New York, 2002), 10-12.

<sup>109</sup> Starting in the early 1990s, the rise of hip hop in select major Southern cities provided new possibilities for economic and community empowerment for black music businesses and consumers—see Roni Sarig, *Third Coast: Outkast, Timbaland and how Hip Hop Became a Southern Thing* (Cambridge, Mass., 2007).

In the next chapter, I will examine how young female consumers in the 1970s drew inspiration from another social movement, second-wave feminism, in embracing blue jeans as a form of liberation from the sexist double standard that governed women's fashion.

## Chapter 2

### Women's Blue Jeans and the Repudiation of the Fashion Double Standard

“Clothing liberation means never having to say, ‘I haven’t got a thing to wear,’” Laura Torbet told readers in her 1973 sartorial manifesto, *Clothing Liberation: Out of the Closets and Into the Streets*. “In an age when clothes are mass produced, often messily produced, when styles change several times a year...more and more people are turning away from the fashion scene entirely. These people wear blue jeans and sweatshirts. All the time.”<sup>1</sup> Torbert was not alone in the 1970s linking contemporary changes in fashion to the theme of liberation. The next year, *Ms.* magazine published an article that surveyed leading feminists on the tremendous changes women’s fashion had undergone in the last half-decade. In “Finding a Personal Style,” Trucia Kushner explained how, as recently as the 1960s,

Most of us were just absentmindedly following along, finding style and sometimes comfort in the clothes that were formulated by our role models... Then, suddenly, we found the premise of style being questioned,...At about the time when most of us were hemming up our skirts into minis, we also began a painful and confusing style-evaluation process.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, by the turn of the 1970s, many young American women had begun the “process” of confronting the many double standards they faced in their daily lives. The decade is well remembered as one in which women questioned, undermined and rejected the sexual double

---

<sup>1</sup> Laura Torbet, *Clothing Liberation: Out of the Closets and Into the Streets* (New York: Praeger, 1973), v.

<sup>2</sup> Trucia Kushner, “Finding a Personal Style,” *Ms.*, February 1974, 50.

standard.<sup>3</sup> But it was in the 1970s that women also began to confront the fashion double standard imposed on them by designers, advertisers, public institutions and powerful codes of propriety that governed women's clothing choices.

Simply put, the fashion double standard expected women to put far more effort, time, and money into dressing themselves than men did. This gendered code of dress also demanded that women express through their wardrobes a form of femininity that was fragile, demure and unthreatening to men. Consequently, many public settings proscribed women from wearing garments considered masculine, informal, or simply assertive. In embracing blue jeans in the long 1970s, women challenged the fashion double standard and raised several fundamental questions about the individual consumer's rights to autonomy in the marketplace and in the public sphere. Who had the authority to decide how women, especially young women, used the goods they bought? Should schools, workplaces and other public places restrict and regulate how women dressed, or should female consumers have the right to present themselves however they pleased in public? Most basically, who was to decide which garments were appropriate for women to wear? To what degree should young women choose their own styles, regardless of the preferences of male arbiters of fashion that populated America's public institutions, retail outlets and design houses?

Although women began to wear jeans in public settings more out of personal choice than political prerogative, by the start of the 1970s, feminists had come to recognize that some of the same impulses that were propelling the second-wave also contributed to jeans' rising popularity.

---

<sup>3</sup> Gail Collins, *When Everything Changed: The Amazing Journey of American Women, from 1960 to the Present* (New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2009), 149-177; David Allyn, *Make Love Not War—The Sexual Revolution: An Unfettered History* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2000); Kelly Morrow, "Navigating the 'Sexual Wilderness': The Sexual Liberation Movement at the University of North Carolina, 1969-1973," (M.A. thesis: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2006).

Issues of how much choice women should have in shaping their daily lives, how much women should defer to male authority, and how much women should comply with gendered expectations of behavior were among the main concerns of second-wave feminism. In wearing blue jeans, women challenged the conventional wisdom in each of these three areas. Even Gloria Steinem, perhaps the best-known feminist in America, described her switch to blue jeans in language that suggested how wearing denim mirrored feminism's goal of liberating women from society's gendered double standards. "I grew dependent on spending a certain amount of time putting myself together," she recalled. "When I finally gave that up, it reflected a change in and a redirection of the uses of my time. Now jeans are my uniform. And I feel much freer from the tyranny of wanting things." This overwhelming pressure women faced to constantly update their wardrobes had constituted one of the central components of the fashion double-standard, but since the end of the 1960s, Kushner concluded, "the Women's Movement had [had] more impact on style than *Vogue* ever dreamed of having."<sup>4</sup> Indeed, female consumers did start to challenge the fashion double standard at around the same time that the women's movement was gaining momentum in America.

Still, I interpret the popularization of women's blue jeans as the result of a broader set of complicated, and sometimes contradictory, developments in fashion, hip business, feminism and, most importantly, in how women advocated and fought for more autonomy as consumers in the marketplace. By examining how women wore jeans for work, school, and recreation, often in the face of countervailing norms and dress codes, we can understand better how female consumers used goods to challenge the fashion double standard and to assert new freedoms in

---

<sup>4</sup> Kushner, "Finding a Personal Style," 47-51. Steinem, although herself not a Baby Boomer, exerted an enormous ideological influence on young feminists in the 1970s and even served as a role model of style and fashion to many young women—see "Gloria in Excelsis: It's the Steinem Look," *Life*, August 11, 1972, 66-67.

the public sphere. Female consumers who amassed new powers and options in how they dressed acted out part of women's larger struggle in the 1970s, within and outside the feminist movement, to gain control of their bodies.<sup>5</sup> But the popularization of women's blue jeans also reveals the limits of second-wave feminism's power to influence consumer culture. Some jeans-makers and merchandisers, despite showing sympathy for undermining the fashion double standard by creating and marketing jeans specifically for women, still refused to fully respecting their female customers as equal to their male counterparts. Not only that, but by the late 1970s, some developments in the market for women's jeans actually undermined feminist ideals, reflecting and reinforcing a surging backlash against the movement and its impact on popular culture.

## II. The Popularization of Women's Blue Jeans

In order to understand the rise of women's blue jeans, we need to consider the topic in relation to three areas of analysis: dress, consumption, and gender.<sup>6</sup> There are few facets of consumer culture in which gender differences are so pronounced. Not only are most clothing items manufactured for and marketed towards one sex in particular, but most of the spaces in which consumers purchase clothes are also segregated along gender lines, with separate shopping areas for women and men, girls and boys. As sociologist Joanne Entwistle has argued, "understanding dress in everyday life requires understanding ...how the body is experienced and

---

<sup>5</sup> For a compelling look at the role that the politicization of the body played in second-wave feminism, see Greta Rensenbrink, "Reshaping Body Politics: Lesbian Feminism and the Cultural Politics of the Body, 1968-1983" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> As a history of dress, instead of fashion or costume, this analysis will center on everyday clothing, as opposed to the more rarefied styles of haute couture that change frequently according to the cycle of designers' seasonal collections. Also, this analysis considers transformations in fashion styles as changes in consumption-not only how consumers purchase clothing and but also the manner in which they use those garments.



lived and the role dress plays in the presentation of the body/self.”<sup>7</sup> The popularization of pants and jeans for women represented a major shift in how women displayed their bodies in public and outside of their homes, and it also marked a transformation in how institutions promoted, allowed and proscribed forms of bodily display.

Before the late 1960s, young women virtually never wore blue jeans at work, school, or anywhere but the most casual social settings. In fact, before the 1920s, very few American women wore pants in any setting, and those who did were almost uniformly viewed by society as pariahs who had effectively renounced their femininity.<sup>8</sup> In the 1940s, wartime production demands that relaxed gender norms made it temporarily acceptable for large numbers of women to wear blue jeans in industrial workplaces.<sup>9</sup> Yet in the early postwar years, with the resurgence of conservative norms that dictated a strict delineation between gender roles, it once again became virtually unthinkable for women to wear blue jeans in public. By and large, women’s

---

<sup>7</sup> Joanne Entwistle, “The Dressed Body,” in *Body Dressing*, eds. Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth Wilson (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 55.

<sup>8</sup> Catherine Smith and Cynthia Greig, *Women in Pants* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2003), 7-15. A handful of American women experimented with wearing two-legged garments as early as the 1850s. By the end of the nineteenth century, small subsets of American women wore pants: women who worked as laborers in the outdoors (as miners or ranch hands); women who participated in athletics; actresses who portrayed men on the stage. Also, a very small proportion of females cross-dressed, sometimes temporarily for photographs or masquerades, but also on rare cases as permanent transvestites, who usually sought to conceal a lesbian relationship. Even female factory workers continued to wear dresses at work, despite the occupational danger of loose cloth catching in running machinery. By and large, Americans interpreted women who wore pants as morally suspect, and sometimes even as prostitutes. Finally, bloomers represented an effort among designers to craft pants that were baggy enough to emulate the billowy effects of dresses, but their popularity was short-lived and limited to the middle of the nineteenth century.

<sup>9</sup> Eileen Boris, “Desirable Dress: Rosies, Sky Girls, and the Politics of Appearance,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 69 (Spring 2006): 123-142. With huge increases of women entering the workforce in munitions and other branches of war production, female factory workers were generally exempted from wearing dresses to their workplaces. Not only had industrial managers did conclude that it was unsafe for women to work assembly lines in dresses or skirts, but wartime rationing made nylon hose scarce, thus making unavailable an accessory that many women viewed as obligatory accompaniment for skirts and dresses. While some wartime female factory workers recall wearing pants to work fondly, many of them remember feeling embarrassed and reluctant to incorporate two-legged garments into their wardrobe. As one female worker remembered, at the conclusion of the war, “seventy percent of the women were delighted to get out of slacks and bandannas”—see Nancy Baker Wise and Christy Wise, *A Mouthful of Rivets: Women at Work in World War II* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994), 190.

“ultra feminine and luxurious styles” dominated women’s fashion in the 1950s and into the first half of the 1960s.<sup>10</sup> Popular articulations of prevailing dress norms strongly discouraged women from donning blue jeans. The 1963 edition of *Seventeen* magazine’s *Book of Etiquette and Entertaining* urged young women, when “shopping or visiting the art museum for your term paper, [to] wear school clothes or a simple dress or suit. No shorts...or beatnik pants.” In fact, blue jeans, “and other obviously country-wear garments” were “always out” in the city.

Educational institutions across the country commonly prohibited women from wearing jeans and pants of any kind in the 1950s and through most of the 1960s.<sup>11</sup> At colleges and universities, women were restricted in what they could wear not only to class, but also in libraries, dining halls, extracurricular activities and even while shopping. In fact, female students were commonly issued written guidelines for appropriate dress as soon as they arrived on campus their freshman year. At a wide range of institutions, female undergraduates were allowed to wear slacks and jeans only in the most private of areas on campus, such as the upper floors of dormitories and their private bedrooms. A survey of freshmen and senior home economics majors at the University of Alabama in 1959 revealed that “sweaters and shirts were the most popular outfit for school wear” and not a single student thought to recommend pants as a garment that rising female freshmen should purchase for their basic college wardrobe.<sup>12</sup> If a female undergraduate wanted to wear something other than a skirt or dress outside after dark, she was commonly required to conceal her outfit underneath a full-length coat. Inclement weather rarely exempted women from the dress code. To take just one example, the Ohio State

---

<sup>10</sup> John Peacock, *Fashion Sourcebooks: The 1950s* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 7.

<sup>11</sup> Ronald Walter Grady, “High School Dress Codes and Due Process of Law,” (Education specialist thesis, Eastern New Mexico University, 1973), 67.

<sup>12</sup> Henrietta M. Thompson and Mary Neville Edmonds, “A Minimum College Wardrobe for a Freshman,” *Journal of Home Economics* (October 1960), 663-664.

University allowed women to wear pants outside dorms only if the temperature fell below ten degrees Fahrenheit. Sorority members occasionally wore jeans for casual, off-campus Greek events like co-ed touch football games or Western-themed mixers.<sup>13</sup> Thus, in the 1950s and most of the 1960s, women on college campuses wore skirts and dresses for virtually all occasions.<sup>14</sup>

Institutional bans on women's pants constituted a powerful and effective strategy of forcing women into a subordinate status in America's public life and consumer culture. According to *Seventeen's* etiquette book, the submissive "girl look" was always in, since "it makes boys want to take care of you."<sup>15</sup> As Judith Butler has argued convincingly, gender represents the sum of a whole range of cultural actions and behaviors that men and women perform on a regular basis.<sup>16</sup> Dress codes represent a prime example of enforced performance of gender. Female undergraduates were subjected to stricter and far more detailed dress codes than their male counterparts. College administrators, in their embrace of *in loco parentis*, considered the task of molding teenage girls into respectable, feminine women as one of their foremost responsibilities. School officials argued that by regulating female students' outfits on campus

---

<sup>13</sup> Renee N. Lansley, "College Women or College Girls: Gender, Sexuality, and In Loco Parentis on Campus" (Ph.D. dissertation, The Ohio State University, 2004), 75-79; Pamela Schuelke Johnson and Sabrina Claire Chapman, *Dressing for Education the First Fifty Years: Highlights of the JMU Historic Clothing Collection, 1908-1959* (Harrisonburg, Va.: 2005), 165-66.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, photographs from the University of California at Los Angeles' *Southern Campus/Bruin Life* (Los Angeles: 1960); Temple University's *The Templar* (Philadelphia: 1963); the University of Oklahoma's *1964 Sooner* (Norman, Okla.: The Publications Board, 1964).

<sup>15</sup> Enid A. Haupt, *The Seventeen Book of Etiquette and Entertaining* (New York: Van Rees Press, 1963), 160-167.

<sup>16</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

they would instill in them a lifetime appreciation for habits of dress and self-presentation that conveyed respectability and femininity.<sup>17</sup>

Indeed, prevailing norms of the period dictated that to wear blue jeans was not only unfashionable, but inherently unfeminine. Any young women who wished to earn the attention of male suitors was urged to adhere to the styles that stressed demure and subordinate femininity. Although skirts revealed a woman's legs and emphasized her body, they de-emphasized her physical strength. They were not designed for manual labor, sports, or any other strenuous activity. After all, the phrase "to wear the pants" signified a relationship marked by an unequal power dynamic, in which a woman "dominate[s] a husband in an unfeminine way."<sup>18</sup> Much of women's clothing was designed and advertised as making its wearers sexually appealing, often by revealing skin, or rendering the female physique in a manner thought to be flattering. Dresses and skirts even restricted women's range of movements in walking and sitting.<sup>19</sup> Women's clothing not only tended to be more expensive than pants, but women were expected to have much more extensive and varied wardrobes than men, so female consumers ended up spending more on store-bought clothing than men did. Women's clothing, and the nylons that often accompanied them, were typically made of more delicate material than pants were and were harder to clean and preserve. Finally, skirts and dresses provided little comfort in the cold or

---

<sup>17</sup> Renee N. Lansley, "College Women or College Girls: Gender, Sexuality, and In Loco Parentis on Campus" (Ph.D. dissertation, The Ohio State University, 2004), ii-iii, 20, 376-377.

<sup>18</sup> These definitions for "wearing the pants" or "wearing the breeches" come respectively from *Cambridge Idioms Dictionary*, second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 453, and R.W. Holder, *The Faber Dictionary of Euphemisms* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989), 346.

<sup>19</sup> Susan Brownmiller, *Femininity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 85-86.

rain. In sum, the expectation that women wear skirts, dresses and other garments in public settings constituted a central component of the fashion double standard.<sup>20</sup>

Blue jeans were considered inappropriate not only because of their status as a male garment, but also because they increasingly carried connotations of teenage rebelliousness and criminality in the eyes of many Americans starting in the 1950s. Traditionally, jeans had been worn by miners, construction workers, outdoorsmen, mechanics, and, of course, cowboys. Yet denim garments were also commonly issued to inmates in correctional facilities. In the middle of the 1950s, actors like Marlon Brando, James Dean and Elvis Presley portrayed uncompromising male rebels who wore jeans, in films whose success played no small role in popularizing the garments among the nation's teens. Consequently, many parents and educators viewed denim as the apparel of teenage insubordination, and institutions of learning commonly barred all students from wearing blue jeans.<sup>21</sup> "I have noted a terrific improvement in what happens in the school since we outlawed dungarees," exclaimed one high school principal in 1953.<sup>22</sup> Widespread bans on denim, combined with countless high-profile crimes in which accused perpetrators were photographed wearing jeans, even prompted Levi's to launch a public-relations campaign aimed at convincing parents and school officials of their products' wholesomeness and compatibility with the educational process.<sup>23</sup> By the early 1960s, folk music aficionados and many of the predominantly middle-class, college-educated young adults who volunteered for organizations like SNCC in the Deep South had come to embrace denim

---

<sup>20</sup> Brownmiller, *Femininity*, 81-85.

<sup>21</sup> James Sullivan, *Jeans: A Cultural History of An American Icon* (New York: Gotham Books, 2006), 80-109.

<sup>22</sup> Carol Kramer, "By Their Fads, Ye Shall Know Them," *The Baltimore Sun*, December 21, 1975, TR1.

<sup>23</sup> Elke Dettmer, "Blue Jeans: Worldview and a Way of Life" (Master's thesis, University of California at Berkeley, 1982), 33; Sullivan, *Jeans*, 108.

clothing, particularly overalls, as authentic accouterments that they believed brought them closer to everyday, working Americans.<sup>24</sup> Finally, because lesbians were among the few adult women to wear denim proudly and publicly before the middle of the 1960s, women's blue jeans were also associated with female homosexuality.<sup>25</sup> In short, through the 1950s and the first half of the 1960s, blue jeans were seen to bestow their wearers with a pronounced rebelliousness and outsider status, a feature that some middle-class consumers embraced in the hopes of concealing or downplaying their socioeconomic appearance, but which also earned the garments bans in educational institutions, workplaces and virtually all but the most casual public settings.

For most of the 1960s, the few women who wished to wear blue jeans did so on male terms. Levi's had briefly offered a line called Lady's Levis in the 1930s, in an effort to satisfy healthy demand for western fashions, but discontinued the line after a few years of lackluster sales. By the postwar years, Levi's and other jeans-makers produced and marketed jeans for boys and men only. Girls and women who wanted to buy jeans that fit had to shop in the boys' department of retail stores; menswear departments rarely carried the garments, as they were considered too casual for business wear.<sup>26</sup> Misses', juniors' and ladies' departments (in the retail parlance of the day) did not sell jeans. By classifying jeans as an exclusively male garment, denim producers forced women who wished to buy their product, in effect, to cross-dress. Not only that, but in having to buy boys' garments if they wanted to wear jeans, women were forced

---

<sup>24</sup> Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993), 163; Sullivan, *Jeans*, 110-112.

<sup>25</sup> Rosen, *The World Split Wide Open*, 165--CHECK CITATION; Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 159.

<sup>26</sup> "Jeans: How Long Can this Go On?" *Clothes*, July 1, 1971, 44; "Levi Strauss: Panning Gold From Pants," *Clothes*, December 1, 1969, 40.

to play a strange game of dress-up in which they submitted themselves to a certain level of infantilization.

Not until 1968 did Levi's release its first women's jeans in the postwar era, as Levi's for Gal's line hit stores that spring.<sup>27</sup> Strangely, the company seemed to have forgotten its earlier forays into women's jeans, as it declared dramatically in ads for the new line that "the 120-year-old pants company has finally discovered women."<sup>28</sup> Despite acknowledging that women should have their own jeans, the new line's use of the term "gals" suggested that the company believed women who wore jeans were acting out some childish exercise in costume. Women initially had little say in the line's design, which "consisted largely of knockoffs of some of the better men's wear numbers," instead of pants that were actually designed to fit women's bodies. Not only that, but many stores still insisted on selling the women's line in their men's department.<sup>29</sup>

Blue jeans finally became common on many college campuses in the last two years of the 1960s. As late as 1967, college yearbook photographs of candid campus scenes showed virtually no women wearing blue jeans.<sup>30</sup> In 1968, a small minority of college women, many of them involved in political or extracurricular intellectual activities on campus, were seen sporting

---

<sup>27</sup> "Jeans: How Long Can this Go On?" *Clothes*, July 1, 1971, 44; "Levi Strauss: Panning Gold From Pants," *Clothes*, December 1, 1969, 40.

<sup>28</sup> Maureen Reilly, *California Casual Fashions, 1930s-1970s* (Atglen, Pa.: Schiffer Publishing, Ltd., 2001), 7. CHECK CITATION.

<sup>29</sup> "Jeans: How Long Can this Go On?" *Clothes*, July 1, 1971, 44; "Levi Strauss: Panning Gold From Pants," *Clothes*, December 1, 1969, 40.

<sup>30</sup> *El Perrisito Yearbook* (Perris, Calif.: Perris Union High School, 1967), 60-61, 79, 90; *1967 Yackety Yack—University of North Carolina* (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1967), 15; *1968 Yackety Yack—University of North Carolina* (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1968), 57; *The Blue and Gold* (Berkeley: The University of California at Berkeley, 1967), 366, 380-381. A rare situation in which women might wear blue jeans at this time on a college campus would be while engaging in casual athletics, such as the all-female, so-called "Powder Puff" variation of football—see 1967 *The Blue and Gold*, 368.

jeans in annuals.<sup>31</sup> Photographs of sororities—among the more socially conservative organizations on most college campuses—demonstrate the rapid and fundamental changes in mainstream women’s style from 1967 to 1972.<sup>32</sup> In 1967, sorority sisters at state universities in California and North Carolina wore skirts or dresses in their chapter photographs. By 1968, perhaps 10 percent of women had begun to wear pants, mostly bellbottom pantsuits. These garments, while technically pants, were so billowy that the garments’ legs came together in a way that resembled dresses, so they still conformed to fashion conventions that implied women’s clothing should identify the wearer as feminine. In 1969, roughly one-third to half of sorority sisters wore pants for their chapter photographs, although in some sorority houses all members still wore dresses and skirts. In 1970, some sororities showed two-thirds of women wearing pants, mainly somewhat dressy pantsuits and slacks. But by 1972, most sororities’ photographs showed three-fourths or more of the women wore pants and jeans, and in several sororities virtually none of the women wore dresses or skirts.<sup>33</sup> At UNC, Chi Omega sisters posed with a few football players in the school’s stadium, many of them wearing evening gowns, in their 1968 photograph. Of fifty women in the photograph, five can be seen wearing pantsuits and none is wearing jeans. In the Chi Omegas’ 1972 photograph, however, all but two of sixty women wear pants. A sea change of fashion had occurred within just four years on college campuses.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Photographs from *The Blue and Gold* (Berkeley: The University of California at Berkeley, 1968), 52, 198, 202, 248, and 305 featured women wearing skirts, while pages 53 and 345 pictured small numbers of women wearing jeans.

<sup>32</sup> On sorority members’ tendency to conform and generally obey prevailing social etiquette, see Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), 211.

<sup>33</sup> *1967 Yackety Yack; 1968 Yackety Yack; 1970 Yackety Yack—University of North Carolina* (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1970); *1972 Yackety Yack—University of North Carolina* (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1972), NEEDS PAGE NUMBERS OF ENTIRE SORORITY SECTIONS.

<sup>34</sup> *1968 Yackety Yack*, 278-279; *1972 Yackety Yack*, 220.



As jeans-makers and textiles companies became more aware of the growing demand for women's jeans, they increasingly crafted their marketing around the strategy of depicting their products as the quintessential garments for Baby Boomers who sought to challenge their parents' and society's dominant social norms. In ad after ad, jeans producers claimed to have developed fashions that gave them a working understanding of and newfound appreciation for the dynamic, yet puzzling generation of Boomer clothing consumers. One ad for the major textiler Anvil Brand showed jeans-wearing attendees of Woodstock and announced, "We don't pretend to understand everything that's going on in the hip, young world of today...But there is one thing we do know. We have the knack for making slacks and jeans that young people go for."<sup>35</sup> Or, as Anvil claimed in another ad featuring an exceptionally hip trio of a "real" actress, art student and fashion coordinator, the company sold "pants that are as contemporary as the people that wear them."<sup>36</sup> Wrangler took a similar approach, with one ad showing a mixed-sex group of young Boomers wearing jeans accompanied by the message, "This is how young people dress informally these days. It's also how they dress formally. This is the way it is. We're into it."<sup>37</sup> Another Wrangler ad asked rhetorically, "If young people are making fashion, who do you think is making it for them?"<sup>38</sup> With ads like these, jeans companies sought not only to present themselves to a new generation of consumers as sympathetic to their style and concerns, but also to persuade retailers that Boomers instinctively craved jeans.

Jeans companies also desperately sought to convey the message that their products were not only stylish, but also appropriate, for women to wear. But many jeans-makers still hesitated

---

<sup>35</sup> *Clothes, etc.*, August 1, 1970, 52.

<sup>36</sup> *Clothes, etc.*, April 1, 1971, 43.

<sup>37</sup> *Clothes, etc.*, May 1, 1970, inside front cover.

<sup>38</sup> *Clothes, etc.*, November 1, 1970, 82.

to challenge the notion that blue jeans were *primarily* designed for men, even if they were acceptable for “girls” to wear. Male Jeans billed itself “the guys’ slacks girls love.”<sup>39</sup> Oshkosh B’Gosh’s jeans’ lines for men and women were simply called “the Guys.”<sup>40</sup> As late as 1977, Levi’s still called its women’s line “Levi’s for Gals.”<sup>41</sup> And while most ads downplayed sexuality, occasional ads coyly suggested that their jeans, even if not revealing or tight-fitting, were perfect for sexually active women. “Do something revolting in Tads,” one ad declared, showing a woman in jeans literally climbing onto her male companion who resembled the archetypal student activist. Tads were “revolutionary pants n’ jeans for guys. Chicks, too.”<sup>42</sup> An ad for Wrangler billed its women’s jeans as “free and loose...and great to look at” and showed not one, not two, but three different women sitting in chairs with their legs spread, with another woman pointing her backside at the camera.<sup>43</sup> Even as jeans companies began to encourage women to wear their designs, their ads often treated women as interlopers in the world of men’s fashion. Simply put, much of jeans advertising, while acknowledging women’s right to wear pants, still assigned female consumers a subordinate position in an imagined sartorial hierarchy.

As denim leaped in popularity, new stores emerged to sell denim to Baby Boomers. For years, women had to venture into the boys’ and juniors’ department at department stores and other retailers to purchase jeans. But in the second half of the 1960s, more and more boutiques and hip retailers began to offer jeans to customers. Not only did these stores lack boys’

---

<sup>39</sup> *Rags*, July 1971, back cover; *Clothes, etc.*, October 15, 1969, 59.

<sup>40</sup> *Clothes, etc.*, September 1, 1972, 57.

<sup>41</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, May 3, 1977, J7.

<sup>42</sup> *Rags*, issue 7?, 3.

<sup>43</sup> *Clothes, etc.*, June 1, 1970, 62.

departments, but in contrast to most retailers of the era, they didn't even offer men and women separate changing rooms.<sup>44</sup> One hip boutique owner from Washington, D.C. reported that "pants sell best" in his store, with African Americans purchasing slacks and whites purchasing jeans. In college towns like Austin, Texas, as many as four jeans shops opened on the city's main shopping thoroughfare in 1970 and 1971.<sup>45</sup> Boutique and hippie jeans-sellers were eager to proclaim in their advertising that they represented a bold departure from traditional retailers who hawked denim. One such store, A. Smile, in New York, proudly advertised its "jeans to fuck around in."<sup>46</sup> In jeans, the new generation of hip boutiques in the late 1960s and 1970s found a big-selling item that reinforced their own values of capitalism by a different means.

Chain stores that specialized in selling jeans to young consumers also emerged in California and then spread to the rest of the country throughout the 1970s. The Gap, for example, grew out of a record store and reopened as a jeans retailer in San Francisco in 1969. As the founder, Don Fisher explained, "I created the Gap with a simple idea: to make it easier to find a pair of jeans."<sup>47</sup> Even as the store expanded its inventory, around 75 percent of the store's stock was still devoted to denim by the late 1970s.<sup>48</sup> Stores like the Gap didn't think of themselves as exactly countercultural, however. "We won't hire any beards," one Los Angeles-based Gap franchiser told a reporter in 1971.<sup>49</sup> But while the early Gap locations did not fit

---

<sup>44</sup> Matt Gottdiener, "Unisex Fashions and Gender Role-Change," *Semiotic Scene* 1 (1977): 25.

<sup>45</sup> See note 25 on African Americans and jeans; Jon Carroll, "A *Rags* Special Report: Boutiques and Hip Capitalism," *Rags*, March 1971, 45, 49.

<sup>46</sup> *Rags*, March 1971, 69.

<sup>47</sup> "About Gap Inc.," (<http://www.gapinc.com/public/About/about.shtml>), accessed 10 November, 2009.

<sup>48</sup> Isadore Barmash, "The Gap, a Retail Chain Success, May Face Problems," *NYT*, July 26, 1976, 33.

<sup>49</sup> Beth Ann Krier, "Jeans Shop With the Gray Flannel Look," *Los Angeles Times*, September 6, 1971, G1.

neatly into the mould of hippie businesses, they functioned like financially successful boutiques by keeping a youth-oriented aesthetic and singular focus on jeans for years. Jeans specialists like the Gap wanted to appeal directly to Baby Boomers by presenting themselves as socially conscious and attuned to the needs of young consumers. Jeans West, another California-based jeans outfitter, sought to capitalize on the lowering of the federal voting age to eighteen with a “We’ll buy your vote” campaign in 1971 and 1972. Twenty-five of the chain’s locations featured voter registration tables, and any customer who showed a completed registration form received a dollar discount off any purchase of jeans. Yet Jeans West, while wanting to appear “socially responsible with its market,” also didn’t want to seem to young consumers to be “ripping off their culture” by using psychedelic advertising or attempting to speak to Boomers “in their vernacular.”<sup>50</sup> If anything, the new jeans retailers wanted to appear to respect young Boomer consumers without seeming to pander to them.

### III. The Politicization of Women’s Blue Jeans

By turn of the 1970s, women on many college campuses across the country were adopting blue jeans as their garment of choice; hip boutiques had embraced denim as one of their top-sellers; and jeans specialists had sprung up in California and were starting to spread east. But denim continued to face resistance in workplaces, secondary schools and other public spaces that persisted in discouraging and banning women from wearing blue jeans. As more and more women wore jeans in their private and social lives, institutional bans on the garment contradicted women’s personal choices even more sharply than they had just a few years earlier. Because of this glaring discrepancy between practice and regulation, some young women began to recognize

---

<sup>50</sup> Martin Rossman, “Sell the Pants First, Sam, Then Be a Helpful Citizen,” *LAT*, November 8, 1971, D11.

the political dimensions of dress codes and respond to them by invoking both feminist principles and their perceived rights as consumers. At most secondary schools, officials exercised even broader powers than colleges in regulating and banning any clothing perceived to interfere with the educational process. One administrator at a California high school defended the school's dress code, because "clothes or hairstyles that disrupt the classrooms or that just look wrong on an individual are wrong for school."<sup>51</sup> Although some schools in big cities and in California had begun to allow women to wear jeans at the very end of the 1960s, most schools continued to frown upon the practice at the start of the 1970s. One high-school junior from Florida blasted her school's rule against women wearing blue jeans as "ridiculous," arbitrary and sexist in 1973.

Most girls have blue jeans and I think they cover you better than a short dress. They are practical and if they aren't frayed or torn up, why can't we wear them? Boys can....[These rules] discriminate against girls by not allowing us to wear clothing boys can. To summarize, I know we need rules, but they should be sensible.<sup>52</sup>

Some schools even witnessed protests against these restrictions. Students circulated petitions against dress codes and coordinated walkout demonstrations in which both men and women wore pants or jeans.<sup>53</sup> Many high schoolers felt that dress codes represented just another example of adults refusing to take them seriously or to treat them with respect. This feeling was particularly acute among young women, as schools almost always subjected them to greater regulation in the area of dress than they did men. Bans on blue jeans, especially when they were applied to women only, represented a remarkably invasive invocation of *in loco parentis* on the

---

<sup>51</sup> Liz McGuinness, "Schools Invoke Long, Short of Dress Rules," *LAT*, September 19, 1965, SG\_A4.

<sup>52</sup> "Raps School Dress Code," Lakeland (Florida) *Ledger*, September 29, 1973, 6A.

<sup>53</sup> "He Blames the Principal and Board," *The Day* (New London, Conn), May 7, 1970, 14; Ken Fanucchi, "Strict Dress Codes are Gone, Principals Agree," *Los Angeles Times*, December 6, 1970, SF\_A1; "High School is Back to Normal After Dress Code Disruptions," *The Hartford Courant*, May 7, 1970, 28D; Roland Vernon Ellerston, "A Legal Evaluation of Dress Codes in a Selected Sample of Public School Districts in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area," (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1969), 21-22.

secondary level. Administrators, in going to such lengths to govern how female students dressed, demonstrated not only their broad powers in controlling how young people expressed themselves with consumer goods. They also revealed their particular determination to promote the fashion double standard and to enforce their preferred gender norms and notions of bodily display in the primary arena of teenagers' public life, the high school.

In response, many students brought lawsuits against high school dress codes. In a ten-year period that saw an outpouring of nearly one hundred legal challenges to educational dress and hair codes across the country, state and federal courts heard several challenges to bans on women's pants and jeans.<sup>54</sup> One female student in New York state, who had been granted detention for wearing slacks to class, challenged her punishment in the state's Supreme Court. The court eventually ruled in the student's favor in 1969, citing the school for violating the Constitution's equal protection clause.<sup>55</sup> In 1972, a U.S. district court in Arkansas ruled that public schools could not ban female students from donning blue jeans if male students were allowed to wear such garments, nor could administrators dictate what style of jeans women could wear.<sup>56</sup> Idaho's Supreme Court issued a similar ruling in 1973, which maintained that schools could not ban female students from wearing slacks or pants due to the fact that such fashions did "not have a detrimental effect on safety and morals of the students" and did not disrupt the

---

<sup>54</sup> Ellerston, "A Legal Evaluation of Dress Codes," 26-27, 199; Ronald W. Stephens, "Legal and Constitutional Basis for Hair and Dress Codes in Washington Public Schools," (M.A. thesis, Pacific Lutheran University, 1973), 1-15; Wallace David Decker, "The Status of Student Dress and Appearance Codes in Public Schools," (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Missouri-Columbia, 1989), 89; Gael Graham, "Flaunting the Freak Flag: *Karr v. Schmidt* and the Great Hair Debate in American High Schools, 1965-1975," *The Journal of American History* 91 (September 2004): 522-543.

<sup>55</sup> *Scott v. Union Free School Board*, 61 Misc. 2d 333; 305 N.Y.S.2d 601; 1969 N.Y. Misc. LEXIS 1063, November 18, 1969.

<sup>56</sup> Stephens, 93; Charlene WALLACE, by her parents and next friends, Mr. & Mrs. Charles Wallace, et al., Plaintiffs, v. J.L. FORD, Superintendent of Schools For the Perryville School District No. 7, et al., Defendants, 346 F. Supp. 156; 1972 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 12333, August 14, 1972. Administrators at the school in Arkansas had banned women from wearing jeans with unconcealed front-opening zippers, as well as "excessively tight" jeans and pants.

educational process.<sup>57</sup> In case after case that revolved around school dress codes, judges sided with student plaintiffs, prompting thousands of schools to willingly eliminate discriminatory dress restrictions. Indeed, after 1975 state and federal courts heard far fewer school dress codes cases than they had in the previous decade.<sup>58</sup>

Many workplaces even practiced their own form of sartorial *in loco parentis*. While such rules were not always written, managers at most jobs expected female employees to wear skirts or dresses to work. At the turn of the decade, major corporations such as AT&T, Macy's and Chase Manhattan Bank still banned women from wearing any form of pants in the office. Other companies, like the First National Bank of Boston, cautiously forecast that year that they would eventually allow the garments, if the practice of wearing them "became accepted" and if female pants-wearers would "continue to act like women." The language management used to justify their dress codes attested to their view of female, adult employees as minors in need of guidance in the area of dress. "After a short while the girls get the idea of what they're supposed to look like and how they should dress," explained AT&T's personnel interviewer. "Most of the kids look real cute in their short, sleeveless summer dress in pretty colors." Though most may not have said so out loud, many women saw these dress codes, and the larger fashion double standard they sought to enforce, as infringing on their equal rights and connecting to larger systems of gender discrimination. "I think the one statement on [my company's] dress policy that made me angriest was 'If you work for a man, you should represent him in a manner that

---

<sup>57</sup> Richard JOHNSON et al., Plaintiffs-Respondents, v. JOINT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 60, BINGHAM COUNTY, 95 Idaho 317; 508 P.2d 547; 1973 Ida. LEXIS 261, March 30, 1973.

<sup>58</sup> Ellerston, "A Legal Evaluation," 22.

doesn't make him nervous," explained one woman working at J.P. Stevens. "Maybe that has less to do with fashion than with Women's Liberation, but it still makes me livid."<sup>59</sup>

At the same time that women struggled in institutional settings to assert a modicum of control over their own dress choices, feminists' interest in the politics of women's fashion grew. The first garment second-wavers embraced was the mini-skirt, which many observers felt liberated its wearers from the constraints of Victorian-style clothing meant to conceal women's bodies. Leading feminists, such as Ti-Grace Atkinson and Gloria Steinem, commonly wore minis, as did self-identified, rank-and-file women's liberationists.<sup>60</sup> The mini was hailed as a weapon in the sexual revolution, a garment that women could wear to show that they were proud, not ashamed, of their bodies. Looking back on the 1960s, one writer for *Ms.* Recalled how women of the period wore "miniskirts because they were supposedly 'liberating,' enabling us to move unencumbered by the demands of Victorian modesty."<sup>61</sup> *Rags*, a New York-based hip fashion magazine established as a counterculture-friendly alternative to *Vogue* and *Mademoiselle*, proclaimed that the mini "has always had a political character...Because [the] mini was something women had *chosen*, Big Fashion be damned. They would not be dictated

---

<sup>59</sup> "New Boom in Clothing Industry: Women are Changing to Pants," *U.S. News & World Report*, September 23, 1968, 79; John Grissim, "Pity the Poor Working Girl: A Report on Office Dress Codes," *Rags*, October 1970, 25-27.

<sup>60</sup> Kushner, "Finding a Personal Style," 51; Nancy L. Ross, "Miss Steinem: One of the Beautiful People," *LAT*, January 1, 1968, D10; Marilyn Bender, "A New Breed of Middle-Class Women Emerging," *NYT*, March 17, 1969, 34; "More Prize Money Demanded: Ladies Threaten to Girlcott L.A. Tennis," *LAT*, September 8, 1970, F1; Nancy L. Ross, "50 Years of Women," *The Washington Post/Times Herald*, June 12, 1970, B3; Deirdre Carmody, "Women's Groups Sees Widespread Gains in Drive for an Equal Role," *NYT*, March 23, 1970, 32; Mayerene Barker, "Approves of Marriage: Women 's Libber Pursue Rights for Men, Women," *LAT*, April 1, 1973, GF4.

<sup>61</sup> Kushner, "Finding a Personal Style," 50.



to.”<sup>62</sup> And as Marshall McLuhan, the Canadian media scholar who found a receptive audience in the American counterculture, stated: “The mini will never die. It is Fashion that is dead.”<sup>63</sup>

While McLuhan’s declaration on the mini reflected his tendency for overstatement, he echoed a popular idea that female fashion consumers were gradually gaining power in the early 1970s, while the traditional pillars of the fashion industry—the European fashion houses, the Seventh-Avenue designers, and the department stores—were declining in influence. The most spectacular demonstration of the fashion industry’s declining power was its abortive marketing campaign to persuade American women to stop wearing mini-skirts and to replace them with calf-length skirts called midis in 1970 and 1971. The fashion press, especially *Women’s Wear Daily* and its editor John Fairchild, declared the death of the mini and the rise of the midi in articles aimed at independent retailers and consumers. Consequently, many of the larger retailers with direct connections to the fashion press removed minis from their racks and replaced them with midis virtually overnight. Yet these heavy handed efforts to convince consumers and small retailers that they should replace their minis with midis inspired a tidal wave of outrage, prompting charges that the fashion industry was “cramming this look down the throats of all women, much against their will.” As one dissatisfied saleswoman who was tasked with selling midis maintained, “If the women in this country let the designers and stores do this to them, they’re sick and crazy and stupid.” Protest groups with names like Fight Against Designer Dictatorship (FADD) were established. *Rags* magazine issued a special report on “Fashion Fascism: the Politics of Midi,” whose overall message was summed up in the simple

---

<sup>62</sup> “Fashion Fascism,” *Rags*, October 1970, 22.

<sup>63</sup> Catherine Court, “An Interview with Marshall McLuhan: Mini Skirt Tribalism,” *Rags*, October 1970, 23

formulation, “Fashion which does not serve the people is bullshit.”<sup>64</sup> Within a few months, it was clear that most midis were staying on retailers’ racks and creating a financial disaster for manufacturers. Over a decade later, one writer for *Ms.* recalled the midi fiasco as a pivotal movement that ushered in “the most significant change in fashion since” the early twentieth century, namely “the erosion over the last 10 years of the power of the fashion press and the dictatorship of the designers... Year by year, more and more options are simultaneously available, [and] we enjoy having more choice.”<sup>65</sup> Indeed, the early 1970s marked a rare period in which many women, by accruing more freedom in how they dressed themselves, felt that they were gaining new power as consumers.

It was this expansion of women’s choices that made fashion relevant and engaging for the second wave. Determining what was appropriate for liberated women to wear fit neatly into feminists’ larger quest to apply politics to the personal. Though they certainly critiqued, even condemned, aspects of American advertising and fashion, few feminists conformed to their popular image as anti-capitalist foes of consumer culture.<sup>66</sup> Feminists did not object to all consumption out of hand, even if they found many corporate efforts to attract female consumers repellant. Although far from representative of feminists, some of the earliest second-wavers to demand a transformation in women’s fashion were Roxanne Dunbar and her fellow members of Boston-based Cell 16. Founded in 1968, Dunbar’s group assumed the demeanor of a

---

<sup>64</sup> “Fashion Fascism,” *Rags*, October 1970, 20.

<sup>65</sup> Mary Peacock, “When Did You Start Wearing Your Self?” *Ms.*, July/August 1982, 53-56

<sup>66</sup> To cite just two examples, at the 1968 Miss America contest in Atlantic City, the feminist group the Redstockings famously organized their famous demonstration around bras and various “instruments of torture,” including girdles and issues, that they had thrown into a trash can. *Ms.* magazine also carried the regular feature “No Comment” in which it reprinted ads (submitted by readers) that so blatantly degraded women that the magazine felt it unnecessary to even offer written responses. For more on feminist critiques of consumption and fashion, see Lois Banner, *American Beauty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Angela McRobbie, “Bridging the Gap: Feminism, Fashion and Consumption,” *Feminist Review* 55 (Spring 1997), 75.

paramilitary unit, to the point of donning combat fatigues.<sup>67</sup> Cell 16 made “militant” clothing their sartorial calling card, even though they “didn’t recognize these things as symbolic at the time,” Dunbar recalled to *Ms.* in 1974. “We tried to make it so we were not identified as sexual beings at all...I pretty much dress the same way now, but it’s just a style now. It’s just unisex.”<sup>68</sup> Many feminists also embraced blue jeans as a means of rejecting middle-class notions of propriety and status in favor of egalitarianism and authenticity.<sup>69</sup> Many young American involved with the counterculture or political activism felt that jeans provided them a working-class alternative to the organization man’s gray flannel suit. Todd Gitlin recalls the denim that SNCC organizers wore in the deep South served as “physical markers of solidarity” with sharecroppers and other manual laborers.<sup>70</sup> In denim, young men didn’t look like middle-class breadwinners in the making, and women didn’t resemble future homemakers. Jeans were the plainest of fashions, and as such, consumers could wear them and express opposition to, or at least disinterest in, traditional symbols of power and professional achievement. They were practical, durable, and seemingly devoid of artifice or contrivance and, according to retailers’ research, young consumers cared little about which brand of jeans they wore.<sup>71</sup>

Meanwhile, some women in the movement who had worn mini-skirts for years began to reconsider their wardrobe in the late ‘60s and early ‘70s. Steinem explained the decline of the mini in feminist circles in a 1974 *Ms.* Article.

---

<sup>67</sup> Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 158-166

<sup>68</sup> Tricia Kushner, “Finding a Personal Style,” *Ms.*, February 1974, 51, 82.

<sup>69</sup> Add Rossinow citation

<sup>70</sup> Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), 163.

<sup>71</sup> “Jeans: How Long Can this Go On?” *Clothes*, July 1, 1971, 42.

I think what was happening to me in 'sixty-eight to 'sixty-nine...was happening to many others, too. My feeling about myself changed in my head, so I didn't need the props any more. Minis were beginning to look funny by then, and that combined with political reasons, made me just stop wearing them.

Roxanne Dunbar, in similar fashion, described the transformation of Ti-Grace Atkinson, who frequently attended feminist meetings “dressed to the teeth wearing her mini and makeup...[seeming] to counteract everything she said.” Then, one day, Dunbar recalled fondly, Atkinson “showed up at a meeting in jeans. It was such a radical thing in those days that it brought the meeting to a standstill. I remember it made me so happy.”<sup>72</sup>

The debate about women's clothing and how much it should convey normative femininity reflected Americans' deeper inability to agree on whether women should emphasize or downplay their differences with men. If men and women were equal, skeptics of feminism asked, didn't that mean they had to be equivalent? In the second half of the 1960s and into the early 1970s, leading liberal feminists generally based their arguments for gender equality on men and women's shared humanity, not on their differences. Betty Friedan recalls, for instance, how in the early years of NOW the organization understood second-wave feminism as “simply the values of the American Revolution...applied to women.”<sup>73</sup> Feminist scholars welcomed what they saw as an ongoing trend towards reconciling emotional and cultural differences between the genders. The sociologist Alice Rossi, for instance, celebrated androgyny in her influential essay “Equality between the Sexes: An Immodest Proposal” in 1964. But the scholar who may have done the most to promote the blurring of gender differences was Carolyn Heilbrun, with her pioneering work of literary criticism, *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny*, published in 1973.

---

<sup>72</sup> Kushner, “Finding a Personal Style,” 51

<sup>73</sup> Rosen, *The World Split Open*, 76-77, 175. Betty Friedan, *It Changed My Life: Writings on the Women's Movement* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 105.

Although most of the work analyzed the writing of Virginia Woolf and other British authors of the early twentieth century, Heilbrun introduced her book with a brief essay on the role of androgyny in contemporary society.

I believe that our future salvation lies in a movement away from sexual polarization and the prison of gender toward a world in which individual roles and the modes of personal behavior can be freely chosen. The ideal toward which I believe we should move is best described by the term 'androgyny'...[in] which the characteristics of the sexes, and the human impulses expressed by men and women, are not rigidly assigned.

In an androgynous culture, "human beings choose their places without regard to propriety or custom." Heilbrun praised contemporary youth of the early 1970s, who expressed "a new homage to androgyny" with "their long hair and costumes making uneasy, in both senses of the word, the immediate identification of gender."<sup>74</sup> Even male consumers embraced androgynous dress fashions and undermined gender divisions, as long hair, jewelry, and florid dress became popular men's styles in the late 1960s.

By the late 1960s, the term "unisex" had emerged to describe this convergence of men's and women's fashions. Unisex styles contrasted sharply with their parents' gender-specific forms of public self-presentation. Jeans allowed consumers of both genders to appear roughly alike, at least from the waist down, and effectively emphasized men and women's commonalities, not their differences. Many consumers and a few forward-looking designers were quite serious in advocating clothing that de-emphasized gender. According to one gay magazine,

Unisex is fashion phenomenon, not another style created by Seventh Avenue dictators. When a women buys men's pants because they're cut better and cheaper than those especially designed for her—that's Unisex! Believe that when

---

<sup>74</sup> Carolyn G. Heilbrun, *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973).

a many buys a silver bracelet and wears it to his Wall Street office—that's Unisex too!<sup>75</sup>

As the designer Rudi Gernreich declared, "We're moving much more toward a unisex oriented style picture. I think pants are much more legitimate for women to wear."<sup>76</sup> Not only that, but in the future, Gernreich prognosticated boldly, "Clothing will not be identified as male or female, so women will wear pants and men will wear skirts interchangeably."<sup>77</sup> Hair salons that sought to attract both male and female consumers dubbed themselves "unisex."<sup>78</sup> By 1968, even Seventh Avenue began to accept the trend, albeit reluctantly. Jeans-makers sought to appeal to the growing popularity of unisex styles with advertisements that featured mixed-sex couples wearing the same outfit. With both amusement and bemusement, one retail trade journal explained, "The mention of unisex may call to mind anything from the United Nations Children's Fund to a subject that is only whispered about. But for those in the know, it is a new area of male-female apparel." Still, as the article noted, "there is much confusion about where, when, why, and how unisex can function."<sup>79</sup> Yet for many consumers, the idea of unisex clearly suggested a broader effort to remove boundaries between men and women, to emphasize men and women's shared humanity instead of their sexual differences.

Of course, clothes that deemphasized gender had great appeal for feminists, who increasingly denounced social expectations that women perform the "feminine" rituals demanded

---

<sup>75</sup> Grant Duay, "Unisex Fall Guys/Gals—Autumn Fashions with the In-Between Look," *Gay*, October 26, 1970, 13.

<sup>76</sup> "Fashion Will Go Out of Fashion," *Forbes*, September 15, 1970, 30.

<sup>77</sup> Sandra Keiser, "The Relationship of the Movement and Changes in American Women's Dress Patterns Between 1848-1975," (Ph.D. dissertation: University of Wisconsin-Stout, 1975), 86.

<sup>78</sup> *Clothes*, September 1, 1968, GET PAGE; "Uniworld of His & Hers," *Life*, June 21, 1968, 86-90; Gottdiener, "Unisex Fashions," 24-30.

<sup>79</sup> "He-She Shop: Gimmick—Or Reality?" *Clothes*, December 1, 1968, 34.

by American society. Wearing garments originally designed for men was a subtle, but meaningful way of saying that women should be able not only to consume however they wanted, but to display their bodies in any way that men do. By wearing pants, many feminists argued, women could resist pressures to assume the role either of the saint or the strumpet. Anne Thompson, a woman from Baltimore, explained her decision to wear pants in a letter she wrote to the feminist magazine *Women: A Journal of Liberation*.

For some of us, a dress is a drag. I tried for a long time to sexually neuter myself with the clothing I chose to wear. I was wearing overalls, loose-fitting jeans, work shirts and boots a lot. I did this for several reasons: It protected my body from having a sexual identification, and it was an effective way of saying “Fuck You” to those who sold, wore and demanded neat, tailored, expensive clothing.<sup>80</sup>

Other women wore jeans instead of skirts and dresses in the hopes of discouraging men from voicing unsolicited commentary on their bodies or making sexual advances.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, by the middle of the 1970s, many women had come to reject the idea that they needed consume in a manner that conveyed the outward appearance of normative “femininity.”

#### IV. Decline and Discontent

But while women’s blue jeans had made deep inroads into American fashion, many outspoken critics of feminism remained steadfast in arguing that men and women’s clothing should articulate, even accentuate, differences in gender identity, lest the sexes become completely identical to each other. Charles Winick, sociologist and author of *The New People: Desexualization in American Life*, cited the growing popularity of women’s jeans and slacks as

---

<sup>80</sup> *Women: A Journal of Liberation* 4 (Winter 1974), 24

<sup>81</sup> Gottdiener, “Unisex Fashions,” 32; Judith Thurman, “Finding Your Personal Style: How to Get Dressed and Still Be Yourself,” *Ms.*, April 1979, 51.

an unmistakable sign of how putatively natural distinctions between women's and men's daily routines were collapsing. As Winick noted with alarm,

After all the jokes about who wears the pants in an American family, there is suddenly nothing to smile at. Perhaps only the pants manufacturers are laughing, now that women's clothing stores may sell more trousers than skirts. Over 45 million pairs of trousers are now bought by women each year, a four-fold increase over a ten-year period.<sup>82</sup>

Winick lamented how “contemporary unisexual costume” in the form of pants for women, perfume and long hair for men intensified “the internal conflict and confusion of each sex in fulfilling its role” making “each sex looks like a transvestite parody.” Most worrying to Winick, however, was how these trends portended a more general neutering of society, “if not the abolition of sex distinction, the closest we have ever come to it.”<sup>83</sup> Some Christian conservatives even insisted that women's jeans violated Biblical teachings. One Indiana evangelical minister condemned women's jeans as “abominations,” part of a larger “modern dress parade of pollution” that violated scriptural demands that “woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man.”<sup>84</sup> In sum, ardent anti-feminists accused women who wore jeans of recklessly defying and destabilizing the natural gender order of American society.

Though originally conceived as a fashion term, the word “unisex” quickly gained favor among feminist critics as a pejorative for describing what they saw as the movement's attempt to eliminate any and all differences between men and women. Phyllis Schlafly, the outspoken foe of the Equal Rights Amendment, decried feminist activists who wanted to “propel us into a

---

<sup>82</sup> Charles Winick, *The New People: Desexualization in American Life* (New York: Pegasus, 1968), 228.

<sup>83</sup> Winick, *New People*, 264-267.

<sup>84</sup> Leo C. Davis, *Which are You—A Man or a Woman; or Jeans, Slacks, Shorts, the Pants-Suits (and other Abominations)* (Bedford, In.: L.C. Davis), exact date unknown, but somewhere between 1972 and 1976, as the pamphlet mentions the Supreme Court's short-lived ban on the death penalty.



unisex society.”<sup>85</sup> Helen Perlman, a professor of social service administration at the University of Chicago, penned the “Case against Unisex,” a screed against what she saw as the overreaching of feminist activists. “We should not fight or strive to be *too* equal,” Perlman warned. “Unisex is a very blurred-out, ambiguous, and therefore dull arrangement for interpersonal relationships.”<sup>86</sup> Russell Kirk, writer of the modern conservative manifesto, *The Conservative Mind*, saw “unisex march[ing] on” in the federal government’s continued efforts to “treat girls as if they were boys and boys as if they were girls” by enforcing the federal ban on gender discrimination in public schools.<sup>87</sup> By critiquing unisex, anti-feminists intentionally mischaracterized feminists’ calls for gender equality as demands for eliminating the category of gender altogether. With this clever strategy, opponents of feminism claimed that the second wave ultimately wanted to deprive all women of their individuality and force them to submit to a repressive code of gender neutrality.

Yet, by the middle of the 1970s, it was clear that conservatives’ warnings about the folly of unisex fashions seemed to fall mostly on deaf ears, as jeans had virtually become the uniform for women under thirty. In surveys of dress habits, more than two-thirds of female high school and college students reported wearing blue jeans “mostly” or “all the time,” a fact confirmed by consulting almost any college or high-school yearbook of the period.<sup>88</sup> So popular were jeans that they no longer represented a challenge to established codes of dress and propriety. Indeed, jeans were beginning to seem mundane to many people. “Not long ago,” a fashion columnist for

---

<sup>85</sup> Phyllis Schlafly, *The Power of the Positive Woman* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1977), 27.

<sup>86</sup> Helen Perlman, “The Case Against Unisex,” *School Review* 79 (November 1970): 119.

<sup>87</sup> Russell Kirk, “Unisex and the Public Schools,” *National Review*, August 15, 1975, 887.

<sup>88</sup> “Teen Survey: Part I—Young Women’s Attitudes,” *Clothes, etc.*, July 1, 1975, 251; *University of Georgia Pandora Yearbook* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1976); *University of Arizona Desert Yearbook* (Tucson: University of Arizona, 1974).

the *New York Times* wrote in 1977, “reverse chic was wearing blue jeans, looking scruffy and allowing your hair to grow. This was also a political act. Now, of course, it is simple [*sic*] the way we are.”<sup>89</sup> Jeans appeared to be losing their appeal for some feminists, too. As one woman declared in *Ms.* in 1974, “some women have grown sick of wearing pants for the last five years and are reconsidering skirts.”<sup>90</sup> Still others worried that wearing jeans undermined one’s individuality. In response, a cottage industry of crafts and how-to manuals for individuals who wished to decorate and “individualize” their blue jeans emerged in the mid-‘70s. Eve Harlow, author of *The Jean Scene*, explained the need for personalizing jeans. “Jeans are everywhere completely acceptable and the most universally worn garment since the fig leaf...and they all look pretty much alike, don’t they,” asked Harlow. “If you want to look different from the crowd (and who doesn’t), show your individuality and make your jeans stand out from all the other underpinning on the street.” Harlow instructed her readers to use appliqué, patches and stitching to “decorate to differentiate: that’s the new jeans scene.”<sup>91</sup> Still, the do-it-yourself impulse of decorating jeans, while elevating denim slightly, never sacrificed the material’s down-to-earth and common appeal.

By the middle of the 1970s, with the onset of the country’s worst economic downturn since the Great Depression and the worst peacetime inflation in American history, jeans should have retained their status as the perfect clothing for economic hard times.<sup>92</sup> Yet just at this moment, conspicuous celebrations of wealth mounted a comeback in America, in what may have

---

<sup>89</sup> John Corry, “New Yorkers, etc.,” *New York Times*, April 20, 1977, 61.

<sup>90</sup> “Finding a Personal Style,” *Ms.*, 86.

<sup>91</sup> Eve Harlow, *The Jeans Scene* (New York: Drake Publishers, Inc., 1973), unnumbered introduction page.

<sup>92</sup> James T. Patterson, *Restless Giant: The United States from Watergate to Bush v. Gore* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 6-8.

been an inevitable counter-reaction to the counterculture's devaluing of material success. Although resurgent celebrations of wealth in the 1980s were often attributed to Reagan's business-friendly policies, the rise of so-called Yuppies, and the decade's Wall Street culture, the revival of conspicuous consumption and extroverted affluence actually had its origins in the late 1970s.<sup>93</sup> Perhaps the most popular expression of this ethos was the disco craze, with its glorification of glamour, exclusivity, and wealth. Clubs like Studio 54 owed much of their popularity to their reputations as exclusive, elite nightspots, where even movie stars were periodically refused entry.<sup>94</sup>

In line with this renewed celebration of wealth, a new form of jeans emerged unexpectedly in the late 1970s, the brainchild of a Seventh Avenue salesman by the name of Warren Hirsh. Having decided he wanted to apply a designer or celebrity's name to "proletarian" denim, Hirsch pitched his idea for "status jeans" to several members of high society, including Pierre Cardin and Jacquelyn Onassis, all of whom rejected his idea—until Gloria Vanderbilt finally consented to lend her name to the product.<sup>95</sup> Vanderbilt, the great-granddaughter of the railroad magnate Cornelius Vanderbilt, had experienced modest success selling her own line of home furnishings, but the idea of an American aristocrat emblazoning traditional work clothes with his or her family name was unprecedented. In the spring of 1976, Vanderbilt launched her jeans with a wildly successful advertising blitz on national television

---

<sup>93</sup> Sarah Ban Breathnach, "Embarrassment of Riches: No Wonder They Hate Us in Omaha," *TWP*, July 22, 1979, SM6; "Study Finds Rise in Materialism Amid Economic Gloom," *NYT*, May 9, 1979, C8.

<sup>94</sup> Peter Shapiro, *Turn the Beat Around: The Secret History of Disco* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2005), 3-4, 213-215; Tim Lawrence, *Love Saves the Day: A History of American Dance Music Culture, 1970-1979* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003), 278-279.

<sup>95</sup> Steven Gaines and Sharon Churcher, *Obsession* (New York: A Birch Lane Press Book, 1994), 214.

that helped her company sell six million pairs within a year.<sup>96</sup> Designers like Calvin Klein and Jordache quickly launched their own lines of upscale denim, which soon became better known as “designer jeans” and cost around twice as much as traditional jeans.<sup>97</sup> Demand was nearly insatiable: Klein alone sold over 200,000 pairs of designer jeans, almost all of them to women, in the first week they reached retailers.<sup>98</sup> Almost overnight, the garment long known for its humble and understated style had transformed into a powerful symbol of status, wealth and exclusivity.

Designer jeans’ cachet was the exact opposite of traditional blue jeans like Levi’s and Wrangler. Hirsch, Klein and the Nakash brothers, who launched Jordache, were outsiders to the upper echelons of both the textile and fashion worlds. Designer jeans were not made for factory workers, or farmhands, or even young people who wanted to emulate the look of those trades. “Levi has the best quality, but no look to it, no fashion,” one of the three brothers of Jordache explained. “It was a functional jean. We wanted a dressy jean.”<sup>99</sup> And designer jeans’ target audience was women, not men; Calvin Klein, for instance, didn’t even bother selling to men for the first two years he produced jeans.<sup>100</sup> One of the common selling points for designer jeans was that they fit female wearers much better than traditional jeans. Calvin Klein explained the rationale for wearing his jeans in simple terms: “Women should be comfortable, look attractive, and feel free.”<sup>101</sup> Yet many designers jeans were far from comfortable to wear; in Klein’s own

---

<sup>96</sup> Dettmer, “Blue Jeans,” 80.

<sup>97</sup> Barbara Ettore, “Status Jeans: Lucrative Craze,” *NYT*, June 25, 1979, D1

<sup>98</sup> S.J. Diamond, “Jeans Change But Public Still Panting,” *LAT*, June 11, 1978, H1.

<sup>99</sup> Barbara Ettore, “The Status Reapers,” *NYT*, July 1, 1979, F7.

<sup>100</sup> Steven Gaines and Sharon Churcher, *Obsession* (New York: A Birch Lane Press Book, 1994), 250.

<sup>101</sup> “Calvin Klein: Bio,” *People Weekly*, January 18, 1982, 98 CHECK PAGE.

words, “the tighter they are, the better they sell.”<sup>102</sup> Nonetheless, designer jeans-makers claimed their products not only represented an aesthetic improvement over Levis’ and Wranglers, but that their fit and design liberated women from the constraints of traditional jeans. Designer jeans, they argued, allowed women to express their femininity through denim, instead of imposing an unattractive and utilitarian plainness on female consumers.

But it was these designers’ all-out advertising assault on American television viewers, and probably not any superior understanding of the female consumer, which fueled designer denim’s popularity among women. Levi’s and Wrangler had advertised for years, but never as aggressively or daringly as the upstart jeans designers of the late 1970s. Jordache, for example, owed nearly its entire success to its first campaign of pricey local commercials in the New York market aired during *60 Minutes* and other prime time news programs. Though the fledgling firm had just gotten its operation off the ground, polished and extravagant television spots gave the impression that “there was a big company behind Jordache,” Joseph Nakash explained. “The strategy [of advertising like a well-funded fashion line] worked. I started getting calls from buyers.” Calvin Klein pushed the envelope even further with his famed, sexually suggestive advertisements, starting with a giant billboard that appeared over Times Square for four years, featuring model Patti Hansen, positioned on all fours with her rear raised in the air and fit into a tight pair of Calvins.<sup>103</sup>

Klein’s most controversial advertising, however, were his 1980 television spots starring the fifteen-year-old model and actress Brooke Shields. Charged with crafting the company’s first commercials, photographer Richard Avedon sought to lend “the Calvin Klein image to jeans

---

<sup>102</sup> William Serrin, “Sex is a Growing Multibillion Business,” *NYT*, February 9, 1981, B6.

<sup>103</sup> Steven Gaines and Sharon Churcher, *Obsession: The Lives and Times of Calvin Klein* (New York: A Birch Lane Press Book, 1994), 257.

and not a jeans image to Calvin Klein,” suggesting how little the company intended to describe its products in its advertising. The commercials featured shots of the teenaged Shields writhing on the ground trying to squeeze into a pair of Calvins, or giggling with her backside poking into the air, and spouting tongue-in-cheek, sexually suggestive one-liners about her favorite jeans. In one spot, titled “Flirt,” Shields admits to the camera that her mother warned her about boys who only “want her for her Calvins”—at the same time a man closely inspects her jeans-clad backside. But the most famous of these ads, titled—of all things—“Feminist,” had Shields seductively gaze into the camera, legs spread wide, and proclaim, “You know what comes between me and my Calvins? Nothing.”<sup>104</sup> This was certainly not the first time jeans-makers had used sexual appeal to sell their products. But Klein’s spots were nothing but sexual, with virtually no mention of denim except a brief mention of Calvins at the very end of each commercial. Gone were the images of matching couples or assertions that jeans were the garment of a new generation of women. Instead, designers like Klein implied through their ads that women *needed* to wear jeans in order to appeal to men sexually, disregarding how traditional jeans offered women expanded independence from men’s expectations.

Although ads like “Feminist” boosted sales of Calvin Klein jeans immediately, they also alienated many consumers, especially feminists. While sales of Calvins shot upward to 400,000 in the first week that “Feminist” was aired, hundreds of outraged viewers called local television stations to complain about the commercials and even succeeded in forcing a station in Los Angeles to stop showing the spots temporarily. Not surprisingly, many of the viewers who objected to the thick sexuality of the commercials cited the traditional moral or religious

---

<sup>104</sup> “Calvin Klein: Bio,” *People Weekly*, January 18, 1982, 98; Gaines and Churcher, *Obsession*, 267-268; “Brooke Shields Calvin Commercials,” [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m\\_tom65LKiE&playnext\\_from=TL&videos=9wBFM633exg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m_tom65LKiE&playnext_from=TL&videos=9wBFM633exg) (accessed April 11, 2010).

concerns of cultural conservatism.<sup>105</sup> But Gloria Steinem, the erstwhile champion of jeans, excoriated the Shields campaign as an “aboveground representation of child pornography.”<sup>106</sup> Dolores Alexander, former executive director of NOW and founder of the group Women Against Pornography categorized the era’s jeans commercials as just another example of how “porn has begun to invade every facet of American life...Companies like Calvin Klein—with Brooke Shields—have literally turned the female into a piece of ass.”<sup>107</sup> Jeans, which feminists had celebrated a decade earlier for deemphasizing gender difference, were now provoking the ire of second-wavers for their exploitation of female sexuality. Unlike jeans designers in the late 1960s and first half of the ‘70s, who had been eager to associate their garments with feminism and women’s improving status in society, Klein thumbed his nose at the women’s movement. So successful were designer jeans that by the start of the 1980s consumers rarely identified blue jeans with growing gender equality or women’s liberation.

But feminist condemnation of Calvin Klein’s advertising did little to dampen women’s enthusiasm for designer jeans. The big four of Jordache, Vanderbilt, Calvin Klein and Sassoon were selling millions of pairs of their jeans by the start of the 1980s, with Klein alone selling 15 million pairs in 1981.<sup>108</sup> An editorialist for the *Los Angeles Times* joked in the election year of 1980 that “the broadest American constituency to be found under any single label this year is the

---

<sup>105</sup> Lisa Marsh, *House of Klein: Fashion, Controversy, and a Business Obsession* (Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2003), 45; Gaines and Churcher, *Obsession*, 272-273.

<sup>106</sup> Gaines and Churcher, *Obsession*, 274.

<sup>107</sup> Pat Collier, “Pros and Cons of Porn Debated in Front of Hostile, Vocal Crowd,” Pennsylvania State University *Daily Collegian*, September 7, 1984, 1.

<sup>108</sup> “Calvin Klein: Bio,” *People Weekly*, January 18, 1982, 98 CHECK PAGE.

one wearing Calvin Klein jeans.”<sup>109</sup> As the *New York Times* reported (with a palpable dose of disdain for middle America): “Not only, it seems, do Vanderbilt jeans ‘check out’ with trend-hungry Bloomingdale’s people, but also out there where women still eat peach cobbles and haven’t even heard of *cuisine minceur*.” The growth potential of designer jeans seemed almost limitless. “Jeans have become a way of life,” a spokesperson for Vanderbilt jeans declared. “We don’t think the bottom is [ever] going to drop out.”<sup>110</sup> In essence, designer jeans represented a rejection of both the mass market and consumer liberation. Traditional jeans had promising consumers a garment that reflected relaxed dress and gender norms and expanded women’s fashion choices since the late 1960s. Yet the upstart designers of the late 1970s achieved what would have been unthinkable just a few years earlier: they relied on expensive advertising and high price-tags to convince customers that their jeans communicated class status, exclusivity, and sexualized femininity—and women actually bought the jeans.

The contrast between feminists’ outrage towards Calvin Klein and the millions of women who bought designer jeans marked a widening discrepancy between the second wave’s analysis of American consumer culture and the actions of rank-and-file female consumers. Indeed, the late 1970s were a time during which feminists’ broader influence in American society began to decline.<sup>111</sup> Yet, from the late 1960s through the middle of the ‘70s, traditional jeans-makers, feminists, boutiques, denim retailers and millions of female consumers agreed not only that women could and should wear blue jeans. They also regarded the garments as a stylish, yet causal and practical fashion choice that owed its success to deemphasizing the wearer’s gender.

---

<sup>109</sup> Ellen Goodman, “The Political ‘In’ Look: ‘Liberal with Reservations,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 9, 1979, C7.

<sup>110</sup> Francesca Stanfill, “The Marketing of Gloria Vanderbilt,” *New York Times Magazine*, October 14, 1979, PAGE NUMBER!

<sup>111</sup> *Ms.*, June 1974.



The popularization of women's blue jeans in the first half of the 1970s suggested to many women that they would continue to gain power to choose their own wardrobes, without facing restrictive dress codes, social pressures, or opprobrium. Growing acceptance of women's jeans did represent a modest, but concrete, example of women gaining more freedom in making personal decisions in their daily lives. But in a great twist of irony, upstart designers in the late 1970s began to insist that women needed their *own* jeans to express their femininity and sexuality fully. But even despite the regressive qualities of designer jeans, by the late 1970s many women felt that they had more power and more choices in dressing themselves than they ever had before. As one woman declared in a letter to *Ms.* in 1979, "Today's fashions allow a woman to be herself: to wear desert boots, high heels, or anything in between; to wear comfortable clothing, or constricting clothing. Fashion today celebrates being a woman and being one's self."<sup>112</sup> Three years later, the fashion writer Mary Peacock summed up the massive changes in women's fashion during the previous decade with the following. "Today it is possible—at least in big cities—to go to a party and see five women talking together: one in a pantsuit, one in a cocktail dress, one in jeans and silk shirt, one in tweeds, and one in metallic knickers and beruffed batwing blouse, and they all feel perfectly comfortable and correct."<sup>113</sup> In short, by the end of the 1970s, jeans had earned their place as an accepted garment in American women's wardrobes. Society had finally granted young women the power to decide whether to wear a dress, skirt *or* pants in public settings. But with the rise of designer denim, it also became clear that even blue jeans could perpetuate the fashion double standard and could be used to

---

<sup>112</sup> Karen J. McCartney, "Letter," *Ms.*, August 1979, 6.

<sup>113</sup> Mary Peacock, "When Did You Start Wearing Your Self," *Ms.*, July/August 1982, 53.

pressure women to identify themselves as submissive, sexualized, and distinctly feminine consumers.

Still, blue jeans were not the only market in which women articulated their rapidly changing relationship to consumption, sexuality and public life in the 1970s. The next chapter will investigate singles bars as commercial spaces in which young women challenged the traditional sexual double-standard and, along with male bar-goers, experienced the thrill and freedom, but also the confusion and disappointment, of what contemporary Americans dubbed the sexual revolution.

## Chapter 3

### Going It Alone: Unmarried Young Adults and the Rise of Singles Bars

“It is almost 3 o’clock on a brisk, blustery Sunday morning. Unmindful of time or weather, several hundred people cluster outside Adam’s Apple, a modishly painted bar and restaurant...Inside, the place is packed to capacity with a thousand people, who are circulating beneath groves of trees bearing artificial apples.” So began the *Wall Street Journal*’s report on Manhattan’s burgeoning “singles’ scene” in 1973. Though some patrons chose to dine at tables or to dance, “most of them are dallying near an enormous bar...For the most part, the people are young and pert. Exuding good fellowship and doing their best to abide by Adam’s Apple’s theme—‘Don’t resist temptation’—they are shopping about, hoping they’ll get luck today and find the Eve or Adam missing in their life.”

For all the perceived bonhomie of the bar’s patrons, however, the *Journal* determined that “feeling perhaps luckiest of all are a pair of fashionably attired men who are...apparently acquainted with many of the faces that flash by,” namely the owners of Adam’s Apple. And the author described the owners’ motivations in rather magnanimous terms. Adam’s Apple allowed women to “come into a bar and not feel like a piece of meat...It’s like meeting your neighbors.” As the reporter explained with a mix of admiration and wonder, “conventional bars fold in unprecedented numbers, victims of the tight dollar, of disdain for alcohol among youths and of replacement pleasures, [but] the singles bar is pocketing money faster than you can say Helen Gurley Brown.” These bars represented “some of the biggest successes in the restaurant-bar

business” in the 1970s. But customers at Adam’s Apple, by contrast, were far from measured their assessments of the singles’ scene. “The place can be fun if you take it lightly,” explained one young man. “You’ve got to come here with a sense of humor. You can’t expect too much. You expect to talk to a few girls, dance a little, and leave.” But as another patron of Adam’s Apple, a young woman, lamented, “This place is filled with people who hate to be here, but are here for the same reason I’m here. I’m lonely. If you don’t come here, you go to another place just like that. But it’s always the same.”<sup>1</sup>

Why was it that young Americans, both male and female, who had for decades embraced the courting system known as dating, suddenly showed a willingness to visit bars and pubs with the explicit aim of engaging total strangers and initiating sexual contact with them? In a sense, Americans’ reactions to singles bars reflected the difficulty they had in expressing their feelings, mixed as they were, about the sexual revolution, the popular term for the sum of dramatic and diverse changes that transformed sex and romance in the 1960s and ‘70s. Singles bars were among the first businesses to welcome both unmarried male and female customers enthusiastically and to treat them as independent, healthy adult consumers who did not need to hide or justify their marital status. Perhaps most remarkably, singles bars achieved this without inspiring the universal condemnation of middle-class arbiters of morality. But because singles bars allowed consumers, especially young women, to challenge the sexual double standard, many Americans still harbored suspicions and unease towards them. Still other Americans questioned whether singles bars made sex too easy by reducing it to a cheap commodity. In short, these establishments challenged prevailing sexual norms without overturning them fully. Although bars were widely perceived as less than tasteful, consumers still patronized them in

---

<sup>1</sup> N.R. Kleinfield, “For Love or Money? The Owners, at Least, Find What they Seek In Busy ‘Singles bar,” *The Wall Street Journal*, December 3, 1973, 1, 24.

great numbers. Consequently, singles bars thrived as popular, commercial laboratories of the sexual revolution in the 1970s.

### I. Singles in the Shadows

For most of the twentieth century, unmarried young adults occupied a place peripheral to the core of American society that was based around family life. From the late nineteenth century until the Great Depression, a subculture of unmarried men based in boarding houses, fraternal associations, YMCAs and saloons thrived in the nation's cities, but it remained off-limits to and concealed from most Americans.<sup>2</sup> Unmarried women, furthermore, were far fewer in number and much less visible in comparison, and virtually no subculture consisting of both unmarried men and women existed. In the amusement parks and dance halls of early twentieth-century urban America, it was not uncommon for working-class men and women to make each others' acquaintance and sometimes even initiate sexual relationships. But middle-class Americans by and large condemned unacquainted men and women who sought romance in commercial spaces. Cabarets and dance halls that served middle-class clienteles commonly forbade uninitiated patrons from interacting with each other, and some even denied entry to unescorted men and women. Meanwhile, Progressive-era reformers considered sexually assertive, single men and women who frequented dance halls and amusement parks dissipated and thus prime candidates for social rehabilitation.<sup>3</sup> By the 1940s, with the onset of the Depression and America's mass mobilization of men of marrying age in the 1940s, leisure-based bachelor's culture had nearly evaporated.

---

<sup>2</sup> Howard Chudacoff, *The Age of the Bachelor: Creating an American Subculture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 3-20.

<sup>3</sup> John F. Kasson, *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1987), 39-43; Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 95-109; John D' Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*, second edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 305.

Not only that, but the twenty years following World War II marked the high-water mark of marriage's image in American culture and the nadir of singles', and especially unmarried women's, status. The return of troops in the second half of the 1940s, combined with the booming economy and the federal government's new incentives for home buying, fueled a boom in marriage and childbirth of unprecedented magnitude. The proportion of men who were unmarried, for example, plummeted to just over 23 percent in 1960, the lowest recorded rate ever. Adults who remained unmarried for more than a few years were widely considered to be social or romantic failures fully culpable for their marital status. Social scientific literature and popular psychology routinely treated unmarried people as deficient and pathological.<sup>4</sup> In a poll conducted in 1957, roughly 80 percent of respondents chose the words "sick," "neurotic," or "immoral" to describe adults who preferred to be unmarried.<sup>5</sup> Men who remained unmarried for long enough earned reputations as "confirmed bachelors," code for closeted homosexuals. But while single men were viewed with suspicion, the stigma of singlehood weighed even more heavily on women, who received the title of "spinsters" or "old maids" and earned outright disdain from most quarters of society. To comprehend the severity of this stigma, one need only consider a poll of high school girls from 1956, in which almost 99 percent of respondents agreed with the claim that "single career women [had]...so thoroughly misunderstood their central role and identity that they had failed to achieve even the most basic task of establishing a household."<sup>6</sup> Not only did women marry on average several years earlier than men, but films, magazines, television and literature stressed to women that happiness was attainable only to

---

<sup>4</sup>Chudacoff, *The Age of Bachelors*, 255-258.

<sup>5</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, A History: From Obedience to Intimacy or How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Viking, 2005), 230.

<sup>6</sup> Betsy Israel, *Bachelor Girl: The Secret History of Single Women in the Twentieth Century* (New York: William Morrow, 2002), 6.

those who were married. As one unmarried woman lamented to *Mademoiselle* in 1955, “We are never allowed to forget what the billboards, television, movies, and the press would have us remember.”<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, courtship between American men and women remained highly ritualized and rigidly codified in the attempt to delineate gender roles clearly and to discourage premarital sex. Dating, which had emerged in the early part of the twentieth century, usually entailed men paying for women to accompany them to a movie, sporting event, dinner, dance hall or some other commercialized leisure event. The minute and complex details of what couples were *supposed* to do when they were courting, it was hoped, would leave no doubt as to how men could and should be men and women could and should be women. By following these conventions, courtship allowed men and women to define themselves in contrast to each other. Men were supposed to ask women on dates; women could accept, but if they did, not too eagerly or quickly. Men were supposed to attempt first kisses and petting; again, women were *supposed* to wait for these advances, but first resist them and only carefully and deliberately assent, but not to the point of actually sleeping with their dates.<sup>8</sup> Teenage and young adults also pursued romantic relationships through chaperoned events sponsored by institutions or organizations, including religious groups, schools, universities and workplaces. Commercial spaces like movie theaters and amusement parks, while they played important roles as venues where couples who already knew each other could become better acquainted on dates, were not considered respectable places for young men and women to meet for the first time. Very few, if any,

---

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>8</sup> Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in New York City, 1880 to 1920* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985); Beth L. Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat: Courtship in Twentieth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 7-12, 97-99, 110-111.

commercial leisure spaces or institutions advertised themselves explicitly as places where unacquainted men and women could meet to initiate romantic relationships.<sup>9</sup> Commercial institutions geared towards singles were segregated by gender and avoided mixing men and women.<sup>10</sup>

More than any one space, however, the bar and tavern was widely considered inappropriate as a meeting place for singles to court or initiate romantic contacts. Drinking establishments had long carried reputations as places unfit for women, and even after the repeal of Prohibition, the lingering stigma of public drinking was demonstrated by the many taverns and bars that remained exclusively male. Bar drinking commonly played a key role in socializing young male adults, especially in urban and working-class areas, and thus were regarded as predominantly male spaces.<sup>11</sup> Even in the 1950s, as the country's alcohol consumption increased substantially, most Americans imbibed in their homes or at restaurants.<sup>12</sup> Women rarely patronized bars, and when they did, they usually accompanied a husband or boyfriend.<sup>13</sup> Unattended women at watering holes carried the reputation as fast and promiscuous and depending on the setting, were sometimes even assumed to be prostitutes.<sup>14</sup> Some bars even

---

<sup>9</sup> Since the early twentieth century, the operators of movie theaters, dance halls, and amusement parks were well aware that their businesses attracted young consumers who hoped to make romantic connections with other consumers, but prior to the 1960s, few businesses advertised themselves per se as spaces for meeting sexual partners and those that did were roundly condemned. ADD PEISS CITATION.

<sup>10</sup> Chudacoff, *Age of the Bachelor*, 267.

<sup>11</sup> Lori Rotskoff, *Love on the Rocks: Men, Women, and Alcohol in Post-World War II America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 53-55

<sup>12</sup> Oldenburg, *Great Good Place*,

<sup>13</sup> John Davies, "'For Men Only' Bar Invaders Criticized," *Chicago Tribune*, January 2, 1970, 11.

<sup>14</sup> Lori Rotskoff, *Love on the Rocks: Men, Women, and Alcohol in Post-World War II America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).



went as far as to formally restrict admission to men as late as 1970.<sup>15</sup> And despite that bars universally admitted women by the 1970s, many female consumers still had to deal with the decades-old stigma of patronizing a drinking establishment. “Lots of us seem to think when we go to bars we’re degrading ourselves...or otherwise abandoning our integrity,” one writer for *Cosmopolitan* observed in 1976. “I’d always been told [in the past] ‘nice girls don’t go to bars.’”<sup>16</sup>

One of the few social settings where alcohol was publicly served and women were permitted, even expected, to attend without male companions were fraternity and sorority parties and so-called “mixers,” which had become increasingly popular on the campuses of American colleges and universities since World War II. These parties were usually held by fraternities and sororities at co-educational institutions, or men at a single-sex institution might invite female students from a neighboring college to a mixer. Some scholars have traced the origins of singles bars to mixers, arguing that they represented an early model of alcohol-fueled, socially acceptable parties where groups of young, often uninitiated singles could congregate with stated intentions of making romantic contacts.<sup>17</sup> Although the motivation for these parties was not to cultivate a culture of singles but to produce long-term relationships between students, mixers would later loom large in the public imagination as forerunners of the singles culture of the 1970s.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> John R. Coyne, Jr., “Ale, Cheese, Onions and Women,” *National Review*, September 22, 1970, 997.

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth Block, “How to Survive (and Enjoy!) Singles Bars,” *Cosmopolitan*, July 1976, 104.

<sup>17</sup> *Sexual Scripts*, 128-129 citing P. Schwartz, “Social Games and Social Roles: Effects of a College Dating System,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1973), 46-56.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Sam Anson, “U.S.A.—Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places,” *Mademoiselle*, June 1981, 89.

While the early 1960s represented the zenith of marriage both as a practice and as an idea in American culture, it was also an era in which a few voices began to promote, and even celebrate, the lives and sexual escapades of young singles. First, Hugh Hefner, a former copywriter for *Esquire* and married father, launched *Playboy* magazine in 1953 with an inaugural issue featuring a nude photograph of Marilyn Monroe from the late 1940s. Hefner's archetypal Playboy was a successful, single male professional, usually depicted or at least understood to be white. The Playboy lived in a major city and committed the majority of his financial and emotional resources to appreciating the finer things in life, which he defined as women, wine and upscale consumer goods. As Barbara Ehrenreich has argued, Hefner's primary message to readers was that "a playboy didn't have to be a husband to be a man."<sup>19</sup> In fact, Hefner eventually divorced his wife and became single again in 1959, and within a few years *Playboy's* monthly celebrations of the male single life were selling over a million copies apiece.<sup>20</sup>

Women would have to wait until 1962 when Helen Gurley Brown published her bestselling guide, *Sex and the Single Girl*, for an endorsement of the unmarried life that approached the audacity and popularity of *Playboy*. Hefner challenged dominant American moral convention by suggesting men should enjoy sex outside or prior to marriage, but in emphasizing male satisfaction, *Playboy* had failed to challenge the double standard that condoned men who enjoyed sex but condemned women who found pleasure in the act. Brown attacked this double standard head-on, however, and not only rejected the notion that unmarried

---

<sup>19</sup> Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Man: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1983), 42.

<sup>20</sup> Chudacoff, *Age of the Bachelor*, 261-264; Coontz (for *Playboy*), 252, citing Ehrenreich, *Hearts of Men*, 30, 42, 47.

women should eschew sex, but even encouraged women to remain single. Single women had much more exciting lives than their married counterparts, Brown maintained, but they should still spend considerable amounts of their time and energy pursuing men, both unmarried and married.<sup>21</sup> Still, Brown and other advocates of the single life saw no reason for unmarried men and women to cultivate their own sub-culture or meeting places. And although *Sex and the Single Girl* remained on best-seller lists for months, many readers may have been compelled to buy the book more out of curiosity than out of agreement with Brown. In one poll from the year of the book's publication, virtually all married women and three-quarters of unmarried women contended that the typical "girl who is married and has a family to raise" is happier than the typical "unmarried career girl."<sup>22</sup> Even if Brown had started a national conversation about what women could gain from eschewing marriage, America had a long way to go before it accepted unmarried women as healthy and stable members of society.

More important than Brown and Hefner's pronouncements, however, were the changes in technology, demographic patterns, media and employment that began to reshape the lives of unmarried people, reduce the marriage rate, and raise the median age of marriage in the 1960s. Academics, popular culture, and news media all showed an increased willingness to both discuss and depict sexuality in this period.<sup>23</sup> The release of the first legal oral contraceptive in America in 1960 gave women much greater latitude in postponing pregnancy, or even avoiding it

---

<sup>21</sup> Helen Gurley Brown, *Sex and the Single Girl* (New York: Pocket Books, 1962); Jennifer Scanlon, *Bad Girls Go Everywhere: The Life of Helen Gurley Brown* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>22</sup> "In general, who do you think is happier—the girl who is married and has family to raise, or the unmarried career girl?" Attitudes of American Women Poll, June 1962, (iPoll Databank at the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, <http://roperweb.ropercenter.uconn.edu/>, accessed February 1, 2009),

<sup>23</sup> David Allyn, *Make Love, Not War: The Sexual Revolution, An Unfettered History* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2001), 166-183; Beth Bailey, "Sexual Revolution(s)," *The Sixties: From Memory to History*, ed. David Farber (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 238.

altogether. Increased control over family planning enhanced some women's ability to plot careers, in turn reducing the appeal of male financial stability as a motivating factor to wed. Female rates of employment continued to rise steadily in the 1960s as they had for several decades, a trend that in and of itself also encouraged women to delay and sometimes even forgo marriage. Rising personal incomes and the declining price of housing combined to make it less expensive for Americans to live by themselves if they so chose.<sup>24</sup> Altogether, these developments prompted various commentators in the 1960s to declare that a sexual revolution was underway.<sup>25</sup>

## II. The Rise of the Singles Market

Americans' awareness of the increase in singles grew out of and was reflected in rising incomes and greater access to discretionary consumption. When news agencies began to report on a growing scene of "swinging singles" in major cities, for example, they focused on the burgeoning populations of unmarried, white-collar workers in cities like New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago. Endorsements of consumer culture and the benefits it produced accompanied both Hefner and Brown's endorsement of the single life. By 1965, it appeared, a handful of entrepreneurs had started to launch businesses that they hoped would profit from young, unmarried city-dwellers.<sup>26</sup> Significant increases in the number of unmarried individuals who could afford to rent or buy their own residences, for example, triggered a new cottage

---

<sup>24</sup> Chudacoff, *Age of the Bachelor*, 259, 265-266.

<sup>25</sup> Allyn, *Make Love, Not War*; Beth Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999).

<sup>26</sup> The topic of gay bars and their popularization in post-Stonewall America is ripe for research, but it is such a large and significant area of consumer culture that it deserves its own examination, instead of being lumped in with heterosexual singles bars. Jane F. Gerhard, *Desiring Revolution*, 85—check footnote!

industry of single-resident housing, further raising awareness of the rising numbers of unmarried Americans.<sup>27</sup> The *Wall Street Journal* dubbed this array of products and services aimed at young “unmarried grownups” with disposable income the “swinging singles market.”<sup>28</sup>

But it was drinking establishments, more than any other businesses, that succeeded in profiting from the growing populations of young singles in cities. A *Time* article from 1967 described them as “dating bars,” but most Americans came to know these establishments simply as singles bars. Berney Sullivan’s Body Shop in New York probably opened as the first self-proclaimed single’s bar in 1964, although TGI Fridays opened the next year and has also claimed the title of the first bar and restaurant devoted to serving singles.<sup>29</sup> Now better known as a so-called “family restaurant,” Friday’s represented the largest of several self-proclaimed singles bars that opened on Manhattan’s upper eastside in the second half of the 1960s. By 1967, there were more than a dozen “boy-meet-girl bars” in New York, including high-volume shops like Friday’s and Mr. Laff’s.<sup>30</sup> Alan Stillman, the founder of Friday’s, offered a simple explanation for the massive popularity of his operation years later. “We happened to be at the right place at the right time, and a small thing happened in 1965 that was a large help to us. The Pill became an accepted way of living for single women.”<sup>31</sup> For Stillman and many others, singles bars seemed to have grown directly out of the new freedoms of the sexual revolution.

---

<sup>27</sup> Chudacoff, *Age of the Bachelor*, 264-266

<sup>28</sup> Felix Kessler, “Ads and Services Aim At Swinging Singles and Would-Be Singles,” *WSJ*, February 23, 1967, 1.

<sup>29</sup> “Dating Bars,” *Time*, February 17, 1967, 47; Jerald W. Cloyd, “The Market-Place Bar: The Interrelation Between Sex, Situation, and Strategies in the Pairing Ritual of *Homo Ludens*,” *Urban Life* 5 (October 1976): 293-313; John Godwin, *The Mating Trade*, 60?

<sup>30</sup> “Ads and Services,” *WSJ*, February 23, 1967, 1.

<sup>31</sup> Lawrence Van Gelder, “His ‘Invention’: The Singles Bar,” *NYT*, April 8, 1984, L12.

The business model and décor for singles bars, especially the larger, more successful establishments that also allowed customers to dine, distinguished the new watering holes both from dingier neighborhood bars and more straight-laced cocktail lounges and restaurants. By the late 1960s, for instance, the highly popular Maxwell's Plum featured a "lighted ceiling composed of ten thousand sheets of stained Tiffany glass,...a magnificent, horseshoe-shaped oak bar, and an amalgam of antiques and just plain kitsch that passed for real glamour," including "stuffed animals hanging from the ceiling." According to one chronicler of the hospitality industry, Maxwell's Plum owed its success to the "the openness, casualness, and uniqueness" of its "sidewalk café" atmosphere. Even bars' owners strived to surprise and charm their customers. Warner LeRoy would show up at Maxwell's Plum in "Moroccan costume done up with flashlights and silver bells." The eccentric entrepreneurs with a flair for the dramatic like LeRoy and Friday's Alan Stillman, "brought to the [hospitality] industry fresh blood and new ideas," according to one influential restaurant critic. And the sheer popularity of singles bars distinguished them from traditional watering holes, too. Customers at a bar like Maxwell's Plum found themselves waiting in a line on the street, sometimes for half an hour, before they could even enter the bar. By contrast, customers rarely had to wait before entering traditional neighborhood taverns. Accounts from the late '60s reported almost incredulously that some singles bars had serious concerns about over-crowding.<sup>32</sup> Still, many of the more prominent singles bars were quite large and could accommodate far more customers than average bars; Boston's The Mad Russian, for instance, hosted 2,400 people on its opening night in 1967.<sup>33</sup> By 1976, one author even claimed that "every single or divorced person in New York has heard of

---

<sup>32</sup> "Ads and Services Aim At Swinging Singles," *WSJ*, 1.

<sup>33</sup> "Dating Bars," *Time*, 47.

Maxwell's Plum. Even those who are only passing through Manhattan may have gone out of their way to visit the bar.<sup>34</sup> In fact, establishments like Maxwell's Plum were so successful that they created a business model that survived for decades and continued to influence eating and drinking establishments well into the 1990s.<sup>35</sup>

Singles bar owners employed a number of gimmicks, specials and advertising strategies to attract unmarried customers, especially women, and to cultivate an atmosphere that would encourage the unacquainted to mingle, converse and flirt with each other. Men made up the clear majority of patrons at most singles bars, so singles spots exerted considerable effort in attracting women with discounted drinks, free entry on night were men paid for admission, and other variations of "ladies' night" promotions.<sup>36</sup> With names like She-Nannigans and The Climax, singles bar sought to convey images of a libidinous social setting where sexual adventure was available to anyone willing to give it a try.<sup>37</sup> New York's Adam's Apple operated an extensive publicity campaign prior to its opening that coyly sparked interest among the cities' young white-collar workers. Apple carts emblazoned with the slogan "Don't resist temptation" were stationed throughout Manhattan, and vendors gave out thousands of piece of the fruit for free along with cards that read "meet me at the Adam's Apple" without providing any further details. Usually singles spots contained just one or two areas for alcohol service, which created a locus of activity where customers found themselves pushed into tight quarters vying for a

---

<sup>34</sup> Suzanne Gordon, *Lonely in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), 213.

<sup>35</sup> Mariani, *America Eats Out*, 205.

<sup>36</sup> "For Love or Money?," *WSJ*, December 3, 1973, 24; Natalie Allon, *Urban Life Styles* (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Company Publishers, 1979), 131; "For Love or Money?," *WSJ*, December 3, 1973, 24.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

drink.<sup>38</sup> It was at the bar where many of the initial interactions between customers took place, not only because people found themselves waiting to order with little to do, but also because it was easy to make physical contact, either incidentally or intentionally. “Bars are where you meet people. That’s why we have three long bars at Trumps,” the proprietor of one singles spot explained. “That lets you buy a girl a drink right away...People talk to one another at a bar, you can be in the driver’s seat.”<sup>39</sup> Singles bars also relied on loud music to create an atmosphere of frenzied social energy that minimized the awkward silences that might characterize conversation between two strangers. Dancing, although rarely the main attraction at singles bars, was not uncommon, and by the middle of the 1970s, some of the larger bars began to market themselves as discos.<sup>40</sup> Some bars even minimized the number of tables in an effort to keep people on their feet and prevent patrons from receding entirely into the group of friends with whom they arrived.

The sheer commercialism of singles bars differentiated them both from traditional bars and conventional dating. While couples had long made habit of meeting in commercial spaces like movie theaters and restaurants, the act of dating did not itself imply a commercial transaction. Men and women partook in commercial acts of leisure *in order to* date. But the very act of seeking sexual contacts in singles bars took on a transactional nature. After all, common monikers for singles bars included “meat market” and “body exchange.”<sup>41</sup> Some bars incorporated the commercial sensibilities of their services into their own names, like New York’s first self-styled singles bar, the Body Shop. One Boston-based singles bar owner embraced the

---

<sup>38</sup> Allon, *Urban Lifestyles*, 143.

<sup>39</sup> Dan Bischoff, “A Cruiser’s Guide to Singles Bars,” *Cincinnati*, June 1978, 80.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>41</sup> Jack Mabley, “Behind the Scenes of City Night Life,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 2, 1975, 4; James Quinn, “Body Shops,” *LAT*, February 25, 1973, GF1.



commercial aspects of the pick-up scene, remarking matter-of-factly, “I sell boy meets girl.”<sup>42</sup> And the very act of patronizing a singles bar took on the air of shopping, with men and women examining each other from afar, scrutinizing the selection of partners in the bar before trying to pitch themselves to someone through conversation, dance and other acts of self-advertising. “Singles bar constitute a market situation,” one sociologist argued. “You go there to sell yourself and select from others with similar intentions.”<sup>43</sup>

The demographic profile of singles bars also contrasted with that of traditional bars and other commercial spaces more generally. First and foremost, the high proportion of these bars’ patrons that were unmarried distinguished them from virtually all spaces in America, fueling the perception that singles spots constituted a separate social sphere. In terms of age, most men and women who patronized singles bars were in their twenties, perhaps even early thirties, but women in their early and mid-twenties were especially common.<sup>44</sup> Singles bars were filled with white-collar workers, or as one *Rolling Stone* article described them, “handsome, healthy men and women with a little cash to burn away the blues.”<sup>45</sup> Many female customers worked in traditional “pink-collar” fields such as education, nursing, and clerical work in business and government, while many of the male customers worked in slightly higher office positions, as well as in management and in the professions.<sup>46</sup> While singles bars were predominantly white and close to racially homogenous, their customers and employees commonly pointed to the range

---

<sup>42</sup> “Jason’s: A ‘Hot Spot’ for Boston’s Swinging Singles,” *Restaurant Business*, May 15, 1982.

<sup>43</sup> “Body Shops,” *LAT*, GF4.

<sup>44</sup> Allon, *Urban Lifestyles*, 145-147; David Lang, “Out for a Knight (or Princess),” *Atlanta Singles Magazine and Date Book*, February/March 1979, 10.

<sup>45</sup> “Houston After Dark,” 35.

<sup>46</sup> “Dating Bars,” 47; Allon, *Urban Lifestyles*, 148.

of their hobbies, personalities, and lifestyles, to borrow the parlance of the day, as the source of exciting unpredictability and heterogeneity at the establishments. Interestingly, African Americans, especially black women, patronized singles bars much less than whites, and singles bars oriented toward African Americans did not emerge until the late 1970s. Even then, black singles rarely referred to such bars as “singles bars,” but thought of them as “just places where middle-class blacks can go and relax with each other,” according to a contemporary sociologist of unmarried African Americans.<sup>47</sup> In drawing a less than broad cross-section of society, singles bars actually kept in tradition with conventional drinking establishments that were frequently segregated by race and class.<sup>48</sup>

Nonetheless, a mix of amazement, delight and sensationalism colored the early accounts of singles bars in the late 1960s and early 1970s and helped to popularize the establishments. One book, *The Swinger's Guide for the Single Girl* declared the “new, highly fashionable dating bars...solve the where-to-meet problem” because they “allow you to respectfully make yourself available to men who you find attractive, and who are initially committed to no more than an offer to buy you a drink.”<sup>49</sup> *Time* magazine reported that “communication begins easily [at] the the dating bars [that] are providing career girls with a sorely needed new meeting ground.” One young woman in a singles bar spoke for their wholesomeness: “No one thinks you are a pickup” in singles bars, insisted one young woman. “The people I would like to meet would be horrified

---

<sup>47</sup> Susan Jacoby, “49 Million Singles Can’t All Be Right,” *New York Times*, February 17, 1974, 42; Robert Staples, *The World of Black Singles: Changing Patterns of Male/Female Relations* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981), 28. Staples’ limited his study of black singles to college graduates between the ages of 25 and 45, only 13 percent of that cohort in the late 1970s. Considering this figure as well as the high numbers of college graduates in predominantly white singles bars suggests the possibility of singles bars having limited appeal and accessibility for working-class and poor Americans.

<sup>48</sup> Allon, *Urban Lifestyles*, 147.

<sup>49</sup> Marie and Hector Roget, *Swingers Guide for the Single Girl: Key to the New Morality* (Los Angeles: Holloway House Publishing, 1966/1968), 198.

to think of me that way.” Furthermore, through the 1960s singles bars were commonly described as places where two people could meet to set up a future date, not as a launching pad for one-night stands. As one young woman at a singles bar claimed, “the most a girl is expected to yield on first encounter is her telephone number.”<sup>50</sup> These breezy, overwhelmingly positive accounts of singles bars went a long way to glorifying the singles culture in the late 1960s, planting the seeds of many Americans’ fantasies of free-for-all bars where one could effortlessly make guilt-free romantic connections.

By functioning as spaces with their own code of social etiquette, singles bars offered to liberate young singles from the strictures of traditional mating norms, the formality of the workplace, and the anonymity of the city. Social interactions ran the gamut, ranging from the mundane to the outlandish. Singles bars had a reputation as places where young people could feel unrestrained in pursuing members of the opposite sex; patrons commonly disregarded rules of etiquette and decorum that prevailed in the world of white-collar work outside the bars.<sup>51</sup> People ogled each other, sometimes for very long periods, in ways that would be considered highly inappropriate in most public settings.<sup>52</sup> In an age when fears of crime were on the rise and striking up conversation with a stranger was increasingly considered risky, singles bars encouraged total strangers to approach and speak with each other.<sup>53</sup> By entering a singles bar, one signaled to others that they were open to conversation, flirting, perhaps even more. In these spaces, engaging strangers was not only acceptable, but preferred. People could lie about their

---

<sup>50</sup> “Dating Bars,” *Time*, 47.

<sup>51</sup> Gordon, *Lonely in America*, 223.

<sup>52</sup> Allon, *Urban Life Styles*, 169.

<sup>53</sup> Allon, *Urban Lifestyles*, 132; Philip Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 66-67, 136-147.

age, profession, or background, but in deceiving other bar-goers, they risked the ire of other bar patrons if found out. But singles bars also offered people rare opportunities to mold one's one image to one's satisfaction, to imagine him or herself as someone else, in a way that wasn't possible in other settings. The escapist elements of singles bars, however superficial, were not without their benefits.<sup>54</sup>

But more importantly, singles bars, by encouraging people to initiate sexual contact with people they had just met, accelerated the traditional courting timeline that most Americans considered appropriate. Prevailing codes of propriety in mid-century America demanded that sexual relations among the young and unmarried progress in a slow and regimented manner, with a gradual escalation of courting and physicality.<sup>55</sup> Instead of abiding by this timeline in which intimacy slowly progressed over weeks and months, however, singles bars were premised on the idea that it was acceptable for adults to pursue sexual relations, even intercourse, without first going on dates. One-night stands flouted courting convention that stressed men and women needed to be married before sleeping with each other. Singles bars attracted some particularly assertive male customers, where they could approach women simple one-liners like "are you taken," "want to come home with me," and the infamous "wanna fuck?" According to a waiter at one singles bar, these types would approach one woman after another with these lines, until someone responded favorably.<sup>56</sup> These blunt one-line inquiries upset most women's sense of decorum (and were the preferred approach of few men), and they rarely produced their intended effect, but occasionally people found such direct come-ons refreshingly honest. But relaxed

---

<sup>54</sup> Allon, *Urban Life*, 171-178.

<sup>55</sup> Bailey, "Sexual Revolution(s)," 245.

<sup>56</sup> Gordon, *Lonely in America*, 228.

social etiquette also placed great pressure on people to make positive impressions of themselves very quickly, to almost instantly give each other the sense that they were witty, sexy, and above all, different. Inside bars that were filled with unattached people, singles had to quickly distinguish themselves as attractive and appealing before a conversation partner drifted back to friends or sought out a new person with whom to talk.

Yet singles bars emerged not only from a desire for more liberated social and sexual interactions; they also formed a necessary response to the inadequate social networks available to young adults in American cities. Research showed that young arrivals to major cities found their social networks much smaller than what they had previously enjoyed in high school, college or the neighborhood in which they grew up. Instead of moving into tight-knit neighborhoods based around shared ethnicity, many young urban transplants gained footholds in residential areas that drew large numbers of white-collar workers who often had little in common with each other. Because young singles increasingly fell into social isolation as they began to work, many of them desperately sought places to meet other people. As early as 1965, one Columbia University urban planning professor even mentioned making “cities more livable for the female” as one of the chief priorities for urban planners, noting that young, white-collar workers’ atomized professional and residential life created a “problem of courting in a city [that] will challenge the most tenacious suitor.” As a solution, he urged cities to incorporate into urban renewal building projects “more communal rooms for dance, talk...in a subdued environment where the young need not always be in the presence of the elders,” anticipating singles bars with the odd term “trystorium.”<sup>57</sup> In a similar manner, one article from *Single* magazine, “How to Find a Small Town in a Big City,” instructed readers who “live in big cities [and] often feel they have no one

---

<sup>57</sup> Charles Abrams, *The City is the Frontier* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1965), 337-342.

to come home to” on how to overcome feeling like solitary characters out of the Beatles’ “Eleanor Rigby.” The key to combating the loneliness of urban single life, the author claimed, was to make one’s “neighborhood into a sort of extended family.”<sup>58</sup> As one writer for *Cosmopolitan* pointed out, “Now that many of us are living away from our families, working in impersonal offices, and residing in isolated, security-tight apartments, the idea of a bar as a gathering place is catching on.”<sup>59</sup> One study showed that young singles’ willingness to patronize singles bars varied inversely with how long he or she had lived in a city. Singles bars even began to open in suburban areas by the middle of the 1970s, as the unmarried populations outside some cities began to boom.<sup>60</sup> The growing demand for singles bars demonstrated that white-collar work and modern urban life failed to provide unmarried, young Americans with the necessary social networks for developing meaningful, interpersonal relationships.<sup>61</sup>

Other commentators treated singles bars as a symptom of a more dire problem, not just urban dislocation, but a pandemic of “loneliness” that gripped young and old Americans almost everywhere beyond small towns and traditional tight-knit, ethnic urban neighborhoods. Although such interpretations exaggerated how much unadulterated loneliness motivated unmarried consumers to patronize bars, they were not entirely unfounded. In her 1976 work, *Lonely in America*, Suzanne Gordon argued that increased mobility in the form of both urbanization and suburbanization had triggered a broader failure of American society to keep its citizens enmeshed in social networks, fueling a crisis of “mass loneliness [that] is not just a

---

<sup>58</sup> Sheila Weller, “Love Thy Neighborhood (Or How to Find a Small Town in a Big City),” *Single*, October 1973, 60-62.

<sup>59</sup> Elizabeth Block, “How to Survive (and Enjoy!) Singles Bars,” *Cosmopolitan*, July 1976, 104.

<sup>60</sup> Michael Knight, “Singles Bars Swing Into the Suburbs,” *NYT*, January 5, 1974, 40.

<sup>61</sup> Joyce R. Starr and Donald E. Carns, “Singles in the City,” *Society*, February 1972, 48.

problem that can be coped with by the particular individuals involved.” Not only did the rise of single person households demonstrate that something was “drastically amiss on a societal level” but “the singles industry” made up of bars, apartment complexes and dating services “was born of the disintegration of the American community” and even sought to promote its collapse.<sup>62</sup> Unmarried men who traveled often, for instance, were thought to be particularly susceptible to loneliness on their trips away from home. At least one guidebook detailed bars across America where men could meet women and parlay those contacts into romance. As the authors of *The Complete Guide to America’s Best Pick Up Spots!* asked their readers,

Have you ever gone to a new city on a business trip or because you were going to school there or because you were just vacationing and passing through? You’re alone...It would be nice if you had some company. It would be nice to go out and meet some women you can talk with. But where do you go? You’re from Detroit and this is Phoenix....There must be some girls in this town. But where? How do you find them? If you only knew the right spots, maybe you could have some *fun*, instead of just watching that grade-B movie on late night television for the third time in the last year. We wrote [this book] for the traveler in a new environment.<sup>63</sup>

Although loneliness did not by itself drive consumers into the singles scene, bars *did* appeal to people who craved social contact, and much of their success lay in offering consumers the opportunity to make that contact no matter where they were from or how recently they had arrived in town.

But because loneliness did drive some consumers to bars, most people in singles spots sought to avoid appearing as though they were desperately on the hunt. Consequently, the more successful singles bars took into consideration their patrons’ insecurities and were careful to avoid overemphasizing their *raison d’être*. One commentator commended Adam’s Apple’s, for

---

<sup>62</sup> Suzanne Gordon, *Lonely in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), 21, 246.

<sup>63</sup> Eric Weber and M. Rob Frazier, *The Complete Guide to America’s Best Pick Up Spots! 910 Fantastic Places to Pick Up Girls!* (Tenafly, New Jersey: Eric Weber Press, 1974), 7.

instance, because in “both in mood and trappings, it doesn’t seem like a singles bar, which is what a good singles bars should avoid seeming like.” Another young woman remarked that a singles bar “needs to camouflage why everyone’s really here...The restaurant [in Adam’s Apple] does that, and so does the dancing. At a lot of places, there’s nothing to look at but bartenders and liquor.”<sup>64</sup> No matter how much these bars strived to normalize the experience of venturing into a commercial venue in pursuit of companionship, sexual or otherwise, many consumers continued to feel embarrassed in patronizing singles bars and hesitated to identify themselves as regular bar-goers.<sup>65</sup> But one woman writing for *Cosmopolitan* countered this sentiment, declaring it was simply “absurd that we feel such fear of *revealing* an interest in meeting new people.” With “a spirit of adventure, [and] a dash of courage,” she wrote, anyone could enjoy themselves at a singles bar.<sup>66</sup>

Young Americans’ declining interest in traditional, structured social activities and organizations played no small role in driving the growth of singles bars. By the late 1960s, young Boomers increasingly criticized institutions and organizations that they saw as overly bureaucratic and damaging to one’s individuality.<sup>67</sup> Even courting was affected by this rising resistance to institutional participation. An article on the “new sexual etiquette” in one singles’ magazine described a sexual sea-change that tidily divided the mores of “then” and “now,” namely the 1950s and 1970s (with the 1960s conveniently omitted). Back “then,” according to the article, it was “good form [for singles] to meet through established social contacts; for example on college campuses, at club meetings.” But in the 1970s, “the meeting ground is

---

<sup>64</sup> “For Love or Money?,” *WSJ*, 1.

<sup>65</sup> Gordon, *Lonely in America*, 225; Allon, *Urban Life Styles*, 156.

<sup>66</sup> Elizabeth Block, “How to Survive (and Enjoy!) Singles Bars,” *Cosmopolitan*, July 1976, 104.

<sup>67</sup> See “Introduction” for more on Baby Boomers and public life, 17-18.



anywhere you happen to be,” including bars, parties, and vacations.<sup>68</sup> Young singles often found organizations or fraternal clubs less rewarding and more contrived than social activities during their teenage or college years. Such organizations were populated largely by married couples and older individuals, and as a result, many unmarried people who hoped to meet potential mates had little reason to join them.<sup>69</sup> Marshall McLuhan conjectured (in his classically abstruse social-scientific language) that the conventional system of “neighborhood dances, neighborhood bars, neighborhood activities” constrained and stabilized young people’s lives, but that “singles bars and apartments offer total osmosis—an intermingling of all kinds of experiences, many inlooks and outlooks.”<sup>70</sup> Indeed, these bars provided unmarried young consumers with a rare setting in which they could meet and socialize with singles outside the confines of any organization and beyond the gaze of chaperones and family members.

The main force driving demand for singles bars—the hope of meeting someone new—meant that these establishments were communities that thrived on people’s unfamiliarity to each other. Many young singles moved around from bar to bar in search of different crowds, and if they did eventually meet someone with whom they could have a long-term relationship, then they would presumably stop going to singles bars. But contrary to this image, singles bars attracted more regular customers than widely thought. Regulars were said to comprise 20 percent of patrons at some of the larger singles bars, but at smaller, neighborhood singles bars the proportion could be even larger.<sup>71</sup> According to one man, it was necessary for men to develop a familiarity with female regulars at any singles bar. “If you’ve been coming in

---

<sup>68</sup> Judy Ramsey, “The New Sexual Etiquette,” *Single*, December 1973, 74.

<sup>69</sup> Starr and Carns, “Singles in the City,” 46-48.

<sup>70</sup> “Ads and Services Aim at Swinging Singles,” *WSJ*, 1.

<sup>71</sup> “For Love or Money?,” *WSJ*, 24.

regularly [to the same bar], so that the women at least recognize your face, then they'll be friendly to you and ignore the guy they've never seen before... You have to put a little effort into it."<sup>72</sup> This contradiction was inherent in singles bars. While people flocked to singles spots in hopes of meeting new people, patronizing the same bar regularly may have been a more effective strategy for making social contacts.

Not surprisingly, men and women's behavior at singles bars differed considerably. Although reliable figures are nearly impossible to find, research and anecdotes suggest that around a third of patrons at commercially successful singles bars in the 1970s were women, clearly implying that they were less comfortable with these spaces than men were. Men were also more likely to visit singles bars by themselves than women, who rarely came alone, although even male bar-goers commonly traveled in pairs or small groups.<sup>73</sup> While men did seem more willing to patronize singles bars than their women, considerable signs pointed to their not feeling fully at ease in these establishments. Most men hesitated to characterize their visits to singles bars merely as efforts to find sexual partners. "I don't come here saying to myself, 'I've got to score tonight or I'll shave my head tomorrow.' I come for a good time, that's all," one man in a Cincinnati singles bar explained. "But if I meet somebody, and it happens, well, I'm not turning anything down."<sup>74</sup> Realizing that bar-going did not always produce quick pickups, patrons commonly tried to maintain realistic expectations about their chances of finding true romance.

---

<sup>72</sup> "Houston After Dark," 37.

<sup>73</sup> "Body Shops," *LAT*, GF1.

<sup>74</sup> Dan Bischoff, "A Cruiser's Guide to Singles Bars," *Cincinnati*, June 1978, 78; Allon, *Urban Lifestyles*, 145-147?

Yet both male and female consumers were drawn to singles bars' atmosphere of sexual opportunity that recognized women's sexual agency more than traditional dating did. Singles bars undermined the sexual double standard that condoned men who had premarital sex while subjecting women who had sex outside steady relationships to ostracism and opprobrium. As one former waiter of Maxwell's Plum, a premier New York singles bar, explained in 1976: "Women come in [to Maxwell's Plum] to screw just as much as men. Before 1965 or so a woman would never admit that she had come to a bar to find a guy to ball him, but now women do."<sup>75</sup> Taboos against women initiating courtship declined more generally in this period; one survey from 1975 revealed that 93 percent of young, female respondents had asked a man on a date at least once.<sup>76</sup> As one woman recalled with relief in a singles' publication, "The 'in' life today...is not like it was years ago when nice girls didn't go out alone in the evening. In fact, going one step further, nice girls didn't."<sup>77</sup> One woman who frequented singles bars in Chicago endorsed assertiveness as the only successful strategy for the city's pick-up scene: "If you're going to be single in this town, you have to be a little tough...If you see something you want, you have to go after it—nobody's going to give it to you." For others, singles bars were a training ground for relationships, for figuring out what type of person one was compatible with, sexually and otherwise. Barbara, a twenty-six-year old divorcee, attributed her failed marriage to sexual inexperience and not knowing what she wanted when she first wed. "I'll admit it. I want to sleep around. I want to have 10 or 12 different sexual experiences before I remarry."<sup>78</sup>

---

<sup>75</sup> Gordon, *Lonely in America*, 234.

<sup>76</sup> *The Good Housekeeping Woman's Almanac* (New York: Newspaper Enterprise Association, Inc., 1977), 62.

<sup>77</sup> Arlene Peck, "Welcome to Singleland," *Atlanta Singles Magazine and Date Book*, January/February 1981, 4.

<sup>78</sup> Anson, "U.S.A.—Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places," 90.

Some bar patrons and operators directly associated single spots with women's liberations.

To one male columnist for *Mademoiselle*, women's assertiveness seemed a natural outgrowth of women's increased freedoms in other parts of society. Since women "were liberated on the job," he asked, "why not in bars," too?<sup>79</sup> One writer for *Cosmopolitan* urged her readers to visit singles bars and "take the initiative sometimes...Men are friendly when approached. Like most of us, they're flattered to be sought out and appreciated."<sup>80</sup>

There were clear limits, however, to the growing acceptance of female sexual assertiveness in singles bars. Some men continued to object to women who met multiple sexual partners in bars; even if Barbara did have sex with a dozen men, she probably did not admit it to all of her partners. And not all men thought it appropriate for women to initiate conversation with them in bars. While it was completely normal in some bars for women to approach men, at other establishments, women who became known for initiating contact might earn reputations as "slutty" or "easy."<sup>81</sup> One psychological study even claimed that "very traditional sex roles are in effect in the singles bars...Inevitably, it's men who do the approaching."<sup>82</sup> Depending on the bar, the pick-up scene could challenge consumers' adherence to the sexual double standard, but it never fully erased that double standard.

But what else were young Americans seeking at singles bars? John D'Emilio forwards a common interpretation of the singles bar as place that appeared "to facilitate the quest for a spouse, but [whose] contours made it more of a sexual, than a marriage, market."<sup>83</sup> The

---

<sup>79</sup> "U.S.A.—Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places."

<sup>80</sup> Block, "How to Survive (and Enjoy!) Singles Bars," 114.

<sup>81</sup> Allon, *Urban Life Styles*, 158.

<sup>82</sup> Bob Greene, "In a Singles Bar, It's Seven Second to Strikeout Time," *LAT*, January 16, 1979, C5

<sup>83</sup> D'Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 304.

perception of singles bars, as hotbeds of free-wheeling, easy-come-easy-go sexual activity, were widespread in the 1970s and formed the basis of many of the bars' strongest supporters and detractors. But singles bars were never that simple. There were certainly consumers at singles bars who fit into that mould, but numerous observers also noted that fewer sexual contacts were made at singles bars than one might expect. Plenty of one night stands got their start in singles bars—yet there were countless people who at the end of the night left singles bars by themselves or with friends with whom they had arrived. And while many people defined “scoring” as meeting someone and sleeping with them that night or soon thereafter, many encounters at singles bars resulted in exchanges of telephone numbers and vows to meet or date at a later point—pledges which were not always kept, of course.<sup>84</sup> In short, because singles bars did not always facilitate sexual encounters, they had to offer more to bar-goers to keep them returning.

Although more women than men admitted it, many singles actually hoped to find a mate or long-term romance, and not just short-term sex, in singles bars.<sup>85</sup> Indeed, the popular image of the typical bar patron as a confident and cavalier super-lover who used singles spots as his or her sexual playground contradicted research findings. Even *Good Housekeeping*, of all publications, recognized that many young women living in cities found “singles bars are a ‘safe’ way to scout for a partner: you can meet men, talk to them...but don’t have to feel obliged to go home with them.”<sup>86</sup> But in pursuing a partner or mate at singles bars, many consumers still admitted that their hopes were somewhat far-fetched. “Who among us walks into a singles bar without a pretty clear understanding that it is a low percentage game that only the blessed (and

---

<sup>84</sup> Gordon, *Lonely in America*, 228-230.

<sup>85</sup> Allon, *Urban Lifestyles*, 149.

<sup>86</sup> *Good Housekeeping Woman’s Almanac*, 62.

beautiful) can draw an ace every time,” asked one man writing for *Glamour*.<sup>87</sup> “The only thing great romantic hopes will get you at a singles bar is nervous...[so] keep your expectations modest” another writer for *Cosmopolitan* advised women in encouraging them to visit singles bars. “So what if you don’t encounter a man who really attracts you—at least you’ve had a more interesting evening than you would have had sitting at home with your macramé.”<sup>88</sup>

Although the hunt for intimacy was the primary draw at singles bars, some bar-goes also wanted to socialize with other people, especially singles who appreciated the challenges of living without a partner. Despite gradually growing acceptance for singles, these bars benefited substantially from persistent fears that “being single past the age of twenty-two connotes failure,” so having a community of like-minded individuals with whom one could discuss the challenges of living along was of no small value.<sup>89</sup> Research showed that quite a few singles considered bars part of a “supportive social movement to help people cope” with the difficulties of being single.<sup>90</sup> “It’s not necessary to always end up with a date,” a young school teacher sitting in a singles bar told the *New York Times*. “If it happens, fine. But really I enjoy just the companionship. I’ve been coming here for years.”<sup>91</sup> Another woman praised the community aspect of singles spots in cities where meeting people was far from easy. “Now that many of us

---

<sup>87</sup> George Simpson, “Viewpoint: A Man Looks at Singles Bars: Give them—and us—a Chance,” *Glamour*, February 1978, 70.

<sup>88</sup> Elizabeth Block, “How to Survive (and Enjoy!) Singles Bars,” *Cosmopolitan*, July 1976, 114.

<sup>89</sup> Gordon, *Lonely in America*, 217.

<sup>90</sup> Allon, *Urban Lifestyles*, 159.

<sup>91</sup> Steven R. Weisman, “Upper East Side No Longer Dullsville to Young,” *NYT*, September 21, 1970, 45.

are living away from our families, working in impersonal offices, and residing in isolated, security-tight apartments, the idea of a bar as gathering place is catching on.”<sup>92</sup>

The multiple, and sometimes contradictory, reasons consumers had for patronizing singles bars exposed the internal tension of these establishments, namely the difference between those who emphasized the short-term benefits of sex and those who placed a premium on the benefits of a long-term relationship. Moreover, the discrepancy between these stated motivations also spoke to the internal contradictions of the sexual revolution writ large. In a perfect world, consumers could find both sex and love, both short-term excitement and long-term companionship in singles bars, but in reality that was rarely feasible. But the mere promise, or even fantasy, that increased access to sex would automatically make it easier for people to love each other was enough to keep countless singles bars in business. This was a central premise of the sexual revolution, that premarital sex and enjoying sex in general would consistently provide the foundation for successful long-term, romantic relationships. But as many Americans discovered, sex freighted with fewer of the taboos and stigmas of years past did not come without its own hazards.

### III. Ambivalence in the Singles Scene

By the middle of the 1970s, critiques of singles bars as unsavory and even dangerous establishments, especially for women, were gaining in popularity. These views crystallized in media accounts of the killing of a young, single woman in New York, Roseann Quinn, and the novel and popular Hollywood film her death inspired, both titled *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*. On the night of January 2, 1973, Quinn, a twenty-eight-year-old school teacher, was seen at a

---

<sup>92</sup> Block, “How to Survive (and Enjoy!) Singles Bars,” 104.

neighborhood bar on Manhattan's Upper Westside, H.M. Tweed's, before she was found knifed to death the next day in her apartment. *The New York Times* featured extensive reports on the killing that painted a confusing and contradictory picture of Quinn's social life. In the initial story, Tweed's figured simply as a "bar with a "neighborhood clientele of people mostly in their 20's."<sup>93</sup> But media coverage of Tweed's and other bars that Quinn patronized soon shifted from describing them as a friendly to portraying them as part of a shadowy society off-limits to respectable New Yorkers. These were "central shared spots" where singles "met, as in a common living room, to drink, talk, and be together," but they made up a "West Side world...that was not the quiet, peaceful one that some families find there." Rather, the inhabitants of this "friendly, relaxed world of young artists, teachers, professionals—[were] 'swingers.'"<sup>94</sup>

The choice of the adjective "relaxed," while ostensibly meant as a compliment, also articulated many people's views that Quinn and the women who patronized singles bars were relaxed in their morals. As her neighbor recalled, Quinn didn't have a "regular boyfriend but was the type of girl who would have a guy in if he brought her home."<sup>95</sup> In short, Quinn was portrayed as a promiscuous, naïve woman who bore much of the blame for her own death. "A death like [Quinn's] is to be expected," one writer asserted, drawing on one police officer's insistence that she had been "unaware of the city's perils." If you lived "on the West Side, like [Quinn] did, and you're friendly, affable, mix with all kinds of people, and have a lot of night life, go to small bars...well, a lot's open to you. A lot." A *New York Times* review of Judith

---

<sup>93</sup> Michael T. Kaufman, "Teacher, 28, Slain in Her Apartment on West 72<sup>nd</sup> Street," *NYT*, January 5, 1973, 29.

<sup>94</sup> Lacey Fosburgh, "A Man Seen With Teacher On Slaying Night is Sought," *NYT*, January 6, 1973, 16

<sup>95</sup> "Teacher," *NYT*, January 5, 1973, 29



Rossner's best-selling novel based on the killing expressed this idea of the self-destructive single even more bluntly. The protagonist of the book had a habit of "going to bars, picking up men and bringing them home to sleep with...[which made for a] life of consummate passivity and emotional impotence." And when the protagonist's last pick-up ends up killing her, the reviewer accuses her of the "ultimate passive act, she gets herself killed."<sup>96</sup>

In contrast to positive press from the late 1960s that glorified the "swinging lifestyle," the coverage of Quinn's death suggested that some Americans were becoming more skeptical and cynical towards singles bars. Journalistic and fictional depictions of Roseann Quinn as the masochistic, morally compromised young woman echoed growing criticisms of single women who chose to live in cities as reckless tramps who risked emotional and physical self-destruction. Quinn's killing revealed how the perceptions of single women as psychologically disturbed, though less common than they had been in the early postwar years, were alive and well. Less than two weeks after Quinn's murder, the *Times* ran a story on "single women against a dangerous city" that explored the crime that "causes more shock, loathing and public horror among New Yorkers than any other—the brutal slaying of young single women." Part of a broader, sensational expose of the putative death wish shared by unmarried women living alone in New York, the article described female singles in the city as "vulnerable both physically and emotionally." In so doing, the *Times* forwarded a common view that women could only feel safe, in all senses of the words, if they were in a relationship with a man and lived with him. The reporter, a middle-aged woman who self-identified as a feminist, surveyed young women in a handful of Manhattan singles bars and found that though some of them expressed hesitation about bringing men home from bars, they often felt comfortable doing so if they lived with a

---

<sup>96</sup> Carol Eisen Rinzler, "The Ultimate Pick-Up," *NYT*, June 8, 1975, 255

roommate.<sup>97</sup> Still, one young woman, who worked in the advertising department of *Ms.* magazine, confessed, “The only time I would bring a man home from a bar was if I was smashed.” Another young woman, sitting with her date, maintained that if she “met somebody in a bar, the most I’d let them do is drop me off in front of my building.” But the article also corrected the flawed premise of so much of the reporting on Quinn, that she had met her killer in a bar. Although Quinn had left Tweed’s with her killer en route to her apartment, she had actually met the man previously through a friend. Still, most reporting on Quinn seemed to telegraph a message that one woman, the head of the New York police rape squad, expressed in no uncertain terms. “The only advice I have for a single woman is that she should avoid being alone in any area of the city.”<sup>98</sup> Roseann Quinn’s death, in effect, gave new strength to the view—less common than it had once been though not extinct—that single women were bent on their own self-destruction, that they couldn’t survive on their own, emotionally or physically, and that they were an embattled, pitiable lot who needed men’s protection.

Even people who patronized singles bars were becoming more vocal in expressing mixed feelings about the establishments by the middle of the 1970s. *Single* magazine ran stories titled “How to Say Hello in Bars” and “The Dangers of Cruising Bars,” for instance, in the very same issue.<sup>99</sup> Sociological studies of singles bars revealed that many patrons, especially women, found it necessary to justify and qualify their presence in such bars and often avoided identifying themselves as regular customers.<sup>100</sup> Singles bars, to the minds of many, allowed their patrons to

---

<sup>97</sup> “Judy Klemesrud,” *Feminists Who Changed America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 256.

<sup>98</sup> Judy Klemesrud, “Single Women Against a Dangerous City,” *NYT*, January 12, 1973, 38

<sup>99</sup> William P. Angers, “The Dangers of Cruising in Bars,” *Single*, September 1973, 30-31, 84-85; “How to Say Hello in Bars,” *Single*, September 1973, 32-33, 74.

<sup>100</sup> Gordon, *Lonely in America*, 225; “A Cruiser’s Guide to Singles Bars,” 78.

extend their youth by replicating the heady mating rituals found in high schools and colleges, but on a much larger and less restricted scale. While some praised this aspect of singles bars for allowing them to feel young again, many critics of singles bars charged them with fostering sexual and emotional immaturity. Patrons at singles bars frequently commented on the perceived immaturity of other patrons, as though they were emotionally and developmentally stunted individuals drawn to playgrounds of the pick-up scene. While reluctant to describe singles bars as the ideal arena for people to make romantic contacts, newsletters and guides devoted to single Americans conceded that some singles bars could facilitate meeting a romantic partner, but that they more often only inspired short-term sexual relations.

Singles bars also inspired a healthy amount of ridicule in the second half of the 1970s. *Saturday Night Live* parodied the swinging lifestyle with its “two wild and crazy guys,” played by Dan Aykroyd and Steve Martin. The Festrunk brothers, a pair of dim-witted Czech émigrés, understood little about American culture, mangled English idioms with abandon, and had no idea how to engage American women. Wearing garish, floral-print polyester shirts unbuttoned halfway down their chest, swinging gold medallions, plaid pants and floppy hats, the Festrunks caricatured the self-styled swinging bachelor constantly on the hunt. In skit after skit, the Festrunks remained oblivious that their “swinging” style and aggressive come-ons just repelled the women they met. In one episode, Aykroyd and Martin wait at their “bachelor pad” in anticipation of “two hot fashion models” they just met at a “fox bar.” The women have promised to arrive as soon as they pick up their birth control from park rangers at the Statue of Liberty, but of course they never show up. But instead of trying to make pick-ups in singles bars, most of the Americans the Festrunks encounter relax in their apartments, at art galleries, or go to parties. The “wild and crazy guys” routine made hay of the travails of eastern European immigrants in

the United States, but it also went far in suggesting how unfashionable and embarrassing the swinging singles lifestyle had become for some Americans. If even the Festrunks patronized singles bars, one assumed, then all kinds of social incompetents and losers must populate them. Other aspects of popular culture, though not as pointed in mocking singles culture as *Saturday Night Live*, still depicted singles bars unflatteringly in the late 1970s. Take for example Armistead Maupin's *Tales of the City*, a serialized novel that appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle before being published as a book in 1978. Though much of the novel focused on the love life of the gay, loosely autobiographical character Michael Tolliver, the book also features several scenes in straight singles bars. At the very start of the book, for instance, the character Mary Ann Singleton, a recent arrival from Cleveland, finds herself at Dance Your Ass Off, a singles bar and disco whose "brick-red walls, revolving beer signs, [and] kitschy memorabilia" bear a striking resemblance to bars like T.G.I. Friday's. The bar is filled with sleazy and trite men who rely on astrology, unsolicited physical contact, and cheesy one-liners like "You're not into boogying, huh?" in their attempts to woo women into bed with them.<sup>101</sup>

Growing skepticism of singles bars could even be seen in the growth of various businesses that emerged to compete directly with the bars. While bars and apartment complexes had pioneered business models that served unmarried Americans, by the second half of the 1970s a wide range of proprietary activities groups, classes, clubs, magazines and matchmaking services had joined their ranks to make up a larger marketplace of singles-oriented businesses. Not only did these businesses compete with singles bars in their promises to introduce unmarried people to each other, but they often took aim at them, implicitly and explicitly, as unhealthy places that actually narrowed one's chances of meeting interesting people. Publications like the

---

<sup>101</sup> Armistead Maupin, *Tales of the City* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1998), 8-11.

*Atlanta Singles Magazine & Date Book* sprang up across the country because “there are too few opportunities for single people to meet other single people.” Although these magazines did occasionally feature stories on bars, more often they suggested the growing discomfort many unmarried Americans experienced in patronizing singles spots. *Atlanta Singles* billed its dating service as a “friendly, non-threatening way to met respectable, interesting singles” within a culture that “has not yet provided us with sufficient means for meeting other singles like ourselves which is considered totally acceptable by society.”<sup>102</sup> Another interpretation within the single culture treated bars as places that provided only certain kinds of singles with opportunities to meet people. “The power you have in a bar is how you look. If you look good and have a lot of confidence, you can probably do okay,” Norm Rockmael, the instructor of a “Living Single” class in Southern California conceded. “But it’s the circumstances under which people meet in bars that’s the problem. When you go there consistently you tend to meet only one type of person. That’s limiting. You’re missing a large part of the population.” And Rockmael wasn’t just plugging his own singles course. Instead, he urged singles to avoid depending on insular social settings designed specifically for unmarried consumers. “Don’t go just where the singles go. If I go where people go, there are bound to be singles too.”<sup>103</sup> Indeed, it appeared by the end of the 1970s that many unmarried Americans shared Rockmael’s sentiments: singles bars, though many people continued to patronize them, were not a popular first choice for meeting others.

\* \* \*

---

<sup>102</sup> *Atlanta Singles Magazine and Date Book*, FIRST ISSUE, 2; *ASM*, May/June 1981, cover; *ASM*, May/June 1980, 2.

<sup>103</sup> Lorraine Bennett, “You Can Meet People in Elevators,” *LAT*, November 3, 1977, OC\_A22A.

By the end of the 1970s, journalists, popular culture and many singles themselves had developed a deep skepticism of singles bars, with feelings ranging from unease to outright disdain. Still, profiles of singles bars from this period suggest that continued to do a brisk business into the early 1980s.<sup>104</sup> The paradox of singles bars' shaky public image juxtaposed with their persistent success as businesses mirrors the larger contradictions of singles bars' impact on Americans sexuality and mating customs at the end of the 1970s. On the one hand, bars did make singles' pursuit for sexual contact easier, more public and less shameful. Singles bars played a large role in eliminating the long-term relationship's role as a prerequisite for sexual relationships. Despite all the accusations, some of them justified, that singles bars attracted dishonest characters, they also promoted a certain frankness and candor about sexuality in the 1970s that had been unthinkable just a decade-and-a-half earlier. Singles bars telegraphed the message to men and women that enjoying sex was not something to be ashamed of, yet they also forced many Americans to accept the painful, but valuable, realizations that sex did not always equate with love, and that sex was much easier to have than romance. But singles bars also contributed to Americans' increasing struggles in determining the meaning of sex, love and romance. For singles who slept with each other after meeting in bars, it was rarely clear if their relationship would remain strictly sexual, develop into something more significant, or even last at all beyond that night. Singles bars made it easier for young Americans to enjoy recreational sex, but they also made it easier for people to deceive and hurt each other. By facilitating quick pick-ups, singles bars diminished sex's value and undermined its power to signal the significance of relationships. In making sex easier to find but love harder to identify, singles bars

---

<sup>104</sup> Many successful singles bars of the late 1970s also began to style themselves as discos—see “Houston after Dark,” 35-40; “U.S.A.—Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places,” 88-91; “A Cruiser’s Guide to Singles Bars,” 75-77.

demonstrated two contradictory byproducts of the sexual revolution: a landscape of expanded sexual freedom but also additional uncertainty and hazards that came with navigating that landscape.

Despite their flaws and detractors, singles bars, simply by becoming a household term, helped to earn basic recognition for the millions of single Americans who struggled to form meaningful romantic relationships in this era of sexual revolution. While long-term romantic relationships did not typically grow out of contacts made at singles bars, anecdotal evidence suggests that regulars at singles bars cultivated friendly acquaintances, and sometimes even friendships, with each other. More than any other marketplace in this dissertation, singles bars did offer their customers vast opportunities for social consumption, functioning as prime examples of Ray Oldenburg's "third places."<sup>105</sup> By the start of the 1980s, singles enjoyed far more social acceptance than they had just fifteen years earlier, but many unmarried Americans still felt that society had a long way to go before affording them full, genuine respect. As late as 1980, one writer for *Atlanta Singles* conveyed this sense of continued progress in sexual and romantic norms that had begun in the 1960s.

Everything is changing. Women are changing. Men are changing. And certainly, important ways in how we view love, sex, and meeting one another are changing. First of all, strict courtship roles, to most people's ultimate relief, are breaking down. A man needs no longer assume all responsibility for dating. A woman may also participate, just as anyone in possession of all their faculties might be expected to do. Secondly, one of the most destructive attitudes of the past (and in fact, one cause of the worst kind of objectification of women)—that men can, all they want and "good" women don't, is fast losing ground.<sup>106</sup>

---

<sup>105</sup> On "third places," see this dissertation's introduction, 18-20.

<sup>106</sup> Sylvia Laufe Johnson, *The Greater Atlanta Single's Guide* (Atlanta, Ga.: Southern-Lite Publishing Company, 1980), 3.

While expressing satisfaction about the decline of the sexual stigmas and double standards that dating and romance had uniformly forced upon women for years, the author describes a sea-change of sexual attitudes not as a set of dim memories from the 1960s, but as on-going process that was still unfolding before her very eyes. If anything, the increases in young people who postponed or avoided marriage, as confirmed by a brief survey of census statistics, told the story of singles' drastically expanded presence in America by the end of the 1970s. Among twenty- to twenty-four-year olds, just over 50 percent of men had never married in 1960, but by 1980 that amount had jumped to 68 percent. Even more dramatic were the increases among women in this age cohort. While a mere 28 percent of women had never married in 1960, by 1980 that number had reached 50 percent.<sup>107</sup> These explosive increases in the proportion of young Americans who remained unmarried, perhaps more than any other measure, demonstrated the country's growing acceptance of individuals who postponed marriage until after their mid-twenties, or even eschewed matrimony altogether. And although singles bars were never fully accepted by all Americans, they forced society to recognize both the joy and the pain that the sexual revolution had injected into the once highly regulated and predictable rituals of American romance.

As the next chapter will show, in the long 1970s Baby Boomers confronted a different convoluted cultural upheaval—the rise of counterculture—in yet another thriving but highly contested marketplace, that for marijuana and drug paraphernalia.

---

<sup>107</sup> *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1984*, 104<sup>th</sup> edition (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1983), 46.



## Chapter 4

### **The Business of Getting High: The Commercialization of Pot and the Rejection of Consumer Regulation**

In the fall of 1974, a group of friends led by Tom Forcade launched a new magazine for consumers in New York. Long frustrated that they couldn't find any publication to address their particular market needs, Forcade's magazine featured "quality-control tests" of new products, company histories, and a comparative guide of "market quotations" for a wide range of domestic and imported commodities available in America. Stories on producers, distributors and governmental regulators gave readers an insider's view of the industry. Surprisingly, Forcade's magazine examined an "essential segment of our national economy" that had never been the subject of a trade periodical, but was nonetheless "practically the only hope [for] sustaining the economy" in the recession stricken mid-1970s.<sup>1</sup> Proclaiming itself to be the "only magazine devoted to getting high...really high," *High Times* magazine quickly became the print medium of choice for America's marijuana consumers, producers and distributors. *High Times* functioned like a trade journal for the marijuana marketplace, except that it targeted all market participants, and not just suppliers. In *High Times*, America's millions of marijuana consumers found a national, public forum for discussing, scrutinizing and trading information about buying, selling and smoking pot.

---

<sup>1</sup> *High Times* 2 (Fall 1974), 10; *HT* 3 (Winter 1975), 5.

Yet less than a decade earlier, a nationally distributed publication that explicitly celebrated illegal drug consumption would have been unthinkable in America. In the 1960s, amid a climate of strict penalties for drug possession and distribution, many marijuana smokers celebrated pot as a vehicle for expanding consciousness and for resisting mainstream, so-called straight America. To a large degree, marijuana's power as a protest against the Establishment rested on its illicit status. Consequently, marijuana use was widely seen as a repudiation of state power, adult authority and stultifying conformity. Smokers consumed covertly—in their homes, at private parties, and in dorms. Yet, in the 1970s, consumers became much less concerned about hiding the fact that they smoked pot. In fact, consumption rates skyrocketed to the point that the green leaf became America's most popular banned product. The Drug Enforcement Administration estimated in 1978 that American consumers spent about 16 billion dollars on marijuana each year, nearly equal to the annual revenues of Chrysler, the U.S.'s tenth largest corporation.<sup>2</sup> Marijuana consumers hailed from every racial group and socioeconomic class. At the end of the decade, over one-third of all young adults smoked marijuana at least once monthly, far more than any other age cohort.<sup>3</sup> In fact, 1979 marked the highest rates of youth marijuana consumption ever.<sup>4</sup> Conspicuous consumption of marijuana—at concerts, at smoke-ins, in public parks and elsewhere—became widespread and frequently went unpenalized.

---

<sup>2</sup> Joanne Omang, "Drug Paraphernalia Sales Are Booming-and Legal; High Sales in Drug Aids," *The Washington Post*, December 17, 1978, D1; "The Fortune Directory of the 500 Largest U.S. Industrial Corporations," *Fortune*, May 8, 1978, 240.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstracts of the United States: 1980*, 101<sup>st</sup> edition (Washington, D.C.; U.S. Department of Commerce, 1980), 123-128.

<sup>4</sup> Eric Schlosser, *Reefer Madness: Sex, Drugs, and Cheap Labor in the American Black Market* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003), 71.

Perhaps most significantly, from 1973 to 1978, eleven states decriminalized (but did not fully legalize) minor personal possession of marijuana.<sup>5</sup>

In the 1970s, marijuana smokers launched a powerful attack on pot laws in the attempt to redraw definitions of what constituted legitimate consumption in America. More and more consumers, especially teenagers and young adults, demanded reform of the marijuana marketplace by attending smoke-ins and supporting groups that advocated decriminalization.<sup>6</sup> Pot smokers, in defying the state's efforts to regulate their consumption of marijuana, articulated an increasingly popular sentiment that Americans had the rights to privacy and to pursue pleasure, even if it meant disobeying institutional and legal authorities. A corollary, aboveground business of making and selling paraphernalia for consuming marijuana, based around the era's thousands of "head shops," brought the nuts-and-bolts of getting high into the public light and, in so doing, also openly promoted disobedience of legal authority. The popularization of drug paraphernalia and decriminalization represented the most telling symbols of how American society was moving towards accepting marijuana as a legitimate consumer commodity. Indeed, the 1970s were a rare period in which American drug consumers appeared to influence their society's dominant norms regarding illicit substances.

But marijuana's commercialization and society's drastically expanded tolerance of pot worried some smokers. "The new marijuana ethic today is closely allied to a general consumerism," one *High Times* contributor remarked in 1979, lamenting that it was eventually

---

<sup>5</sup> Decriminalization of marijuana reduced individual possession for private consumption to a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine similar to that of a speeding ticket. Outright legalization, however, would have removed all penalties, criminal and civil, for possession *and* distribution.

<sup>6</sup> According to Patricia Fishburne, Herbert I. Abelson, and Ira Cisin, *The National Survey on Drug Abuse: Main Findings 1979* (Rockville, Md.: National Institute on Drug Abuse, 1979), 57, an estimated 35 percent of Americans between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, 15 percent of youth between twelve and seventeen, but only 6 percent of adults older than twenty-six were current marijuana smokers at the time of their survey in 1979.

“bound to intrude on the consciousness-altering ritual of smoking weed.”<sup>7</sup> Paradoxically, pot had become a full-fledged consumer commodity that was still illegal in America, but whose prohibition was honored primarily in the breach. Indeed, marijuana’s status in this period raises important questions about the complex, and often contradictory, process by which American countercultures were commercialized following the 1960s. While several scholars have examined how major marketers and corporations impacted counterculture in this period, I will investigate instead how rank-and-file consumers, who self-identified with the counterculture, shaped and influenced the nation’s broader commercial culture. Moving beyond the anthropologists Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood’s incomplete definition of consumption as the use of goods and services “free within the law,” this chapter asks how the growing commercial appeal of pot—without the support of major corporations or Madison Avenue—forced many Americans to rethink the state’s efforts to regulate personal consumption.<sup>8</sup> How did marijuana consumers exercise and understand their small, but concrete, power to resist what they saw as the state’s encroachments on their individual rights as consumers? How did marijuana’s rising popularity and the realization of its enormous commercial appeal change the way smokers and non-smokers alike viewed the substance? Finally, despite tremendous gains in acceptance and popularity, why did marijuana fall short of earning the full tolerance of American citizens and lawmakers by the start of the 1980s?

---

<sup>7</sup> Larry Sloman, *Reefer Madness: The History of Marijuana in America* (Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1979), 328.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Frank, for instance, tells of advertisers and corporations who eagerly embraced counterculture for the purpose of selling goods, so thoroughly mainstreaming it as to make it “impervious to the angriest assaults of cultural and political conservatives.” See Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 31. The philosophers Joseph Heath and Robert Potter’s work *Nation of Rebels: Why Counterculture Becomes Consumer Culture* (New York: Harper Business, 2004) echoes this message of the inevitable transformation of the adversarial into the hegemonic since the ‘60s.

## I. Pot in the 1960s

As anthropological and historical scholarship on psychoactive substances has shown, definitions of licit and illicit consumption vary widely over time and geography; social, cultural and medical authorities periodically reassess substances, so that one era's vices may be fully accepted in another time or place.<sup>9</sup> To this effect, marijuana consumption fluctuated considerably over the course of the twentieth century. While legal authorities tolerated pot in the 1910s and 1920s, federal prohibition in the 1930s drove it underground, where it subsisted as a practice among only a tiny minority of Americans until the middle of the 1960s.<sup>10</sup> As late as 1960, fewer than five percent of all young adults had ever consumed marijuana. By the middle of the '60s, marijuana had gained a modest dose of publicity and notoriety, especially through the writings of the Beats, and it began to gradually gain in popularity, especially among white, middle-class college students. By 1965, only 5 percent of all Americans and just 10 percent of American young adults had tried marijuana.<sup>11</sup>

Even though it was gaining acceptance among young Americans of the New Left and counterculture, marijuana remained taboo as a topic of discussion in public forums. Even in the

---

<sup>9</sup>Jordan Goodman, Paul E. Lovejoy and Andrew Sherratt, ed., *Consuming Habits: Drugs in History and Anthropology* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), x.

<sup>10</sup> Larry Sloman, *Reefer Madness: The History of Marijuana in America* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1979), 29-30, 84-101, 133-151, 173-179, 217-218. Prior to the 1930s, marijuana consumers comprised a "small deviant culture," but support for a federal ban had not yet developed. Public opinion turned against marijuana, however, in the 1930s, as Harry Anslinger, Commissioner of the Narcotics Bureau, led a successful public relations campaign to convince politicians and the American public that marijuana was an "assassin of youth." As a result, Congress passed legislation that effectively banned it in 1937. Although marijuana remained popular among small numbers of Americans in large cities in the late 1930s and early 1940s, tough enforcement of marijuana laws in the postwar era greatly reduced its use.

<sup>11</sup> David Frum, *How we Got Here: The 70's, the Decade that Brought You Modern Life (For Better or For Worse)* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), xxi.

counterculture's underground newspapers, writers rarely discussed smoking marijuana in explicit terms, and instead focused on the political aspects of drug laws. The *Berkeley Barb* seldom mentioned marijuana, and when it did, it was typically in an indirect and implicit fashion that did not pointedly promote its use. Atlanta's premier underground newspaper, *The Great Speckled Bird*, referred to marijuana only occasionally and mostly in articles about drug busts or advice columns on how to avoid arrest. Even though the number of young Americans smoking pot was rising, few smokers were comfortable publicly identifying themselves in the '60s.<sup>12</sup>

Many people in the counterculture were also uncomfortable with the idea of individuals profiting from marijuana, believing that pot should exist outside the marketplace. Ideally, marijuana selling offered small-scale entrepreneurs in the counterculture the chance to support themselves without pursuing profits. Yet some hippies found much to critique in the considerable success marijuana sellers achieved in the late '60s. While certainly not averse to smoking marijuana, the prominent Yippie Abbie Hoffman objected to large-scale sellers who only seemed interested in profiting from their customers.

The big dope dealers get their kicks out of the Yippies as much as heads of the Rock Empire. They also help about as much. Once in a while they'll give a little free dope...But they'll never give anything big and they'll never give any money—not one thin dime. The relationship has always been a strange one. They are after all capitalists, but then, too, they are outlaws. For the most part, they admire PIG NATION in the way the Mafia does...It takes a crook to know a crook and the dope dealers are well-qualified social critics.<sup>13</sup>

The problem with major pot dealers, in Hoffman's eyes, was they were not interested in marijuana smoking as a means of maximizing profits. Marijuana smoking was supposed to be a

---

<sup>12</sup> *The Great Speckled Bird*, June 21-July 2, 1968, 12.

<sup>13</sup> Hoffman, for instance, cajoled readers in the introduction to his 1969 book *Woodstock Nation*, "Light up your joint, inhale and proceed to the next song." See Abbie Hoffman, *Woodstock Nation: A Talk-Rock Album* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), 8, 66.

communal activity, shared or sold in small amounts to meet costs, but not to be traded for handsome profit. To do so was to accept the distorted capitalist mindset of the Establishment, so Hoffman and others in the counterculture distrusted the notion of a proprietary marijuana marketplace made up of consumers, producers and sellers.<sup>14</sup>

Although the sale and consumption of marijuana still carried heavy legal risks and limited consumers' opportunities for smoking, pot use continued to rise in the late 1960s, though mostly out of public view. John Rosevear's *Pot: A Handbook of Marijuana*, published in 1967, was one of the first of many how-to guides to grass.

A person who smokes marihuana has restrictions, which limit his recreational smoking intervals. He is always plagued by the law, however, and must filter his desires through the "being caught" possibility before he can think of lighting up. The mood to smoke may come on suddenly, but if the smoker is in a public place or has an appointment, he will be forced to refrain from lighting up...[Even] sitting in a backyard with nothing to do on a sunny day is a fine (but) risky time to light up.

Instead, marijuana consumers were likelier to smoke in their private apartments, houses and dorm rooms. In most states, jail sentences for simple possession of marijuana could reach up to one year. Selling marijuana was an even riskier affair, and sellers' fear of undercover narcotics agents and arrest was acute. Five years or more was the common upper limit of jail time for selling, with even stiffer penalties for sales to minors.<sup>15</sup> From 1967 to 1969 alone, the number of defendants charged with "marijuana violations" in U.S. District Courts increased by over 125 percent.<sup>16</sup> Still, despite the counterculture's occasional misgivings about pot as well as the legal penalties it carried, young Americans consumed marijuana more than any other illegal drug. By

---

<sup>14</sup> Abbie Hoffman, *Woodstock Nation: A Talk-Rock Album* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), 8, 66.

<sup>15</sup> Jack S. Margolis and Richard Clorfene, *A Child's Garden of Grass: The Official Handbook for Marijuana Users*, revised edition (New York: Pocket Books, 1976), 159-167.

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstracts of the United States: 1973*, 95<sup>th</sup> edition (Washington, D.C.; U.S. Department of Commerce, 1973), 160.

1967, around 15 percent of young adults had tried marijuana. By 1969, roughly 22 percent of American college students had smoked pot. In comparison, only around five to eleven percent of college students had tried hallucinogens at this time.<sup>17</sup>

While social theorists have long articulated that consumers seek to convey messages to both friends and strangers in the process of buying and using goods, marijuana smokers of the late 1960s faced significant risks and hazards in consuming conspicuously.<sup>18</sup> Consumers smoked marijuana inconspicuously so as to avoid unwanted attention from disapproving neighbors, family members or law enforcement officers. Marijuana consumers could signal their rebelliousness and willingness to flout prohibition to friends and acquaintances with whom they smoked, but they were loath to convey their consumption to non-smokers and strangers. Public smoking was infrequent and the buying and selling of marijuana was secretive, so marijuana consumers had few opportunities to convey social distinction to non-smokers in the 1960s. Many people smoked marijuana for some of the same reasons they drank alcohol or smoked cigarettes—because they wanted to relax, escape temporarily from their daily routines, and experience some fleeting but palpable pleasure.

But many consumers also found deeper meaning in smoking marijuana. To many smokers, marijuana consumption was a major form of risk-taking, a way to defy prevailing norms that governed morality and the marketplace. Baby Boomers' parents, most of whom were too young to have rebelled against Prohibition in the 1920s, obeyed legal controls on consumption by and large, so marijuana allowed teenagers and young adults to assert their

---

<sup>17</sup> John Conger, *Adolescence and Youth: Psychological Development in a Changing World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 422, 440.

<sup>18</sup> On the symbolic value of goods, see Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood, *The World of Goods* (New York: Basic Books, 1979); Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Modern Library, 1899, 2001).



generational independence.<sup>19</sup> Smoking pot was typically a communal activity, with people passing joints passed around a circle. Marijuana was not a product of industrial and corporate America, but an organic substance that could grow in the wild. Finally, marijuana produced a relaxed, if not harmonious, feeling in its users, in contrast to alcohol, which many Boomers viewed as the fuel of many of their parents' old-fashioned, dysfunctional and even violent relationships.<sup>20</sup> Marijuana's reputation as a peaceful intoxicant helped to promote its popularity among students in the anti-war movement.<sup>21</sup> Although smokers generally aimed to consume covertly in order to avoid arrest, they also placed value in consuming overtly among their peers and friends, as a means of articulating these values to each other.<sup>22</sup> Many smokers appreciated the kinship, community, and even their peers' social recognition that consuming marijuana brought them, so while they didn't want authorities or "straight" adults to know they smoked pot, they also didn't want to keep their practices entirely secret from the people in their social sphere.

By the end of the 1960s, it seemed that some young consumers were seeking attention and social recognition, rather than cultural and political enlightenment, by smoking pot. As one reader's letter to the *Great Speckled Bird* in 1969 complained,

There has been a tremendous growth of the 'hip' element in Atlanta...Perhaps this situation exists because the sole basis for this new cult is dope, and not because of any enlightenment to the true ideology. They know virtually nothing about the Vietnam revolution, the draft, economic discrimination and manipulation...It may

---

<sup>19</sup> For more on Prohibition, see Michael A. Lerner, *Dry Manhattan: Prohibition in New York City* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007).

<sup>20</sup> For more on alcohol in the postwar era, see Lori Roskoff, *Love on the Rocks: Men, Women, and Alcohol in Post-World War II America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002)

<sup>21</sup> Martin Booth, *Cannabis: A History* (London and New York: Doubleday, 2003), 260.

<sup>22</sup> The main exception to covert consumption of marijuana in the '60s was the mass smoking of marijuana at the few large-scale rock festivals of the decade, such as Woodstock. L. Collier, "300,000 at Folk-Rock Fair Camp Out in a Sea of Mud," *The New York Times*, Aug 17, 1969, "The Message of History's Biggest Happening," *Time*, August 29, 1969.

be safe to say that the whole transition of many of Atlanta's youth is entirely caused by and held together with drugs.<sup>23</sup>

Although many middle-aged Americans still associated marijuana with radical student politics and anti-war activism, to some Baby Boomers, drugs seemed to be hurting the “movement” by attracting people simply interested in getting high, not in working for peace, equality, or other progressive change in America. At the close of the ‘60s, all the signs pointed toward continued growth of marijuana consumption among young Americans. But much to the dismay of more adamant freaks and heads, pot’s growing popularity was starting to suggest how consuming marijuana—and other recreational practices of the countercultural “lifestyle”—could be disjoined from progressive ideology and countercultural ideals.

## II. Between Counterculture and Commercialism

The concomitant surge in young consumers’ marijuana use and the decline in their political activism suggested that pot had more staying power than the political ideals with which it was associated.<sup>24</sup> As the pollster Daniel Yankelovich observed, at the end of the 1960s, “Granny glasses, crunchy granola, commune-living, pot smoking and long hair seem[ed] inseparable from radical politics, sit-ins, student strikes, protest marches, draft card burnings.”<sup>25</sup> In the early 1970s, however, the connection between progressive “lifestyles” and politics began to weaken. “Radical political values and life style values which traveled together since the mid-1960s have, in 1971, begun to go their separate ways,” Yankelovich declared. The growing

---

<sup>23</sup> S. Cheer, “(II) Boston to Atlanta,” *Great Speckled Bird*, March 17, 1968.

<sup>24</sup> James Reston, “Student Involvement or Detachment?” *The New York Times*, November 25, 1970, 36; David Farber, *The Age of Great Dreams: America in the 1960s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994), 189

<sup>25</sup> David Yankelovich, *The New Morality: A Profile of American Youth in the ‘70s* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1974), 3.

“privatism of the 1970s with its similarly strong focus on self” rendered the student protests “moribund” by 1973, with campuses lacking any “clear-cut political center of gravity” amidst competing political “pressures in both directions, left and right.” Much of this was due to decline of the New Left, which was becoming “a negligible factor on campus.” But in the new “lifestyles”—the living arrangements, sexual practices, clothing choices and other daily habits so much of the ‘60s countercultural rhetoric had advocated—Yankelovich witnessed a “diffusion of a set of new values that incubated on the nation’s campuses in the 1960s [that] have now spread out to the entire youth generation.”<sup>26</sup>

Indeed, marijuana consumption increased rapidly among young Americans in the early 1970s. By 1972, almost half of all young adults reported having tried marijuana in 1972, up from just 15 percent in 1967.<sup>27</sup> Not only that, but 46 percent of white, young adults and 55 percent of non-white young adults supported legalizing marijuana; of young adults who had served in Vietnam, a whopping 76 percent favored legalization. As late as 1969, while nearly one of two college students could not “willingly and easily accept” the prohibition of marijuana, 71 percent of young Americans not attending college had accepted the marijuana ban. By 1973, however, only 38 percent of college students still accepted criminalized marijuana, and fewer than half of all young non-students endorsed prohibition. Decreasing support for marijuana laws reflected a deeper skepticism towards laws and law enforcement that grew in the early 1970s. In one survey from 1969, over a third of students described “abiding by laws you do not agree with” as “easily acceptable,” but by 1973 that proportion had shrunk to less than a quarter of

---

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 5, 75.

<sup>27</sup> Miller and Cisin, *Highlights from the National Survey on Drug Abuse: 1979*, 14.

respondents. Among college students, the proportion who agreed with the statement fell from 17 to 12 percent.<sup>28</sup>

Marijuana's transformation on college campuses in the early 1970s was particularly dramatic. "Smoking [pot] is more accepted now" than it was a few years earlier, one University of Chicago senior reported in 1972. "It's not as 'naughty.' Grass is a lot more open." Yet one student at Berkeley recalled, "There isn't the same community of rebelliousness now as there was a few years ago, when taking acid or smoking marijuana was regarded as a way to strike out at the establishment, a way of being revolutionary." The demand for pot on college campuses had increased, however, and student dealers reported that their foremost problem was meeting their peers' appetite for high-grade weed, not evading law enforcement.<sup>29</sup> Summarizing findings from hundreds of interviews with marijuana smokers, sellers, police, and school officials throughout the tri-state area, the *New York Times* concluded in 1972 that the "sale and use of soft drugs—marijuana, hashish, and pills—is common, casual and virtually institutionalized [on college campuses], with large numbers of students turning on and school authorities turning the other way.

The once covert, underground sale and consumption of marijuana was revealing itself above ground on college campuses that had become "virtual sanctuaries for soft-drug users." Smoking sessions in dormitories were "nightly affair[s] at many schools"—not hidden behind closed doors with towels stuffed underneath, but openly conducted in common areas and lounges. At the University of Connecticut, for example, residential advisors who found dormitory residents smoking marijuana were instructed neither to discipline students nor to call

---

<sup>28</sup> Yankelovich, 142-147, 94.

<sup>29</sup> Linda Charlton, "Gallup Finds a Continued Rise in Use of Marijuana and LSD on Campuses," *The New York Times*, February 10, 1972, 16.

the police, but simply to notify school administrators. “Friendly campus dealers” were well known students and often viewed themselves as “providers of a popular service with little risk or harassment.”<sup>30</sup> In short, within just a few years, pot smoking and selling had gone from covert to overt on many college campuses.

Meanwhile, a small but growing number of marijuana consumers were starting to wage a serious campaign to increase tolerance for marijuana. Keith Stroup, a Washington lawyer who specialized in consumer product safety, founded the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws in 1971.<sup>31</sup> Stroup explained his rationale for advocating decriminalization in simple terms. “I see the marijuana issue as a consumer issue...The consumers in this issue are the smokers, but we can’t deal with their problems as long as we are in danger of being locked up.” NORML could only fulfill its mission, Stroup argued, when “the marijuana question—and I don’t just mean decriminalization—has been settled to the satisfaction of the consumer.”<sup>32</sup> The campaign for legalization could offer marijuana smokers something to rally around, but it was miniscule in the early 1970s, as many young Americans just wanted to get high, not put in the time and energy to change the laws against getting high.

Although NORML was extremely limited in its influence in the early 1970s, growing numbers of professionals, journalists and politicians voiced support for reforming the marijuana marketplace in this period. One group that took particular interest in marijuana was the Consumers Union, the long-time publisher of *Consumer Reports* magazine. Following the success of *The Consumers Union Report on Smoking and the Public Interest* in 1963, the

---

<sup>30</sup> Robert D. McFadden, “Hard Drugs Fade on Campuses, But Use of Soft Drugs is Wide,” *The New York Times*, November 20, 1972, 77.

<sup>31</sup> Patrick Anderson, *High in America: The True Story Behind NORML and the Politics of Marijuana* (New York: Viking Press, 1981), 58.

<sup>32</sup> A. Craig Copetas and Michael Foldes, “Keith Stroup, the Great Weed Hope,” *HT* 10 (June 1976), 21.

organization decided that all drugs, both licit and illicit, deserved similar examination in a thorough, scholarly report intended for a general audience of consumers. Edward Brecher, one of the drafters of the 1963 smoking study, began research for a study on drugs in 1969, and in 1972 he released *Licit and Illicit Drugs*, which analyzed illegal substances not as a legal issue or moral issue, but as an issue of the consumer marketplace.<sup>33</sup> Brecher assured readers that the Consumers Union approached drugs just as it would cars or appliances, in the hopes of offering “young people...information they can trust about licit and illicit drugs.”<sup>34</sup> As Brecher explained, “any book about drugs that ignores socially approved and legally marketed substances... sacrifices its credibility among young readers—and seriously distorts the perspective of older readers.”<sup>35</sup> In so doing, Brecher wanted to dispel the mistaken notion that all licit drugs were inherently safer and more salubrious than illicit substances. The guide also scrutinized the social consequences of policing and state regulation, noting that much of the debate over illegal substances “was overemphasizing the supposed pharmacological effects of drugs while paying curiously little attention to the effects of drug laws, drug policies and drug attitudes.” In short, Brecher wanted to assess the full range of impact drugs and drug policy had on consumers.

Brecher and company sought to normalize marijuana as a consumer issue that demanded market reform, rather than a problem that simply needed tougher policing and enforcement. *Licit and Illicit Drugs* concluded its recommendations for drug policy by calling for the “immediate repeal of all federal laws governing the growing, processing, transportation, sale, possession, and

---

<sup>33</sup> Edward M. Brecher, *Licit and Illicit Drugs: The Consumers Union Report on Narcotics, Stimulants, Depressants, Inhalants, Hallucinogens & Marijuana—including Caffeine, Nicotine, and Alcohol* (Mount Vernon, New York: Consumers Union, 1972).

<sup>34</sup> “Some Comments on Drugs...and CU’s Position Concerning Them,” *Consumer Reports*, February 1973, 134-135; Brecher, *Licit and Illicit Drugs*, x-xi.

<sup>35</sup> Brecher, *Licit and Illicit Drugs*, 536.

use of marijuana,” and the passage of new laws that allowed for “the cultivation, processing and orderly marketing of marijuana.” While condemning the sale of cocaine, heroin, and speed, the report argued that

An orderly system of legal distribution and licit use will have notable advantages for both users and nonusers over the present marijuana black market. In particular it will separate the channels of marijuana distribution from heroin channels and from channels of distribution of other illicit drugs—and will thereby limit the exposure of marijuana smokers to other illicit drugs. Even more important, it will end the criminalization and alienation of young people and the damage done to them by arrest, conviction, and imprisonment for marijuana offenses.<sup>36</sup>

Only a fundamental restructuring of young marijuana consumers’ and sellers’ relationship to the marijuana market, the Consumer’s Union argued, could alleviate the social and legal problems that resulted from marijuana.

Another powerful voice calling for reform of the marijuana marketplace was the National Commission on Marihuana and Drug Abuse, which Richard Nixon had mandated by signing the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act of 1970. The Commission’s report asserted that the adult marijuana consumer “is primarily a recreational user, is not usually involved with radical political activity and maintains a life style largely indistinguishable from his non-using neighbors.” If anything, pot smokers were “not a threat to the social order.” Most surprising, however, was the commission’s final endorsement for legalizing both the personal possession and “casual distribution of small amounts of marihuana for no remuneration, or insignificant remuneration not involving profit.” Nixon, however, who had been warned ahead of time of the commission’s decision, preemptively declared before the report’s release in March 1972 that he would reject any recommendation for marijuana’s legalization. Refusing to implement the commission’s recommendations, Nixon called for a “total war” on drug addiction

---

<sup>36</sup> Brecher, *Licit and Illicit Drugs*, 536.

in the same month the Commission released its report.<sup>37</sup> But the fact that a presidentially-appointed study—chaired by a governor from the party that condemned Democrats in 1972 as the standard bearers of “acid, amnesty and abortion,” no less—merely suggested reforming federal marijuana laws demonstrated the dramatically rising tolerance for marijuana consumption in the early 1970s.

The Consumer Union’s and the National Commission on Marihuana’s findings reflected growing support among Americans that marijuana consumption should not carry criminal penalties. In opinion polls conducted for President Nixon re-election campaign, 25 percent of respondents signaled their desire to legalize marijuana—more than double than the support in a 1969 Gallup Poll.<sup>38</sup> And the memberships of both the American Bar Association and the American Medical Association publicly called for reducing federal penalties for marijuana in 1972. With the highest echelons of the nation’s professions willing to throw their weight behind lowering marijuana penalties, it was only a matter of time before some lawmakers began to contemplate moderating pot laws. City councils in the college towns Berkeley and Ann Arbor were among the very first municipalities to vote to decriminalize marijuana in the early 1970s.<sup>39</sup> It wasn’t entirely shocking that left-leaning college towns were eager to decriminalize. But when Oregon became the first state to abolish jail sentences for limited possession of marijuana in October 1973, it in a new era in the history of marijuana consumption in the United States. In granting consumers the right to smoke and possess modest amounts of marijuana without facing

---

<sup>37</sup> *Marihuana: A Signal of Misunderstanding—First Report of the National Commission on Marihuana and Drug Abuse* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), 93, 152-154; James M. Markham, “President Calls for ‘Total War’ on U.S. Addiction,” *New York Times*, March 21, 1972, 1.

<sup>38</sup> “Gallup Poll (AIPO)—October 1969” and “Nixon Poll—July 1972,” (iPoll Databank at the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, <http://roperweb.ropercenter.uconn.edu>, accessed April 19, 2007).

<sup>39</sup> “Ann Arbor Eases Marijuana Curbs,” *NYT*, September 24, 1972, 42; Philip Hager, “Berkeley’s Initiative on Marijuana Voided,” *LAT*, May 30, 1973, A21.



arrest, Oregon's legislators anticipated a coming shift in many American lawmakers' thinking on marijuana.<sup>40</sup>

In just the first four years of the 1970s, marijuana smoking had skyrocketed in popularity, both as a practice and as a political cause. Yet the "imagined community" of regular marijuana consumers throughout the country still lacked a shared national forum in which to share their enthusiasm for pot.<sup>41</sup> But in the summer of 1974, *High Times* magazine debuted, instantly giving the millions of young Americans who enjoyed getting high a publication they could claim as their own.<sup>42</sup> Without publishing a manifesto or announcing the dawn of a new era, the magazine's inaugural issue featured rambling bursts of commentary on the burgeoning marketplace for drugs ("Pot so widespread now that enforcement nearly impossible...Hashish a bad buy per dollar by comparison to top grass.") Tom Forcade, the magazine's editor and founder, was a secretive veteran of the underground press with a voracious appetite for drugs. In its own words, *High Times* was the "magazine of high society," the only periodical "devoted to getting high...really high."<sup>43</sup> Though Forcade's journalistic roots lay in the underground press of the 1960s, *High Times* was more similar to *Rolling Stone* in its appearance, with slick issues that frequently ran over 100 pages, color photographs, and substantial advertising,. Having started as a quarterly with a circulation of BLANK, by 1977 *High Times*' circulation had risen to 400,000,

---

<sup>40</sup> Richard D. Lyons, "A.M.A. Would Drop Serious Marijuana Penalties," *New York Times*, June 21, 1972, 56; Fred P. Graham, "A.B.A. Would Ease Marijuana Laws," *New York Times*, August 18, 1972, 10; "Oregon Has Not Become a Haven for Pushers Despite Nation's Most Liberal Drug Law," *New York Times*, December 18, 1973, 29.

<sup>41</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991).

<sup>42</sup> Other magazines, like the little known *Marijuana Review*, had focused on decriminalization prior to *High Times*, but none ever achieved as large of a circulation as *High Times*, or assumed its consumer-oriented approach to marijuana.

<sup>43</sup> *High Times*, 2 (Summer 1974); *HT* 3 (Winter 1975), 5.

although an outside marketing firm estimated that ten people read each copy of the magazine, so per-issue readership was actually closer to four million.<sup>44</sup>

In a sense, *High Times* represented something of a trade journal for marijuana, with its devotion to enabling further drug use and informing drug consumers about the ins and outs of marijuana selling and producing. In issue after issue, the magazine explicitly promoted drug use as a legitimate act of consumption, and its efforts to disavow lawbreaking were few and perfunctory. In an average issue, readers found centerfold spreads featuring exotic and expensive varieties of marijuana, consumer tests of drug paraphernalia, and advice columns on how to intensify and enhance drugs' effects. *High Times* also printed letters from readers in which they boasted about exotic or high quality drugs they had consumed or grown, often accompanied by photographs of themselves (sometimes even with unconcealed faces) appearing with prodigious marijuana plants they had grown. Writers for the magazine consistently admitting to consuming illegal drugs in signed articles.<sup>45</sup> Altogether, the magazine was far more brazen in its support of marijuana than general underground newspapers.

In contrast to its predecessors in the 1960s underground press, *High Times* celebrated marijuana as a consumer commodity. From its inception, the magazine presented itself as a player in the proprietary media, not another underground rag that eschewed profits in favor of anti-capitalist purity. "*High Times* in at least every city and burg in the world. That's our modest goal," the magazine declared in its premier issue, adding, "We are taking advertising in everything from *Rolling Stone* to the *New York Times* to support our newsstand sales." In fact, the magazine could barely meet demand for advertisements. *High Times* launched its own

---

<sup>44</sup> "It's Official: 4 Million People Read *High Times*," *HT*, September 1978, DK10; Daniel Machalaba, "The Pot Trade," *WSJ*, July 29, 1980, 1.

<sup>45</sup> *Ms.*, July 1974.

classifieds sections due to countless inquiries from readers; by 1977, around half of the each issue's pages featured at least one advertisement.<sup>46</sup> Simply by providing drug paraphernalia companies with the means to advertise directly to a national audience of marijuana consumers, *High Times* facilitated much of the commercialization of marijuana in the 1970s.

Indeed, the magazine's ken was not just the experiences of drug consumers, but also the market forces that shaped them. *High Times* glorified participants in the drug economy—sellers, traffickers, smugglers—and it often used double entendres to invoke the marijuana marketplace. “Deal *High Times*,” the magazine beckoned, offering free subscriptions to any reader who could convince a retailer to stock the magazine.<sup>47</sup> “Buy American is a slogan we heartily endorse,” *High Times* told readers, as it promoted American-grown grass.<sup>48</sup> The magazine espoused market values most explicitly with its “Trans-Market High Quotations,” a detailed price guide in every issue that appraised the street value of a wide range of illegal substances in different regions of the country. Unveiling this ticker tape of recreational drugs in its first issue, *High Times* pledged that the “prices listed are the latest available from our stringers around the world...[but] vary according to region, quality, quantity, market conditions, supply and demand, law enforcement cycle intensity.” In the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic alone, *High Times* priced fourteen types of marijuana—including a mix of Mexican, Columbian, and Jamaican varieties, hash oil and pharmaceutical THC powder, with enthusiastic endorsements such as “maui grasses are excellent buys in all parts of Hawaii.”<sup>49</sup> All in all, *High Times* played a critical role in validating marijuana's consumer and capitalist potential in the eyes of smokers.

---

<sup>46</sup> See, for example, *High Times* issues from January and July 1977.

<sup>47</sup> *HT*, Summer 1974, 3.

<sup>48</sup> *HT*, Fall 1974, 18.

<sup>49</sup> *HT*, Summer 1974, 48.

In fact, *High Times* routinely relied on consumer- and market-oriented language to describe marijuana use and the challenges marijuana smokers faced. Although some of this rhetoric was tongue-in-cheek, on the whole it expressed a sincere effort to frame the use and trade of marijuana and other illegal drugs as legitimate acts of consumption. Some of the magazine's advice to readers sounded like the kinds of tips for penny-pinching one expected from *Consumer Report*. "In these days of rising inflation and shrinking wallets, do you have any suggestions for economizing on the dope dollar," one reader asked. "The first thing a careful shopper should recognize is that the cheapest grass is not always the most economical," *High Times* responded. "The less stems and seeds, the better the bargain...Of course, planting your seeds can conserve dollars."<sup>50</sup> Amid a series of stifling recessions in the mid- and late-1970s, *High Times* half-jokingly drew comparisons between marijuana and other, more struggling sectors of the economy.

With 6 million unemployed, profits floundering, and stockbrokers leaping out of skyscrapers, practically the only hope for sustaining the economy is the brisk business of getting high...The worse it gets, the more people want to get high...Not only is pot a fully established part of modern living, it is also an essential segment of our national economy.<sup>51</sup>

While *High Times* was not alone in employing economic and consumerist language to depict the drug scene of the 1970s, other voices were less rosy in their assessments of marijuana business interests' impact on consumers. Scott French's *The Complete Guide to the Street Drug Game*, for instance, argued that "the dope market is a perfect mini-economic system model," but lamented that the "prices, quantities, and even terminology [for marijuana] have responded to the laws of supply and demand in a way obvious even to those of us on the shitty end of the stick

---

<sup>50</sup> *HT* 2 (Fall 1974), "Forum," 8.

<sup>51</sup> "Flashes," *HT* 3 (Winter 1975), 5.

(consumers).”<sup>52</sup> Observers like French believed that a handful of dominant marijuana producers and distributors exploited marijuana consumers for financial gain. Despite French’s remarks, the pro-pot rhetoric of *High Times*, while sometimes comically bordering on chamber-of-commerce boosterism, actually reflected the widespread and sincere belief among marijuana enthusiasts that demonstrations of pot’s economic power served the larger quest to win greater tolerance for the substance.

*High Times* also sought to promote marijuana consumption by portraying it as a part of young Americans’ broader pursuit of pleasure in their daily lives. The magazine strived to provide consumers “access to unbiased, intelligent information about the substances that they put into their body for pleasure” while reminding them that “some of the best highs are not from drugs but from far out books, records, movies, and various mental disciplines, from yoga to feedback.” Billing itself as “the hedonist’s Bible of mind alteration,” the magazine featured stories on the sensual delights of food and drink, including in-depth articles on coffee, chocolate and even mangos.<sup>53</sup> As one reader wrote to thank *High Times*, “For years I have been...searching for a slick magazine or tabloid to satisfy what I never considered an unusual taste for good writing on the dope and pleasure scene.”<sup>54</sup> How-to guides to marijuana with titles like *The Gourmet Guide to Grass* and *The Connoisseur’s Handbook of Marijuana* echoed this

---

<sup>52</sup> Scott French, *The Complete Guide to the Street Drug Game* (Secaucus, N.J.: Lyle Stuart, Inc.: 1976), 215.

<sup>53</sup> “The Most Dangerous Magazine in America,” *HT*, November 1977, CHECK PAGE.

<sup>54</sup> *High Times Encyclopedia of Recreational Drugs* (New York: Stonehill Publishing Company, 1978), xii; *HT* 1, “Letters,” 6.

glorification of marijuana's powers of pleasure, as did drug paraphernalia sellers like the New York store Morgan Love, which dubbed itself a "dealer in euphoric devices."<sup>55</sup>

Interestingly, by celebrating the joys of consumption and featuring photographic centerfolds of pot plants, *High Times*' treatment of marijuana in the 1970s resembled how *Playboy* had approached sex since the late 1950s. *Playboy* and *High Times* not only embraced the capitalist elements of sex and marijuana consumption, respectively, but they affirmed the pursuit of pleasure as a right that justified those activities. With their frank and graphic depictions of those activities, *High Times* and *Playboy* challenged American society to tolerate previously taboo endorsements of drugs and sex. In contrast to the goals of raising consciousness and affirming communal bonds that so many pot smokers had articulated in the 1960s, marijuana enthusiasts in the 1970s placed a far heavier emphasis on the pursuit of individual pleasure, and they combined that quest with a strong stomach for capitalist enterprise and profit making.

Marijuana consumers, however, were not alone in the 1970s in imagining pleasure as a right. Robert Ringer's self-help manual *Looking Out for Number 1*, the second best selling non-fiction book of 1977, stands as the most popular expression of this widespread sentiment. Ringer defined every individual's prime task in life as "looking out for Number One," namely,

The conscious, rational effort to spend as much time as possible doing those things which bring you the greatest amount of pleasure and less time on those which cause pain...When you boil it all down, I think that's what everyone's main objective in life really is—to feel good...All our other objectives, great and small, are only a means to that end.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> William Drake, *The Connoisseur's Handbook of Marijuana* (San Francisco: Straight Arrow Books, 1971); Garry Russoff, *The Gourmet Guide to Grass* (Los Angeles: Pinnacle Books, 1974); *HT* 2 (Fall 1974), 66; *HT*, "Paraphernalia '78," October 1978.

<sup>56</sup> Robert Ringer, *Looking Out for # 1* (New York: Funk & Wagnall's, 1977), 1-12; the *Bowker Annual of Library and Book Trade Information*:1978, 435.

Although billed as a primer in modern self-fulfillment, *Looking Out for Number 1* was also a manifesto in favor of unencumbered individuals' rights. "Man's primary moral duty lies in the pursuit of pleasure *so long as he does not forcibly interfere with the rights of others*," Ringer instructed readers. "No other living person has the right to decide what is moral (right or wrong) for you." By questioning the legitimacy of efforts to delimit the range of appropriate pleasure, Ringer echoed sentiments voiced by regular marijuana consumers, who argued that smoking pot was a victimless crime and an enjoyable activity in which government should avoid interfering. Ringer's philosophy of assertive individualism reflected a society that was coming to interpret America's greater good and the powers of the federal government more narrowly, amid growing interest in the protection of the rights of individuals. California's Proposition 13, for example, articulated a similar message of assertive individualism in their successful campaign to cap their state's property taxes.

This growing skepticism of institutional and governmental authority vis-à-vis individuals marked a rare topic on which a broad spectrum of Americans, especially Baby Boomers, found political common ground in the 1970s. Many on the Left were interested in protecting personal behaviors and civil liberties, while many on the Right wanted to reduce governmental control in areas of taxation and schools. Taken altogether, large segments of both ideological camps expressed a shared desire to reduce government's role in certain aspects of American life in the 1970s. As pollster Daniel Yankelovich asserted, many Americans felt that the country's "old giving/getting compact," its traditional work ethic,

Needlessly restricts the individual while advancing the power of large institutions—government and business particularly...This judgment, in one form of another, has now been made by the overwhelming majority of the American people...People want to retain some elements of familiar success...[but] are also struggling mightily to make room for greater personal choice against institutional encroachments.

Such deep suspicion of institutional authority was a common feature of *High Times*. When a reader accused the magazine of giving voice to “gun and violence freaks” by writing a favorable story on *Soldier of Fortune* magazine, for instance, the magazine expressed its full support for gun rights and libertarian causes more generally. “The price of freedom is eternal vigilance, and the right to bear arms, smoke dope and have a free press are all basic constitutional guarantees.”<sup>57</sup> Checks on institutional power—from Congress’ reform of the CIA, to tax reform, to marijuana decriminalization—appealed to a wide range of political sensibilities in the post-Watergate, post-Vietnam era. “Sometimes the government makes big mistakes. Remember Watergate?” asked an advertisement for NORML in a 1977 issue of *High Times*.<sup>58</sup> In sum, growing skepticism towards the primacy of work and institutional authority in the U.S. undergirded many young Boomers’ willingness to defy laws that conflicted with their prerogative as consumers.<sup>59</sup>

The growing boldness with which Americans consumed marijuana in the late 1970s demonstrated this disregard for governmental authority. In major cities, consumers routinely purchased marijuana in plain view and in daylight in public parks and on streets, and smoking was even more conspicuous. “Marijuana, once largely a private indulgence, has gone public and is no longer confined to protest rallies and rock concerts,” the *New York Times* reported in 1977. “The scent of marijuana now floats along Wall Street at noon and over Chicago opera-goers during intermission...People are smoking marijuana at professional football games, on

---

<sup>57</sup> “Letters: Deep Choate Swallows All,” *HT*, August 1977, 10.

<sup>58</sup> “Everybody Makes Mistakes,” *HT*, November 1977.

<sup>59</sup> Yankelovich, *New Rules*, 231.



commuter trains and even in certain nightclubs and restaurants.” As *The Washington Post* pointed out in 1980,

If you haven’t spotted someone smoking marijuana in public by now, you’ve probably been out of the country...Going public is something that evolved in the past several years, a joint here and a joint there, until suddenly we were in the age of the roll-your-own, no-name cigarette anywhere you choose.<sup>60</sup>

Perhaps the boldest acts of defying the state’s efforts to regulate marijuana were smoke-ins, where hundreds, sometimes even thousands, of marijuana enthusiasts would gather to protest drug laws, smoke marijuana, and generally celebrate pot. Smoke-ins in New York and San Francisco dated as far back as 1967, but by the mid-1970s they had spread to many college towns and middle-sized cities throughout the country. Police officers usually attended smoke-ins, but they rarely made arrests, except in rare instances when they turned violent. Sometimes fewer than a hundred people might attend a given smoke-in, but others attracted thousands of participants. In 1978, a smoke-in in Ann Arbor claimed 6,000 attendees, one in Dayton, Ohio 8,000, and a Yippie-led smoke-in at Lafayette Park in Washington drew 12,000 people to consume marijuana in plain view of the White House. More than anything else, smoke-ins were well-advertised public events at which participants directly challenged police to arrest them and demanded that lawmakers legalize marijuana. Smoke-ins not only exemplified unabashed, conspicuous consumption of marijuana. They also revived some of the activist spirit that had been associated with marijuana in the 1960s, although they treated pot not as a means to political expression, but as a political end unto itself.<sup>61</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> Vivian Aplin-Brownlee, “Too Many Cool Out as Pot Goes Public,” *The Washington Post*, July 10, 1980, DC2.

<sup>61</sup> Stephen A. O. Golden, “Police Look on as Hippies Stage a Park Smoke-In,” *New York Times*, July 31, 1967, 23; Judith Cummings, “Marijuana Smokers Hold ‘Village’ Rally,” *NYT*, May 15, 1977, 29; “Summer Smoke-In Update,” *HT*, July 1978; “Smoke-In Update,” *HT*, August 1978, 29; “12,000 Pot Protestors Siege D.C. in 4-Day Smoke-In,” *HT*, October 1978.

Marijuana's image softened considerably in the late 1970s. No longer seen as a revolutionary practice as it had been in the 1960s, marijuana had come to be associated more often with mischievousness and youthful indiscretion. Pot smoking signaled a rather unthreatening rebelliousness in many Americans' eyes, and young consumers certainly continued to use it to challenge their parents and other adult authorities. Some consumers still wanted other people to know they smoked marijuana, hoping to receive social recognition for their consumption. Of course, some consumers smoked pot simply to get high. But by consuming pot in public, many smokers hoped to telegraph how laid back they were to others, that they were unconcerned about prevailing social etiquette, that they were strong individuals who did not allow minor laws to dissuade them from having a good time. Having once been limited to covert consumption, marijuana smokers of the late 1970s relished in their freedom to consume conspicuously.

Hollywood in the late 1970s reflected society's growing acceptance of, and even enthusiasm for, marijuana. The most notable expressions of this increased tolerance were the films of the stoner duo Cheech and Chong. Cheech Marin and Pete Chong had made their name with comedy albums that revolved around the adventures of two bumbling potheads from California. After five albums, one of which climbed to the second spot on the Billboard charts, Cheech and Chong released their first film, *Up In Smoke*, in 1978. Produced for a mere \$1.7 million, *Up in Smoke* grossed over \$65 million, second of any film in the fall season of 1978; within five years the film spawned three sequels. *Up in Smoke*'s plot centered on Cheech and Chong's meandering quest to score some pot, but the film also periodically snuck in commentary on the changing landscape of the marijuana marketplace in the late 1970s. Failing to score marijuana from Cheech's dealer cousin, Chong laments, "Too many people are smoking it now.

It really makes it tough on the rest of us. The prices have gone crazy.” The hapless police sergeant assigned to catch the duo instructs his officers on the urgent need of apprehending the suspects, because the “buying and selling of dope in this country...is the last vestige of free enterprise left” for law enforcement to regulate. Cheech and Chong come off in the film as annoying and immature, but also comically charming, men who smoke too much marijuana and enjoy an extended adolescence. But the film never suggests that the two are dangerous, despite that they drive while high, indulge in a variety of illegal substances, and even smuggle large amounts of marijuana over the Mexican border into the U.S. There are no consequences or penalties for Cheech and Chong’s constant breach of the law, and their unflappable determination to smoke pot is treated as a harmless and humorous hobby.<sup>62</sup>

*Midnight Express*, another popular film of 1978, further reflected Americans’ softening attitudes towards marijuana. Based on a true story, the film chronicled the travails of Billy Hayes, an American tourist who spent years in a Turkish prison for attempting to smuggle hashish out of the country. Throughout the film, Hayes endures torture, beatings, and an altogether cruel penal system. With only 53 days remaining in his four-year sentence, Hayes is summoned to court, where a judge extends his sentence by thirty years. In a speech to the courtroom, Hayes furiously attacks Turkey’s draconian drug laws.

What is crime? What is punishment? The answer seems to vary from place to place, from time to time. What’s legal today is suddenly illegal tomorrow cause some society says it’s so, and what’s illegal yesterday all of a sudden gets legal today, because everybody’s doing it and you can’t throw everybody in jail...The concept of a society is based on the quality of its mercy, of its sense of fair play, its sense of justice.<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> Lou Adler, *Up in Smoke* (Paramount, 1978), VHS.

<sup>63</sup> Alan Parker, *Midnight Express* (Columbia Pictures:1978), DVD.

Indeed, Billy's polemic channeled American marijuana consumers' adamant belief that their country's drug laws lagged behind changing attitudes toward pot, with harsh punishments for drug violations that hurt citizens more than drug consumption did. *Midnight Express* achieves the unlikely task of getting its audience to sympathize with, if not cheer for, a drug smuggler. By surviving Turkish prison and eventually escaping to America, Hayes cements his role as the film's hero. As late as the 1960s, major Hollywood studios hesitated to portray drug consumers and distributors as triumphant heroes. A film like *Easy Rider*, although it glorified drug trafficking, still ended with the death of its smuggling protagonists.<sup>64</sup> But in the late 1970s, *Midnight Express* passed as a socially acceptable story of a marijuana consumer who beat unfair drug laws and state-sponsored brutality to achieve freedom.

Notwithstanding Hollywood's sympathetic portrayals of marijuana consumers, the most remarkable expression of pot's legitimization in the second half of the 1970s was the success of the above-ground, legal drug paraphernalia business. Back in 1966, a small store called the "Head Shop" selling incense and cigarette papers had opened in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district.<sup>65</sup> A year later, the Haight was home to what *Time* magazine called "27 shops catering to the needs of hippies and trippies...[where the] hottest items [are] incense, cigarette papers and bells." When asked about the reason for such high demand for cigarette papers, one head shop owner in the Haight coyly explained, "We have sold an awful lot of papers, [but] no one has asked for tobacco yet."<sup>66</sup> Yet the head gear trade remained the purview of small-scale, localized

---

<sup>64</sup> Dennis Hopper, *Easy Rider* (Columbia Picture: 1969), DVD.

<sup>65</sup> David Farber, "The Intoxicated State/Illegal Nation," in *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s*, ed. Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 29; Angela Taylor, "Bells, Books and Candles: Psychedelia on Sale," *The New York Times*, August 16, 1967, 44; "The Paraphernalia Game," *High Times*, May 1976, 19.

<sup>66</sup> "The Psychedelicatessen," *Time*, February 24, 1967.

hip capitalists through the first few years of 1970s. One such store was Jay Hanson's "highly imaginative, though not entirely problem-free, mod department store, the Free Spirit," located in Lansing, Michigan and profiled as part of a series of articles on small businesses in 1970 in the *Wall Street Journal*, of all places. "Stocked within its doors are the furnishings and paraphernalia of the 'turned-on, tuned-in' generation, goods that most other merchants shun as too far out," the *Journal* reported, including "cigarette paper for wrapping marijuana, though not the weed itself."<sup>67</sup>

While head shops opened (and closed) with great frequency in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it was not until 1972 that a new product sparked paraphernalia's transformation into a major, multimillion dollar business. American marijuana consumers typically smoked their grass in joints that were about four inches long, but the only rolling papers available were designed for shorter cigarettes. In a tedious and challenging series of steps, smokers tore and affixed two papers to each other in order to make a single amalgamation large enough for several people to smoke. To Burt Rubin and Robert Burton—and undoubtedly to many marijuana consumers—this seemed like an awful lot of trouble just to smoke a joint—so Rubin, a metals trader, and Burton, a systems analyst, put their heads together to create an easier joint to roll. The business partners found a Spanish manufacturer that agreed to make a long rolling paper, and in June 1972, the two young entrepreneurs began selling the E-Z Wider, the first rolling paper specifically designed with marijuana smokers in mind. Within months, Rubin and Burton would have difficulties meeting demand for E-Z Widens, which naturally created a boon for head

---

<sup>67</sup> Art Glickman, "The Corner Store: Mod Boutiques in Lansing Turns Tidy Profit By Offering Clients a Feeling of Freedom," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 17, 1970, 34.

shops.<sup>68</sup> Overall sales of rolling paper packages in the U.S., which had hovered around 60 million in 1971, grew 250 percent within five years. Meanwhile, sales of loose tobacco plummeted from 12 million pounds in 1971 to about 5 million pounds by 1977—a clear indication that most rolling papers were used for smoking something other than tobacco.<sup>69</sup> The E-Z Wider and a handful of other rolling papers came to dominate the rolling-papers market by the mid-1970s, but it had no shortage of competitors. One wholesale paraphernalia catalog offered retailers 134 varieties of rolling papers.<sup>70</sup> And most companies did not hesitate to acknowledge their customers’ preferences for using their rolling papers. Some ads in *High Times* pictured rolling papers next to copious amounts of an unnamed, green and leafy herb, while the Joker brand advertised itself as the “dealer’s choice.”<sup>71</sup> While stopping just short of explicitly identifying their products with pot, paraphernalia companies essentially promoted marijuana consumption with advertisements that left little to the imagination.

Not surprisingly, *High Times* played a key role in facilitating the growth of the paraphernalia businesses by providing them a national venue for advertising their wares. By 1980, over 90 percent of the magazine’s advertising revenue came from paraphernalia businesses.<sup>72</sup> But the market for marijuana accessories also flourished outside the established channels of the stoner sub-culture. In fact, paraphernalia sold briskly at record stores, traditional

---

<sup>68</sup> “Giving Consumer Easy-to-Use Product is the Basis of Robert Burton Success,” *United States Tobacco Journal*, October 5, 1978, 1.

<sup>69</sup> Michael Antonoff, “A Smoldering Battle Over Rolling Paper Technology,” *New York Times*, December 17, 1978.

<sup>70</sup> *Naplac Ltd. 1977-78 Paraphernalia Dealers Handbook* (Oak Park, Michigan: May 1977), 15-17.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>72</sup> Daniel Machalaba, “The Pot Trade,” *WSJ*, July 29, 1980, 1.

tobacco shops and convenience stores. Larry Posner, a director of the National Association of Tobacco Distributor who at one time worked for Burton and Rubin, estimated that “ninety percent of the cigarette paper in this country is not sold through the paraphernalia industry,” and some stores in national chains like Sears, Roebuck & Company and K-Mart even sold rolling papers. The paraphernalia industry’s ties to tobacco distributors were particularly close, although tobacconists hesitated to acknowledge that products like the E-Z Rider were consciously marketed to marijuana consumers. A 1978 issue of *United States Tobacco Journal*, a trade newsletter for cigarette and candy distributors, carried a four-page-long cover story on Richard Burton Associates and their invention of the E-Z Wider, without once mentioning marijuana. A *High Times* interview with Rubin, by contrast, explicitly celebrated him as pioneer of marijuana paraphernalia.<sup>73</sup> Thus, while traditional retailers were selling drug paraphernalia, they did so uneasily and without acknowledging why consumers bought such products.

Nonetheless, paraphernalia became a big business in the latter half of the 1970s, and it was a conspicuous one at that. By 1980, roughly 30,000 head shops were operating in the United States, with estimated annual sales ranging anywhere between \$350 million and 3 billion dollars.<sup>74</sup> Rolling papers were just one of many products that paraphernalia companies sold. A review of paraphernalia wholesaler catalogs from the late ‘70s reveals the impressive panoply of the industry’s products, including bongs, water pipes, vaporizers, scales, and carrying cases.<sup>75</sup> And head shops were by no means limited to bohemian neighborhoods and big cities—by the late 1970s paraphernalia sellers had set up shop in the suburbs, rural areas, and even in shopping

---

<sup>73</sup> “Giving Consumer Easy-to-Use Product,” *United States Tobacco Journal*, 1978.

<sup>74</sup> Lawrence O. Gostin and Zita Lazzarini, “Prevention of HIV/AIDS Among Injection Drug Users: The Theory and Science of Public Health and Criminal Justice Approaches to Disease Prevention,” *Emory Law Journal* 46 (1997), 611.

<sup>75</sup> *Naplac Ltd. 1977-78 Paraphernalia Dealers Handbook* (Oak Park, Michigan: May 1977).

mall.<sup>76</sup> The paraphernalia trade, by bringing the nuts-and-bolts of getting high into public view, openly promoted a consumer culture that revolved around defying legal authority, but it also strived to present itself as a form of legitimate, legal capitalism. Most enthusiastic marijuana consumers conceded that it was a corollary to the much larger, illegal business of marijuana distribution. Paraphernalia, according to *High Times*, was only the “legitimate tip of the multi-billion-dollar international dope-trade iceberg.” As the decade progressed, paraphernalia sellers became bolder. Not only did they advertise what their products were used for ever more explicitly, but they increasingly offered items that facilitated the use of more addictive drugs, like cocaine.<sup>77</sup>

At the same time, however, paraphernalia sellers began to justify themselves as legitimate, traditional businesses in the late 1970s. For one, the cottage industry organized its own trade organizations such as the Accessories Trade Association, published its own trade journals, and even organized its own trade conventions. The inaugural meeting of the Boutique Show in 1978, for example, drew 125 paraphernalia sellers and roughly 40,000 attendees to New York. Praising it as a “slick form of capitalism with a multi-billion-dollar potential the government and Fortune 500 have yet to decipher,” *High Times* also strived to legitimize the paraphernalia business.

The nuts-and bolts business of selling things to help you get stoned has exploded into the most phenomenal industrial success story of the decade. As Detroit continues to recall cars and the oil companies quiver over depletion allowances, the business of getting high continues to expand, guided by sophisticated teams of international bankers, federal loan schemes, computerized data processing and 40 million marijuana smokers.<sup>78</sup>

---

<sup>76</sup> James Barron, “Issue and Debate: Can Drug Paraphernalia Be Banned,” *New York Times*, May 26, 1980, B19, and “Legal Debate Grows With Drug Paraphernalia Laws,” *New York Times*, August 10, 1980, 38.

<sup>77</sup> *HT*, Winter 1975, 63; *HT*, Spring 1975, 72; *HT*, October/November 1975, 9.

<sup>78</sup> A. Craig Copetas, “Paraphernalia ’78,” *HT* (August 78? Dope and Sex Issue).



In a period of acute economic downturn, *High Times* glorified both paraphernalia and marijuana more generally as recession-proof businesses.<sup>79</sup>

The normalization of marijuana was also evident in the ever growing support for decriminalization in the late 1970s. Two months after entering the White House, President Carter's administration asked Congress to decriminalize marijuana possession. Peter G. Bourne, the head of Carter's Office of Drug Abuse, even testified to Congress that Carter's administration was "carefully reexamining" its position on criminal penalties for cocaine possession. Irrespective of decriminalization's progress, Peter Bensinger, an administrator of the Drug Enforcement Administration, explained to Congress in the same hearings that federal agencies "were not now effectively prosecuting individual use" of marijuana.<sup>80</sup> Decriminalization appeared to be moving even faster on the state level. By the summer of '78, eleven states—including North Carolina and Mississippi—had decriminalized possession of small amounts of marijuana, so that over 71 million Americans—nearly one-third of the country's 220 million residents—could smoke marijuana without the threat of criminal penalties.<sup>81</sup>

The late 1970s marked the high-water mark for marijuana popularity, visibility and acceptance in American history. In 1978, the National Institute of Drug Abuse's survey revealed the all-time highest rates of young Americans who consumed marijuana. Nearly 36 percent of young adults reported smoking monthly. About 11 percent, or one of every nine, of young adults

---

<sup>79</sup> Sloman, *Reefer Madness*, 328.

<sup>80</sup> "Carter Asks Congress to Decriminalize Marijuana Possession; Cocaine Law is Studied," *NYT*, March 15, 1977, 15.

<sup>81</sup> Between 1973 and 1978, California, New York, Maine, Oregon, Alaska, Colorado, North Carolina, Mississippi, Ohio, Minnesota and Nebraska all decriminalized simple possession of marijuana in these years.

reported smoking marijuana daily. In addition, a whopping two-thirds of all young adults replied they had tried marijuana at least once.<sup>82</sup> And a majority of Americans—53 percent—voiced support for decriminalizing marijuana possession in a 1977 Gallup poll.<sup>83</sup>

### III. The Anxieties of Acceptance

By the end of the '70s, however, marijuana's strongest supporters began to express deep ambivalence in response to pot's dramatic popularization. While smokers celebrated the inroads that pot had made into American popular and commercial culture, they also expressed worries about the perils of too much tolerance. According to *High Times*,

America does not allow \$350-million-a-year industries, employing thousands of people, paying millions in taxes and pumping a sagging GNP, to fade away like chimney sweeps...The question is not when will these anti-paraphernalia laws stop the industry, but who—liquor, tobacco or pharmaceuticals—is going to stop it and take it over.<sup>84</sup>

These anxieties about who would eventually control the paraphernalia businesses reflected more fundamental worries about marijuana consumers' future amid growing legal and cultural acceptance of pot. Many smokers simply assumed that marijuana would be decriminalized, if not legalized, on the federal level in the 1980s. Such a prognostication seems far-fetched in retrospect, but with eleven states having eliminated criminal penalties for marijuana possession between 1973 and 1978, it was not unreasonable for America's marijuana faithful to think that federal decriminalization was soon forthcoming. So widespread were the expectations of

---

<sup>82</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstracts of the United States: 1980*, 101<sup>st</sup> edition (Washington, D.C.; U.S. Department of Commerce, 1980), 129; Robert E. Schell and Elizabeth Hall, *Developmental Psychology Today* (New York: CRM/Random House, 1979), 389.

<sup>83</sup> Gallup Poll, April 1977, "Do you think the possession of small amounts of marijuana should or should not be treated as a criminal offense?" (iPoll Databank at the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, <http://roperweb.ropercenter.uconn.edu>, accessed April 19, 2007).

<sup>84</sup> A. Craig Copetas, "Paraphernalia '78," *HT* (October 1978).

decriminalization that NORML felt it necessary to remind people in advertisements that smoking marijuana was not yet legal in America. “Marijuana” It’s almost legal. Isn’t it?” read a NORML ad imitating a typical smoker’s attitude towards contemporary pot laws. “Nothing is ever legal. Especially marijuana,” NORML proclaimed in response.<sup>85</sup>

Instead of trying to persuade pot’s remaining critics to accept reform, many marijuana enthusiasts fixated on fears that decriminalization, inevitable as it was, would hurt consumers’ interests by concentrating the power of suppliers in the hands of too few sellers and producers. NORML worried federal decriminalization could allow major corporations to seize control of the marijuana market and deny independent sellers and distributors their livelihood. As Keith Stroup told *High Times* in 1976,

I’ll bet that some of the last holdouts to approve any kind of legal marijuana will be those senators and representatives from the tobacco states. The companies will hold us back as long as possible, and when they see they can’t hold us back any further, they’ll jump in and try to get their corner of the market...The [marijuana] smoking public’s attitudes might turn sour towards the prospect of commercialization [after legalization]...If consumer demand for a low-key commercial exploitation aren’t heeded, they might stop at decriminalization and say, “The hell with you, I’ll grow my own, or ‘I’ll buy it on the black market.”

Proponents of marijuana’s legalization were already proposing concrete plans for the regulation and distribution of marijuana that would take effect once prohibition was repealed. As soon as marijuana was legalized, Stroup thought, NORML’s top priority would be to establish “a system of legal marijuana that the consumer can live with...I’d like to have marijuana blends from a lot of countries,” he explained. “I’d like to have the same choice wine drinkers do. I’d like to have it pure.”<sup>86</sup> In planning for decriminalization, NORML articulated that its primary concern was to protect consumers, and to ensure their continued access to a wide range of varieties of marijuana.

---

<sup>85</sup> *HT*, September 1977, 42.

<sup>86</sup> Copetas and Foldes, “Keith Stroup,” *HT* 10 (June 1976), 23.

Even without federal decriminalization, some consumers thought that marijuana had already become too socially acceptable and thus too commercial and beholden to economic motives. In his 1976 work, *The Complete Guide to Street Drugs*, Scott French expressed discomfort with the “evil economic forces” that controlled the marijuana market now that it had become a “socially ‘in’ drug for the cocktail set...[and] fallen prey to price and quantity manipulators.” Back in the late 1960s,

A key (a real kilo mind you) of top Mexican weed could easily be had for \$160... [But] people began selling “bricks,” some undefined, vague chunk of marijuana...As the price inflated further, the brick shrank and shrank (after all, when there was no real standard size, how could you yell “cheat”). At some point the brick gave way to another Madison Avenue type price reduction—it became a pound.<sup>87</sup>

To longtime marijuana enthusiasts like French, new smokers like the affluent members of the “cocktail set” represented a group of interlopers who did not really belong to the true core of dedicated and fair-minded consumers. Most troubling, their enhanced demand for pot raised prices for less affluent consumers. Pot had become a victim of its own popularity, and was suffering from over-commercialization and the threat of co-optation.

Yet marijuana’s defenders should have done more to appreciate how much circumstances had improved for pot smokers in the last decade. Whether or not pot had become banal or trendy, increased tolerance meant that fewer people were in danger of going to jail for consuming marijuana. But instead of recognizing the gains they had made, many avid pot smokers found fault in the mainstreaming of their favored substance and carped that it had become too popular. Rather than fret about how mundane pot had become, enthusiasts should have contemplated how the spread of marijuana, especially to non-adults, threatened to undermine expanded tolerance of the substance. In fact, roughly three-fifths of high school

---

<sup>87</sup> French, *Complete Guide to the Street Drug Game*, 215.

seniors reported having tried marijuana in 1978, and over a third of all ninth-graders had smoked at least once. The number of high school seniors who smoked marijuana daily had nearly doubled in just a few years, from only 6 percent in 1975 to 11 percent in 1978.<sup>88</sup> Apparently, teenagers had little trouble obtaining marijuana. Four-fifths of high schoolers and 60 percent of junior high students told a Gallup poll it was “easy or fairly easy to obtain marijuana.” “I don’t really have to go out and find it,” a sixteen-year-old boy from Atlanta admitted in a television interview. “Somebody just comes up to you and asks, ‘Hey, you want to smoke.’ You don’t have to find it, it finds you more or less.” One news report noted that “many American schoolyards have become retail outlets for the marijuana industry.”<sup>89</sup> The marijuana market had gained an economic foothold in the one place that children were supposed to be protected from market forces.

Put in these terms, marijuana’s growing economic power represented a menace to many American families, in an era of parents’ escalating fears of the dangers that commercial markets posed to children more generally.<sup>90</sup> By the late 1970s, a broader backlash against the increased social permissiveness of the last decade was brewing. Acute fears among parents about juvenile drug use was only one part of a much larger trend of “widely publicized panics over children’s well-being” in the last quarter of the twentieth century.<sup>91</sup> In a similar fashion, unjustified fears of

---

<sup>88</sup> “Increase in Marijuana Use Continues,” *The Ledger*, June 28, 1979, 9C.

<sup>89</sup> Edwin Newman, *Reading, Writing and Reefer*, NBC News, 1978; Lloyd D. Johnston, Patrick M. O’Malley and Jerald G. Bachman, *Drug Use, Drinking, and Smoking: National Survey Results from High School, College, and Young Adult Populations, 1975-1988* (Rockville, Maryland: National Institute of Drug Abuse, 1989), 103.

<sup>90</sup> Gary Cross *The Cute and the Cool: Wondrous Innocence and Modern American Children’s Culture* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 182-83.

<sup>91</sup> Steven Mintz, *Huck’s Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 336; Philip J. Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 256.

gay adults—especially teachers—preying on children fueled a larger counterassault in the late 1970s on the gains that sexual minorities had consolidated in that decade.<sup>92</sup> Alarmed by what they saw as a culture permissive of drug consumption and other threats to a healthy childhood, some parents began to organize to publicize their concerns to politicians and the media. In August 1976, a woman from Atlanta named Sue Rusche was shocked to discover that her thirteen-year-old daughter and her friends had been smoking marijuana at a birthday party. Rusche called for a meeting of the teenagers’ parents, and they decided all they could do was to write the federal government for information on youth drug use. But Rusche saw the problem as something larger than her daughter’s experiment with pot. Rusche also became increasingly outraged as she witnessed head shops thrive in the Atlanta area by selling drug paraphernalia to consumers of all ages. Wanting to help parents stem this tide of growing drug consumption, Rusche organized an anti-drug advocacy group called DeKalb County Families in Action.

Rusche’s first successes included persuading Georgia’s legislature to pass three different anti-paraphernalia laws and winning a \$15,000 grant from the DeKalb County school system to train teachers about drug abuse. Meanwhile, parents in other parts of the country were starting their own advocacy groups seeking to reduce discouraged drug use among children and teenagers. By 1979, Rusche had made a big enough name for herself that she was invited to Washington to testify to Congress’ Select Committee on Narcotics. In her testimony, Rusche railed against the legal businesses that she saw as enabling illegal consumption and businesses to flourish. “We call upon Congress to conduct a full-scale, criminal investigation of the drug-paraphernalia industry, *High Times* magazine, and NORML,” Rusche told Wolff’s committee. Rusche and other parents who organized against drugs voiced a common theme: young

---

<sup>92</sup> Philip J. Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 119-123.

consumers had legal access to too much literature and too many accessories that facilitated drug consumption, and consumer markets were woefully under-regulated to protect young Americans from the dangers of drugs.<sup>93</sup>

In response to these attacks on pot, some marijuana smokers redoubled their efforts to argue for a right to consume marijuana. *High Times* exhorted readers to “fight for your pot rights—now or never” in their opening editorial in one 1978 issue. “Is the fight for pot rights gaining ground—or sliding back, inch by hard-won inch,” the editorial asked. “We have won enough battles, but we can still lose the war... We must all smoke now, or surely we will be burned later.”<sup>94</sup> When Dr. Peter Bourne, President Carter’s drug advisor, wrote an editorial, “Kids Shouldn’t Get Stoned,” for another issue of *High Times*, he was rebutted by thirteen-year-old Monica Choate’s piece, “Everybody Must Get Stoned.”<sup>95</sup> And as one *High Times* columnist chafed,

If marijuana poses any real danger to young people, it is only the threat of arrest, abuse at the hands of the police, and imprisonment... Marijuana isn’t dangerous for minds or bodies... If children win the right to their own culture, if they win the right to smoke pot, they might start thinking about other rights. They might start realizing that they are they last great unliberated segment of the human race.<sup>96</sup>

*High Times* was unapologetic in its avowal of marijuana consumption for all ages and refused to acknowledge any drawbacks of pot smoking even for children and teenagers. Not only that, but by the late ‘70s, the magazine commonly extolled the pleasures of cocaine consumption. Photo spreads in several issues showed large amounts of high-value cocaine powder, while another

---

<sup>93</sup> Anderson, *High in America*, 300-305.

<sup>94</sup> “Fight for Your Pot Rights—Now or Never,” *HT*, July 1978, 1.

<sup>95</sup> Peter Bourne, “Kids Shouldn’t Get Stoned” and Monica Choate, “Everybody Must Get Stoned,” *HT*, September 1978, 76-77.

<sup>96</sup> *HT*, May 1979, 67.

article regaled readers with the “ABZ’s of cocaine connoisseurship.”<sup>97</sup> An unwillingness to acknowledge cocaine’s dangerous addictiveness undermined some marijuana defenders’ ongoing efforts to argue that marijuana was less harmful than other banned substances.

While the majority of Americans at the end of the 1970s believed marijuana consumers should not face criminal penalties for possession, they were becoming concerned with the harmful effects marijuana smoking could have on non-adults. Even NORML’s president, Keith Stroup, admitted to NBC that it was important for children and teenagers to understand marijuana’s potentially harmful effects on their physical and mental development prior to adulthood and, in his words, to recognize that marijuana was “no panacea.”<sup>98</sup> In the late 1970s, marijuana enthusiasts didn’t even bother taking their critics seriously. Without giving it much thought, many stoners ridiculed those who claimed that marijuana might be more damaging to minors than for adults. Instead of compromising and focusing on how to facilitate adults’ safe and legal consumption of marijuana, pot enthusiasts underestimated and denied the validity of growing concerns about marijuana’s ill effects on minors.

The long trend of expanding tolerance for marijuana, while appearing inexorable to many people in the stoner subculture, was coming to a close at the end of the 1970s. Throughout the decade, young consumers had invoked notions of the right to privacy and the primacy of pleasure to insist that they—and not laws or prevailing social norms—should determine the legitimacy of the commodities they purchased. Those who purchased marijuana rejected the idea that the state possessed the sole authority to determine which markets should be licit and which should illicit. Products expressly designed to enable illegal consumption remained virtually unregulated, as

---

<sup>97</sup> “It’s Official: 4 Million People Read *High Times*,” *HT*, September 1978, DK10; Richard Ashley, “Cocaine Karma,” January 1979, 58-60.

<sup>98</sup> Edwin Newman, *Reading, Writing and Reefer* (NBC News, 1978).



millions of dollars worth of legal accessories for consuming marijuana flew off the shelves of head shops, record dealers, convenience stores and discount retailers. When eleven states decriminalized possession of marijuana in a five-year period in the heart of the 1970s, federal decriminalization of pot didn't seem that far off to many marijuana consumers. Yet, as political and cultural developments in the first half of 1980s would show, marijuana enthusiasts severely underestimated the backlash that they had inspired.

## **Conclusion**

### **Consumer Liberation: Backlash and Assimilation at the Close of the Twentieth Century**

While the four markets examined in this dissertation boomed through the 1970s, by the early 1980s many Americans were expressing deep unease with the political and social transformations that had given rise to consumer liberation. Not only did consumers showed diminished interest in the black-owned music marketplace, women's blue jeans, singles bars and marijuana, but in many cases public policies and shifting political opinion worked against the very cultural forces that gave rise to consumer liberation. More than any other marketplace in this study, marijuana and drug paraphernalia provoked a backlash from state authorities and citizens in the 1980s. Although Families in Action's quick rise to prominence suggested growing opposition to marijuana and drug paraphernalia in the late 1970s, by 1980 a much larger coalition of parents' anti-drug groups, The National Federation of Parents for Drug-Free Youth, was founded to unite over 370 such groups.<sup>1</sup> Another key sign of marijuana opponents gaining ground was seen in the federal government's changing rhetoric and policies. Early in his presidential term, Jimmy Carter had claimed he wanted to "discourage the use of marijuana...[without] defining the smoker as criminal," showing an exceptional openness to liberalizing the nation's marijuana laws.<sup>2</sup> Yet by 1979, the Carter administration decided to heed

---

<sup>1</sup> Ellen Hume, "Network of Parent Groups Formed to Combat 'Massive Drug Epidemic'," *Los Angeles Times*, May 9, 1980, B19.

<sup>2</sup> "Carter's 1-Ounce 'Pot' Plan," *Los Angeles Times*, August 2, 1977; James T. Wooten, "Carter Seeks to End Marijuana Penalty for Small Amounts," *NYT*, August 3, 1977, 37.

the demands of parents' groups and urge the Drug Enforcement Administration to draft the Model Drug Paraphernalia Act, a Constitutionally-compliant blueprint for state and municipal anti-paraphernalia laws.<sup>3</sup> But it was not until Ronald Reagan's election to the White House that the anti-drug movement attained an equally ardent anti-marijuana ally in the federal government. Initially, Reagan proposed "winning" teenagers away from drugs as the most effective approach for reducing consumption of marijuana and other illegal substances. As Reagan explained in March 1981, "It's far more effective if you take the customers away from the drugs than if you try to take the drugs away from those who want to be customers," arguing that it would be "virtually impossible" to stem drug use by focusing on arresting consumers, dealers, and distributors.<sup>4</sup> If the federal government didn't act soon to curb illegal drug consumption, Reagan warned, America faced the "risk of losing a great part of a whole generation." But after initially sounding these moderate and deliberate strategies for reducing drug use in the early months of 1981, the Reagan administration soon declared a "war on drugs," a massive law enforcement and public relations campaign that sought to vilify and arrest drug consumers, producers and distributors, as well as head shop operators.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the Reagan administration's approach to reducing drug abuse sought to punish marijuana consumers to a degree unseen since the 1950s.

Increasingly, news media, political rhetoric and popular discourse condemned all illegal drugs equally, regardless of differences in their effects. In June 1986, a *Newsweek* cover story, "Plague Among Us: The Drug Crisis," alerted readers that "a whole pharmacopeia of poisons

---

<sup>3</sup> Kerry Murphey, "Controlling Drug Paraphernalia," in *Handbook of Drug Control in the United States*, James Inciardi, ed., (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 319.

<sup>4</sup> George Skelton, "Reagan Hopes to 'Win' Teen-Agers Away from Drugs," *Los Angeles Times*, March 7, 1981, A14.

<sup>5</sup> Philip J. Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 248-255.

hiding behind street names as innocent as grass, snow, speed, horse and angel dust” had recently triggered “an epidemic...as pervasive and as dangerous in its way as the plagues of medieval times.”<sup>6</sup> Operating on a far-fetched goal of eliminating all illegal drug consumption, state and federal authorities showed little desire to prioritize which drugs to curb. Instead of aiming to reduce drug consumption and its resultant social ills to levels acceptable to the majority of society, the all-or-nothing rhetoric of the “War on Drugs” and President Reagan’s Drug Free America Act of 1986 signaled a return to a discourse on drugs in which moral absolutes consistently overrode nuanced and pragmatic policy stances. As concerns about drug use increasingly focused on children and teenagers, the question of which substances mature adults could safely consume was effectively eliminated from political discourse. As a result, in discussions of illegal substances, drugs were reified as willful, evil forces that would stop at nothing to corrupt and ruin “users,” whereas drug consumers per se functioned as mere abstractions, devoid of the power of control or choice that most Americans ascribed to consumers in the so-called free market.<sup>7</sup>

Marijuana’s defenders, though they had anticipated declining support for marijuana’s decriminalization as early as 1978, made two grave mistakes in how they responded to the backlash against pot, in turn making it that much easier for government and parents’ groups to demonize all illegal substances. First, decriminalization advocates sorely underestimated the persuasiveness of arguments that children and teenagers’ growing use of marijuana was a serious social and public health problem, ignoring the potency of more general fears about children’s

---

<sup>6</sup> Richard M. Smith, “The Plague Among Us,” *Newsweek*, June 16, 1986, 15.

<sup>7</sup> “Message to the Congress Transmitting Proposed Legislation to Combat Drug Abuse and Trafficking,” *The Public Papers of Presidential Ronald W. Reagan—The Ronald Reagan Presidential Library*, <<http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1986/091586b.htm>>, accessed April 17, 2007.

safety and welfare in the late 1970s and 1980s.<sup>8</sup> The marijuana consumers of the *High Times* community who refused to admit that pot could harm minors betrayed their better instincts and forwarded a double standard, since they also argued that society should regulate marijuana as it does alcohol and tobacco. Second, too many marijuana consumers erred in pushing for the acceptance of more harmful drugs, most notably cocaine. As cocaine and crack became the focus of America's repudiation of illegal drugs in the '80s, proponents of marijuana who had also defended cocaine found themselves undermined by their association with the brewing crack hysteria. Ironically, while the numbers of Americans who consumed crack cocaine skyrocketed in the 1980s, the proportion of young Americans who consumed marijuana declined significantly over the course of the decade.<sup>9</sup> The widespread notion that marijuana was a legitimate consumer commodity whose possession was undeserving of criminal penalties—a popular sentiment in the 1970s—became the view of only a small minority of Americans, and expectations of an inevitable decriminalization and normalization of marijuana in America nearly disappeared. As late as 1977, a Gallup Poll had found that a solid majority of respondents thought that possession of a small amount of marijuana should not bring criminal charges, but by the middle of the 1980s, surveys revealed that a majority of Americans (up to two-thirds of respondents in one poll) supported criminal penalties for minor pot possession.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares*, 108-133, 256-272.

<sup>9</sup> Glenn C. Loury, *Race, Incarceration, and American Values* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008), 16.

<sup>10</sup> Gallup Poll, "Do you think the possession of small amounts of marijuana should or should not be treated as a criminal offense?" April 1977; Gallup Poll, "Do you think the possession of small amounts of marijuana should or should not be treated as a criminal offense?" May 1985; CBS News/New York Times Poll, "Do you think the possession of small amounts of marijuana should or should not be treated as a criminal offense?" August 1986; Gallup/Newsweek Poll, "Do you think the possession of small amounts of marijuana should or should not be treated as a criminal offense?" July 1986.

Though far from enduring the opprobrium and legal restrictions that confronted marijuana and drug paraphernalia, singles bars also experienced decline and backlash in the 1980s. For starters, Republicans incorporated the phrase “family values,” which had emerged out of evangelical Christian discourse in the late 1970s, into their platform for the 1980 elections.<sup>11</sup> Although the New Right originally coined the phrase to promote judges that would limit or oppose *Roe v. Wade*, the notion of “family values” soon assumed a coded meaning not only for denigrating the massive changes in American sexual and family life inspired by feminism and the sexual revolution, but also for glorifying married life as inherently virtuous and belittling the single life as morally compromised, if not deficient. As Susan Faludi has shown, the deep and wide-reaching backlash against feminism in the 1980s succeeded most when it avoided the appearance of political relevance and addressed seemingly “private” issues of individual romance, career advancement and personal finance. News reports that described with alarm how many middle-aged women were unable to find husbands, for instance, often treated the trend as a direct consequence of troubles that feminism and the sexual revolution had created for Americans since the 1960s. With titles like *Otherwise Engaged: The Private Lives of Successful Career Women* and *Smart Women, Foolish Choices*, a virtual cottage industry of books arose to reveal how professional women and others sympathetic to feminism had jettisoned their chances of wedding by pursuing “too much” equality.<sup>12</sup>

After a decade-and-a-half of explosive growth, singles bars’ sales suffered in the 1980s and their image worsened considerably. Establishments that had once proudly advertised

---

<sup>11</sup> Robert G. Kaiser, “Republican Right Molds Platform in Reagan’s Image,” *The Washington Post*, July 11, 1980, A1; Frank P. Somerville, “Thousands Rally in the Cold Rain, Protest ‘Infamous’ Abortion Ruling,” *The Baltimore Sun*, January 23, 1980, A1.

<sup>12</sup> Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (New York: Crown, 1991), xxii; Betsy Israel, *Bachelor Girl: The Secret History of Single Women in the Twentieth Century* (New York: William Morrow, 2002), 247

themselves as singles spots played down their reputation as meeting places for the unmarried. After *Playboy* picked one drinking establishment as a top spot for meeting singles in New York in 1985, the bar's owner refused to display the promotional materials that accompanied the prize, asking rhetorically, "When was the last time that you met someone who admitted going to a singles bar?"<sup>13</sup> Another singles hotspot, Friday's, re-invented itself as the "family restaurant" T.G.I. Friday's and expanded beyond New York by emphasizing its "California-style" fare. More and more, barkeepers avoided the term "singles bar" to describe drinking establishments that attracted a predominantly young and unmarried clientele. One American Entrepreneurs Association business manual from 1987, for instance, divided drinking establishments into three categories: the "neighborhood bar," "the nightclub" and the "pub or tavern," which "brings people together...[and] usually caters to a younger, 'singles' crowd with money to spend."<sup>14</sup> Stiffened penalties for drunk driving and increased awareness about the risks of alcohol also contributed to singles bars' decreasing popularity.<sup>15</sup> On Manhattan's upper eastside, where singles establishments had thrived side-by-side since the late 1960s, numerous bars closed their doors in the 1980s. Maxwell's Plum, for years considered America's most famous singles bar along with Friday's, abruptly closed for business in 1988; the *New York Times* commemorated the closing with a front page story on its local section that read like an obituary. Although the bar-and-restaurant's yearly intake had shrunk to just one-quarter of what it had been through the 1970s, *Advertising Age* attributed Maxwell Plum's demise to an act of divine retribution. "God

---

<sup>13</sup> Robert Johnson, "When Playboy Bestows Its Praise, Bar Owners Come Out Swinging," *The Wall Street Journal*, December 19, 1985, 31.

<sup>14</sup> *Bar, Tavern/Nightclub: AEA Business Manual No. X1186* (Irvine, Calif.: Entrepreneur, Inc., 1987).

<sup>15</sup> Philip J. Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 204-205; Paul Vettel, "Dining Out," *Chicago Tribune*, September 7, 1984, SD22; Lawrence M. Fisher, "Old Standby, the Corner Bar, Falling Victim to New Values," *NYT*, November 18, 1989, 1.

has always found a way of punishing us for having too much fun...It's happened again. Warner LeRoy has closed down Maxwell's Plum."<sup>16</sup>

While *Advertising Age* may have just been joking, ever more Americans interpreted the decline of singles culture and singles bars as the inevitable result of the excesses of the sexual revolution. Amid rising awareness that HIV could be contracted through heterosexual sex, anecdotal evidence suggests that escalating fears about AIDS undermined the appeal of quick sexual contacts with strangers. "The day of the one-night stand is over," one young single man remarked. "I go to bars now to drink, not to pick up women, and if I go out with a woman I don't sleep with her until I check up on her history and her reputation." As the president of a national association of sex therapists pointed out, "Men are still cruising the singles bars and 'meat markets' but they are complaining they can't get women into bed anymore on the first date."<sup>17</sup> Those who did continue to patronize singles spots exhibited a mix of defiance and defensiveness that hinted at their nervousness in pursuing sex with people they met in bars. "I know I'm clean and I think somebody I meet in a nice spot like this is clean, too...Maybe I'm indestructible" explained one woman in 1989, feeling compelled to justify her decision to patronize a singles bar.<sup>18</sup>

Although never accused of facilitating risky behaviors like singles bars, the market for women's blue jeans also suffered collateral damage from surging resistance to feminism in the 1980s. In every year of the 1970s, Levi's sales had increased, even amid the recessions of 1973-

---

<sup>16</sup> Bryan Miller, "Maxwell's Plum, a 60's Symbol," *NYT*, July 11, 1988, B1; James Brady, "Decline of the Singles Bar" *Advertising Age*, July 25, 1988, 38.

<sup>17</sup> Jon Nordheimer, "With AIDS About, Heterosexuals are Rethinking Casual Sex," *NYT*, March 22, 1986, 7.

<sup>18</sup> Douglas Martin, "Singles Bars: Not Really Gone, Just Forgotten," *NYT*, March 22, 1989, B1.



74 and 1979.<sup>19</sup> By the 1980s Levi's had become not only America's biggest jean producer, but the largest apparel manufacturer in the world. Still, as late as 1981, the company insisted on selling its denim not through national mass merchandisers, but at regional "department stores, specialty chains, and independent jeans boutiques." That same year, however, Levi's decided to start selling its jeans in mass merchandise chains like J.C. Penny's and Sears in an effort to broaden its customer base, but the plan backfired and exacerbated the already formidable demographic shifts that the company was facing.<sup>20</sup> Industry observers claimed that Baby Boomers, many of whom were reaching middle age, were buying fewer jeans than they had as teenagers and young adults.<sup>21</sup> Although blue jeans sales reached a then all-time high of over 500 million pairs in 1981, over the course of the decade sales declined by 23 percent, sinking to lower than 400 million pairs by 1988. In response, companies like Levi's and stores like the Gap, who had once dealt exclusively in denim, were forced by the middle of the decade to diversify their product lines and start offering khakis, sweat suits and other forms of casual wear beyond jeans.<sup>22</sup>

While sales of denim pants for both sexes declined significantly, some women's jeans wearers encountered what Susan Faludi has identified as "fashion backlash." Like intensifying criticism of Americans who lived outside "traditional families," this backlash drew inspiration from anti-feminist ideology but owed its success to its ability to present itself as non-political.

---

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Lueck, "Levi's Problems Finding a Fit," *NYT*, November 8, 1980, 32.

<sup>20</sup> Victor F. Zonana, "Levi Strauss to Sell Its Brand Products Through J.C. Penny," *Wall Street Journal*, December 17, 1981, 6; Isadore Barmash, "Now in Bigger Stores, Levi Seeks Return of Smaller Outlets," *NYT*, September 26, 1983, D5.

<sup>21</sup> Peter W. Barnes, "A Cooling-Off for Jeans Sales," *NYT*, July 20, 1984, D1.

<sup>22</sup> Andrew Pollack, "Jeans Fade but Levi Strauss Glows," *NYT*, June 26, 1989, D1; Andrew Pollack, "At the Gap, a Bold New Look," *NYT*, April 6, 1989, 129.

Similarly, the novelist and fashion critic Alison Lurie noted “ominous signs of retrenchment” in the liberalizing trend of women’s clothing that had started in the 1960s and continued through the 1970s, only to slow in the 1980s. Lurie identified styles like “uncomfortable footwear and the demand for slimness” as attempts to “handicap [women] in professional competition with men.”<sup>23</sup> At the forefront of this backlash were fashion designers, who championed a return to what they believed were traditional feminine values that had declined in the sartorial realm as a direct consequence of the women’s movement. In promoting 1987 as the “Year of the Dress,” for example, designers like Alfred Scassi advocated the so-called High Femininity look, which he described as a “reaction to the feminist movement, which was kind of a war.”<sup>24</sup> A new generation of designer jeans makers, led by Guess’ Georges Marciano, introduced upscale denim for women with an even more explicit anti-feminist orientation than had Calvin Klein. Marciano declared he was “attracted to [the] femininity” American women had embodied in earlier times and thus strived to design styles that emphasized women’s sexuality and fragility. “Women want to look the way they did in the 1950s...They feel cheated by liberation,” Marciano remarked in explaining his products. With the rise of second-wave feminism, “independence took over [women’s] private life, and their private life was tremendously damaged.”<sup>25</sup> Professional workplaces showed less tolerance for pants and jeans than they had just a decade earlier, rescinding freedoms they had once granted to women in the area of dress. “In the early 70’s, if a woman wore a tailored pants suit, it meant she was an executive,” recalled one woman heading a public relations firm in 1989, “but nowadays there’s a universal dress code that a woman who’s a

---

<sup>23</sup> Alison Lurie, *The Language of Clothes* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1981), reprinted 2000, 227.

<sup>24</sup> Faludi, *Backlash*, 172.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

professional wears a skirt and pumps.”<sup>26</sup> Some professional settings, most notably legislatures and legal courtrooms, even continued to require women to wear skirts or dresses.<sup>27</sup> Although women continued to wear jeans and pants in the 1980s, they bought fewer of the garments and did so despite countervailing pressures of the fashion and larger anti-feminist backlashes.

African American radio and record stores also experienced considerable decline in the 1980s, due to a wide range of changes in retail, technology, media production and shifting attitudes towards black-owned businesses. Deejays lost considerable control over the medium of black radio, as more and more black radio stations adopted automated programming. While black radio had once emphasized local community and local consumers, industry trends in the 1980s encouraged black programmers to cultivate a more regionally ambiguous sound with minimal local references. Automated playlists and recorded talk-sets undercut deejays’ spontaneity and creative control and reduced the variety, human touch and listener input that had distinguished black radio from other, more systematized forms of electronic media. To make matters worse, the Federal Communications Commission, on the heels of several federal court decisions, eliminated policies that had made possible the sales of over one hundred stations to African Americans since 1974. This policy change conformed to the Reagan administration’s broader contention that the federal government had enacted enough, if not too many, programs to promote racial equality and protect the civil rights of African Americans.<sup>28</sup> The FCC also eliminated a federal rule that required commercial AM stations to devote 8 percent of their broadcast time to news, public affairs and other forms of “non-entertainment.” This effectively allowed broadcasters to slash their community-oriented programming, which was an especially

---

<sup>26</sup> Anne-Marie Schiro, “Are Pants Fit Attire for the Office?” *NYT*, July 30, 1989, 52.

<sup>27</sup> “Carolina Legislators Toughen Dress Code,” *NYT*, December 4, 1986, A20.

<sup>28</sup> Zook, *I See Black People*, 2-4.

valuable feature to African American listeners whose news needs were often neglected by white-owned media outlets.<sup>29</sup> By 1987, even the ardently free-market *Wall Street Journal* admitted that deregulation and increased corporate influence had created “an increasingly perilous future” for independent black radio stations.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, at the start of the 1990s, the number of black-owned radio stations—which had increased unabated since the late 1960s—began to decrease for the first time ever.<sup>31</sup>

Consolidation in music merchandising, a market that had long been amenable to independent retailers, was only the largest trouble plaguing black-owned music outlets in the 1980s. In a state like North Carolina, the number of record store chain outlets (all of which were white-owned) grew by 36 percent between 1980 and 1985.<sup>32</sup> Because music chain stores were often located at shopping malls far from black residential areas, most black consumers had to plan special trips outside their neighborhoods to patronize them.<sup>33</sup> But as the 1980s progressed, changes in African-American communities applied downward pressure on business at black-

---

<sup>29</sup> Barlow, *Voice Over*, 261-262; Kimberly A. Zarkin and Michael J. Zarkin, *The Federal Communications Commission: Front Line in the Culture and Regulation Wars* (Westport, Conn., 2006), 123-124; Lawrence N. Redd, “Radio Deregulation: The Impact on Black Families and Nonprofit Social Agencies,” *Journal of Black Studies* 22 (December 1991): 223, 237.

<sup>30</sup> Bob Davis, “Tuning Out: Black Radio Stations Face Balky Advertisers as Competition Rises,” *WSJ*, September 23, 1987, 1.

<sup>31</sup> Barlow, *Voice Over*, 262; Walker, *The History of Black Business in America*, 323.

<sup>32</sup> In 1980, the U.S.’s top 100 record chains operated 33 stores in North Carolina; by 1985, that number had jumped to 45—“North Carolina,” *Music Retailer Directory*, pages unnumbered; *Music Video Retailer: Directory of Record and Tape Stores* (Chestnut, Mass., 1985), 266-275; “The Top 100,” *MR*, December 1980, 19-21.

<sup>33</sup> On downtowns’ growing reliance on non-white consumers in the 1960s and ‘70s, see Alison Isenberg, *Downtown America: A History of the Place and the People who Made It* (Chicago: 2004), 206-207, 214. Through the 1970s, 95 percent of suburbanites, who tended to shop at “regional or community shopping centers,” were non-black. African Americans, however, mostly lived either in central cities or small towns far from suburban shopping districts, often lacked personal automobiles, and consequently had to “restrict their shopping travel to the nearest and often less goods-diversified CBD [central business district], convenience, or neighborhood retail centers.” See Woodrow W. Nichols, *The Adequacy of Transportation Facilities in Black Communities: The Problem of Residence-Shopping Place Separation* (Washington, D.C., 1982), 21-22.

owned record retailers. While the African-American middle class experienced considerable growth in the 1980s, increased black affluence also produced suburbanization and a general retreat from historical black neighborhoods and black shopping districts. These developments, along with huge increases in black urban poverty and the residual effects of “urban renewal” projects combined by the 1980s to drive out many of the black-owned businesses, record stores and otherwise, from the traditional black commercial districts that they had called home for decades.<sup>34</sup>

Two technological threats to black-owned record stores came in the form of home recording and the birth of the cable channel Music Television (MTV). More and more consumers began to buy inexpensive blank cassettes onto which they could record an album’s worth of songs from the radio or a friend’s collection. While this development enhanced cash-strapped consumers’ access to music, it did not help independent record dealers’ sales. Record stores across the country reported that home recording reduced demand for licensed recordings, but amid a disheartening recession in the early 1980s, many music retailers conceded that hard times for consumers made recordable cassette tapes an obligatory product to stock. Still, chain stores with large profit margins could much more easily withstand the loss of revenue resulting from home recording than could independently owned stores.<sup>35</sup> And the debut of MTV, while it boosted demand for rock records in the early ‘80s, hurt black music businesses and their

---

<sup>34</sup> Bill Hennessee, interview by author, digital recording, April 26, 2007. Andrew Wiese, *Places of their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago, 2004), 255-261; William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago, 1987), 56-58. On urban renewal efforts that damaged Greensboro’s main black business district along East Market Street, home to Curt’s Records and Gifts, see interview transcript for Claude Barnes, September 27, 2002, R-0177, Special Research Projects: Remembering Black Main Streets (Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill).

<sup>35</sup> “The Blank Tape Controversy: Villain or Scapegoat?,” *MR*, August 1980, 12-17; Stephen Grover, “Record Business Slumps as Taping and Video Games Take Away Sales,” *WSJ*, February 18, 1982, 31; Moore, interview.

consumers, too.<sup>36</sup> From the start, MTV's personnel indicated they had scant interest in airing videos by black performers. Announcer Mark Goodman once unapologetically justified the station's preference for white performers, declaring that many MTV viewers would "be scared to death by...a string of black faces, or black music."<sup>37</sup> Funk musician Rick James, in his characteristically blunt style, complained bitterly that MTV operated on an unwritten "requirement of no niggers...catering to a white audience."<sup>38</sup>

Unfortunately, even African Americans' interest in black-owned retail businesses had shrunk in the 1980s. In a 1984 survey, just over 38 percent of African American seventeen- to twenty-four-year olds affirmed that "blacks should shop whenever possible in black stores," down from 70 percent of black respondents who had voiced the same sentiment in a 1968 survey.<sup>39</sup> The number of black retail firms in America peaked in 1982 at over 70,000, representing 22 percent of all black businesses (down from 29 percent in 1969). But by 1987, the number of black-owned retail had dipped to just over 66,000, comprising under 16 percent of all black firms. Not only that, but the proportion of income that African Americans spent at black-owned businesses fell by almost half, from 13.5 percent in 1969 to 7 percent in 1984.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Susan Austin, a manager for the Record Bar chain from 1976 to the mid-1980s, recalled MTV as the single biggest factor to boost purchases at her stores in North Carolina in the first half of the '80s in an interview with the author, digital recording, October 12, 2007. Performers with videos on MTV enjoyed increases of 15 to 20 percent in their record sales; see Laura Landro, "Record Industry Finding Financial Revival in Promoting Artists on Video Music Shows," *WSJ*, November 19, 1982, 33. Only the most crossover-friendly and popular black artists that included rock in their repertoire (primarily Prince and Michael Jackson) received airplay on MTV for most of the '80s. Not until August 1988, when MTV launched the program *Yo! MTV Raps*, did the station express any significant interest in black performers and their fans.

<sup>37</sup> R. Serge Denisoff, *Inside MTV* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1988), 99-101

<sup>38</sup> Robert M. Collins, *Transforming America: Politics and Culture in the Reagan Years* (New York, 2007), 165.

<sup>39</sup> Katherine Tate et al., *The 1984 National Black Election Study Sourcebook* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1988), 137; Campbell and Schuman, *Supplemental Studies*, 20.

<sup>40</sup> Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic*, 327.

The growth of opportunities for non-whites in franchising, white-collar employment and non-retail businesses was thought to draw away many African Americans from independent retail. Meanwhile, increasing numbers of Asian immigrants opened retail firms in predominantly black neighborhoods. Taken altogether, these development prompted the NAACP's *Crisis* magazine to run a cover story on "the dying breed" of "black mom-and-pop-retailers" in 1991.<sup>41</sup>

If we take a step back from these four case studies and examine the decline of the consumer liberation impulse through a wider analytical lens, we can see a larger shift in how Americans in the 1980s responded to the social upheavals and transformations of the previous two decades. These backlashes that came to a head in the 1980s reflected American consumers' inability to agree on what constituted socially and culturally beneficial forms of consumption beyond the mass market. Admittedly, the New Right exerted a considerable impact on the politics and public discourse of American consumer culture in the 1980s after consolidating its gradual electoral and cultural gains of the late 1960s and 1970s in the election of Ronald Reagan. At times the New Right curtailed consumer liberation directly through legislation and regulatory reform, as it did with marijuana and black-owned radio stations. Other times the rhetoric of the New Right—denunciations of overweening feminists, glorification of Americans' cherished "family values"—spilled over into consumer markets and fueled resistance to women's blue jeans and singles bars.

But while much of the resistance to consumer liberation reflected the ascendant conservative spirit of the 1980s, many Americans were oblivious to the political dimensions of hip businesses' decline. Susan Faludi's assertion that anti-feminism succeeded by assuming a non-partisan appearance applies not only to backlashes the civil rights movement, the sexual

---

<sup>41</sup> Randall Brock, "The Future of Mom and Pop Businesses in the Black Community," *The Crisis*, May 1991, 11-14.

revolution and the counterculture experienced in the 1980s. It also applies to backlashes against the markets and new forms of consumption that those political upheavals inspired. The New Right encouraged and fueled much of the resistance to consumer liberation, but they did not invent and control that backlash singlehandedly. Yet the currents of opposition to gender equality, racial equality, liberalization of drug laws, and the sexual revolution had been swelling gradually since the late 1960s. Independent of the electoral gains of the New Right, many American consumers in the 1980s showed a strong desire to turn away from the supposedly liberated forms of consumption that experienced great popularity in the 1970s. Fatigue with the cultural upheavals of the previous two decades applied to consumer markets no less than it did to the nation's politics, as consumers' demands for the liberated products of the late 1960s and 1970s waned and hip businesses found themselves hard-pressed to keep up their sales.

Baby Boomers' rise to middle age also did much to reshape their attitudes towards young people and consumer liberation. For many Americans who had come of age in the late 1960s and 1970s, marijuana and singles bars were unseemly vestiges of their youth, things that they would rather leave in the past, even if they didn't reject them outright. By the early 1980s, enough Boomers were having children to spark a sharp spike in birth rates, prompting some demographers to speak of an "echo boom."<sup>42</sup> A great deal of anxiety towards hip businesses in the 1980s can be attributed to Baby Boomers who felt that the 1960s and '70s had produced a world more dangerous for their children than the one in which they had grown up. Sexual predators, drug use, HIV, drunk driving and violent crime, while posing very real threats to young Americans in the 1980s, produced far more fear and terror among parents than they should have, often due to how much news media and politicians sought to publicize and profit

---

<sup>42</sup> Jeff Goldsmith, *The Long Baby Boom: An Optimistic Vision for a Graying Generation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 40.



from those so-called epidemics. In the words of one historian, by the middle of the 1980s, “child protection became a national social orthodoxy.”<sup>43</sup> These fears had no small effect on attitudes towards consumption. Parents’ advocacy groups were on the front line of debates calling for stricter laws against marijuana and drug paraphernalia; increased fears of African American criminality (much of it fueled by reluctance among whites to continue policies that addressed racial inequalities) sharpened divisions in the music marketplace and inspired outcry over black music, especially hip hop. Baby Boomers turned away from singles bars, often in favor of so-called “family restaurants,” and increasingly viewed alcohol as a life-threatening menace to young consumers, as nearly all states raised their minimum drinking ages to twenty-one by 1984.<sup>44</sup>

But growing conservatism and increased fears over threats to young Americans were not the only forces that stifled consumer demand for hip businesses’ products. Perhaps an equally significant (though harder to quantify) reason for consumer liberation’s decline was that its power to shock, surprise and entertain consumers had diminished since the 1970s. Indeed, some hip businesses and hip products had proved so successful and become so widespread that they lost much of their novelty. The market for women’s blue jeans reflects this development better than any other of the markets examined in this study. In addition to the revival of anti-feminist styles in the rarefied world of haute couture, sellers and markers of women’s blue jeans suffered from the declining sense of novelty and thrill that women got from wearing denim. Indeed, so many women wore jeans by the end of the 1970s, including upstart designer labels, that the fashion lost virtually all of the political relevance it had at the height of second-wave feminism.

---

<sup>43</sup> Steven Mintz, *Huck’s Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 336; Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares*, 256.

<sup>44</sup> Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares*, 204-205.

College and high school yearbooks from the period show women wearing a wide range of skirts, dresses, shorts and pants, indicating that many young women had come to view jeans in the 1980s as simply one of the many garments they could choose to wear.<sup>45</sup> And while bars more and more refused to self-identify as singles bars, it may be more accurate to think of them as assimilating into the larger market for drinking establishments.

Unfortunately, consumers who sought liberation from mass consumption by emphasizing the expression of cultural and individual identity in the marketplace helped to obscure the increasing economic inequality that marked the 1980s. Though few people seemed to notice, economic inequality began to increase in America in 1977 for the first time in decades, marking a widening income gap that would accelerate in the 1980s and continue apace until the middle of the 1990s.<sup>46</sup> While proponents of mass consumption in the 1950s and 1960s had often ignored the cultural discrimination inherent to the “consumer’s republic,” young Americans who patronized hip businesses in the 1970s often downplayed or ignored consumer culture’s tendency to reinforce economic inequalities. Declining interest in rectifying income inequality through consumption may have paved the way partially for the explicit celebrations of wealth and materialism that saw a wide revival in the popular discourse and culture of this 1980s. As Bruce Schulman has written, Americans in the 1980s expressed a “shared sense...that the excesses of capitalism were to be applauded or chuckled about rather than checked,” while another scholar has written of the decade’s “New Materialism.”<sup>47</sup> The real and fictional characters seen on

---

<sup>45</sup> *Jaywalker 1988* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1988), 64-179; *The Desert Yearbook* (Tucson: University of Arizona, 1984), 70-175; *1985 Tower: Going Places* (Gainesville: University of Florida, 1985).

<sup>46</sup> Peter H. Lindert, “The Distribution of Income and Wealth,” in *The Historical Statistics of the United States: Earliest Times to the Present* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), NEEDS PAGE.

<sup>47</sup> Bruce Schulman, “The Privatization of Everyday Life: Public Policy, Public Services, and Public Space in the 1980s,” in *Living in the Eighties*, ed. Gil Troy and Vincent J. Cannato (Oxford: Oxford University Press,

television shows like *Dallas*, *Dynasty* and *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous* often received scorn for their horrible taste or deplorable manners, but criticisms of celebrations of wealth often ignored the structural inequalities that made such affluence possible.

The widely publicized phenomenon of “yuppies”—the small, but influential cohort of young, urban professionals who enthusiastically pursued both career advancement and conspicuous consumption—illustrates how the lingering influence of consumer liberation combined with a reinvigorated materialism in the 1980s. Like consumer liberationists of the 1970s, yuppies exhibited both sympathy for left-leaning causes and an aversion to American mass consumption, as best seen in their cravings for imported automobiles and gourmet European food and drink. Yet yuppies refused to acknowledge how the post-industrial economy that had enabled their elite consumer tastes also bore much of the responsibility for blue-collar and lower-tier white-collar workers’ declining fortunes. In fact, one study showed that yuppies, more than the general population, supported increases in spending that benefited African Americans or protected the environment, but that they wanted to “equalize wealth” slightly less than other Americans did.<sup>48</sup> In privileging the marketplace as an arena for cultural expression, consumer liberationists of the 1970s had inadvertently paved the way for individualistic young urban professionals in the 1980s to dismiss mass consumption without seeking to cultivate more accessible and communitarian alternatives.

But even as this strident conservative spirit and glorification of wealth spilled into the 1990s, information technology firms like Microsoft, Apple and Google, which began as upstart

---

2009), 176; Russell W. Belk, “Yuppies as Arbiters of the Emerging Consumption Style,” *Advances in Consumer Research* 1 (1986): 516.

<sup>48</sup> Michael Delli Carpini and Lee Siegelman, “Do Yuppies Matter? Competing Explanations of Their Political Distinctiveness,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 50 (1986): 504-507

small businesses but had quickly transformed into major corporations, strived to emulate hip businesses' iconoclasm and casualness through their marketing and workplace culture.<sup>49</sup> Meanwhile, a few particularly successful companies that had begun as hip retailers expanded by quietly tamping down their more rebellious impulses and adopting business practices more in line with those of expansion-minded Fortune 500 companies. The most prominent example of an erstwhile hip business that has embraced the politics, practices and expansion strategies of mass marketers is Whole Foods Market. Co-founders John Mackey and Rene Lawson opened their first Whole Foods as an independent health-food grocery in Austin, Texas in 1980. But within three decades, Whole Foods had ballooned into an international grocery chain with over 270 locations that often expanded by taking over smaller, local health-food outfits like North Carolina's Wellspring Grocery. In addition, Whole Foods has often found itself in political clashes with local communities for vehemently denouncing universal health care and workers' rights to organize in unions and thus embracing American corporate orthodoxy. Another major corporation that grew out of the hip economy is Cathy Liggins Hughes' Radio One, an African-American owned conglomerate of fifty-three hip-hop and R&B radio stations in sixteen metropolitan areas across the U.S.<sup>50</sup> Radio One has exhibited impressive financial success and resilience in the face of the Federal Communications Act, which has imperiled many African-American and independent broadcasters since 1996. But at least one African American commentator has indicted Hughes' stations for "dumbing down black people" by neglecting to disseminate increasingly rare news coverage aimed at African-American listeners.<sup>51</sup> True or not,

---

<sup>49</sup>Frank, *Conquest of Cool*, 32, 225-235.

<sup>50</sup> "Radio Stations," Radio One: The Urban Media Specialist, <http://www.radio-one.com/properties/radio.asp> (accessed December 30, 2009).

<sup>51</sup> "Who Killed Black Radio News," *The Black Commentator*, May 29, 2003, [http://www.blackcommentator.com/44/44\\_cover.html](http://www.blackcommentator.com/44/44_cover.html) (accessed December 30, 2009).

Hughes has taken the model of white-owned, one-size-fits-all national communications networks like Clear Channel, and applied it to black-oriented radio, a medium that owed most of its success in the 1970s by appealing to local audiences, local tastes and local listeners.

In addition to the corporatization of black radio, each of the other three markets examined in this study, after experiencing backlash in the 1980s, became more acceptable to mainstream tastes in the 1990s and 2000s. Blue jeans have become nothing less than the year-round uniform for vast swaths of the American population, male and female. Self-styled singles bars have virtually disappeared from the commercial landscape as well as from the American lexicon in the early twenty-first century and exist simply as bars, which are now assumed to attract large numbers of unattached male and female patrons.<sup>52</sup> And by all measures, casual sexual encounters have become even more common among young Americans since the 1990s. The so-called “hook up,” when two people engage in casual sexual activity without the explicit expectation of forming a long term relationship, has become commonplace, as evidenced by the exploding popularity of Craigslist’s classifieds and online dating services that offer “casual contacts.”<sup>53</sup> Perhaps most surprising, the U.S. Census Bureau announced in 2000 that single persons represented the nation’s most common household size, outnumbering both couples and households with three or more people, for the first time in American history.<sup>54</sup> And even

---

<sup>52</sup> Not only have the terms pub, tavern and saloon become nearly extinct, but electronic searches in news databases for the term “singles bar” have yielded fewer and fewer results since the 1980s, and contemporary mentions mainly reference singles bars of the past.

<sup>53</sup> In the last decade, social scientists and cultural critics have spent considerable effort trying to elucidate the origins, meanings and consequences of the thriving hook-up culture among young Americans, though they appear to have overlooked the hook-up’s direct debt to the singles bars of the 1960s and ‘70s. See Michael Kimmel, *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008), 190-216; Kathleen Bogle, *Hooking Up: Understanding Sex, Dating and Relationships in College and After* (New York: New York University, 2008); Tom Wolfe, *Hooking Up* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000).

<sup>54</sup> Regina Blaszczyk, *American Consumer Society, 1865-2005: From Hearth to HDTV* (Wheeling, Ill.: Harlan-Davidson, 2009), 196.

marijuana and drug paraphernalia, the marketplace in this study that mass merchandisers influenced and infiltrated the least, have shown signs of resurgence. While regulation of marijuana and head gear tightened significantly in the 1980s, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, pot smoking among teenage consumers doubled (though fell short of the 1970s' levels).<sup>55</sup> Not only that, but support for decriminalizing marijuana has recently reached over 70 percent in public opinion polls.<sup>56</sup> Although no state has decriminalized marijuana since 1978, between 1998 and 2010 fourteen states enacted exemptions for the legal purchase of medical marijuana.<sup>57</sup>

While general retailers like Wal-Mart have continued to grow since the 1970s and have been joined by massive merchandisers in more specialized markets for books, hardware, electronics and even pet supplies (so-called “category killers” or “big boxes”), these stores’ dominance of American retail by the 1990s has reawakened the consumer liberation impulse. Indeed, both the particular markets examined in this dissertation, as well as many of the practices and strategies of hip businesses in general, enjoyed revivals in the late 1990s and 2000s. In the face of the seemingly inexorable expansion of big box stores, community-activists, journalists and other commentators have hailed the rebirth of small, independent and locally-owned retail businesses in America. Books like *The Smallmart Revolution* urge consumers to patronize local businesses and encourage small entrepreneurs to coordinate their efforts through organized alliances, so that improved “vibrant local economies...will make our cities and towns the places

---

<sup>55</sup> Eric Schlosser, *Reefer Madness: Sex, Drugs, and Cheap Labor in the American Black Market* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003), 71

<sup>56</sup> Joel Stein, et al., “The New Politics of Pot: Can It Go Legit,” *Time*, November 4, 2009.

<sup>57</sup>“Fourteen Legal Medical Marijuana States,” <http://medicalmarijuana.procon.org/viewresource.asp?resourceID=000881>, accessed January 23, 2010.

we very much want them to be.”<sup>58</sup> The founding of the American Independent Business Alliance in Boulder, Colorado in 1997 and the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies in New York in 2001 have marked a resurgence of independent businesses in the last decade-and-a-half. Embracing the values of hip businesses, these organizations seek to offer an alternative to mass consumption and big business by “aligning commerce with the common good and bringing...a caring human face to the marketplace.”<sup>59</sup> Like hip businesses’ customers in the 1970s, many of today’s small business patrons want to reshape, not reject, market relations by reinforcing local commercial cultures that accommodate a wider range of cultural identities than do nationally coordinated and standardized, “absentee-owned” retailers. And like many of the entrepreneurs who founded their own hip enterprises in the 1970s, proponents of the new small businesses exhibit a pointed skepticism of large institutions in commerce and government, which they see as undermining the prerogatives of local communities.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, contemporary consumer culture owes a significant debt to the spirit of consumer liberation. None of these observers who have hailed the renewed growth of independent retailers, however, have acknowledged how the hip businesses of the 1970s provided the missing link between the mundane mom-and-pop stores of mid-century America and the more rarefied retailers that thrived in the 1990s and 2000s.

It is also troubling to note that many of the businesses that offer alternatives to the mass retailing model in the twenty-first century, by specializing in products and services that are not affordable or appealing to working-class or lower-middle class Americans, often reinforce and exacerbate class differences among consumers. In contrast to many hip businesses in the 1970s,

---

<sup>58</sup> Michael H. Shuman, *The Small-Mart Revolution: How Local Businesses are Beating the Global Competition* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.: 2006), x.

<sup>59</sup> “About BALLE,” BALLE: Business Alliance for Local Living Economies, <http://www.livingeconomies.org/aboutus> (accessed December 30, 2009).

<sup>60</sup> Shuman, *Small-Mart Revolution*, 16.

which were often somewhat dingy and located in neighborhoods with cheap rents, many of the new generation of independent retailers are polished and pricey shops, funded with sizable amounts of capital and located in upscale commercial districts. As Robert Spector writes in *The Mom & Pop Store: How the Unsung Heroes of the American Economy are Surviving and Thriving*,

Today's mom & pop store is a trendy women's boutique that reflects the fashion vision of a former department store sportswear buyer...[or] a hip bakery started by an erstwhile hedge fund trader, who wanted to capitalize on grandma's recipe for cupcakes.<sup>61</sup>

In another examination of the heirs of the hip business model, Rebecca Skloot, writing for the *New York Times* in 2004, juxtaposed the customs and customers of two eateries in New Martinsville, West Virginia (home to one of her four residences). Although Skloot prefers a hip, locally-owned restaurant and coffee shop by the name Baristas, most of Martinsville's residents prefer the chain Bob Evans. Skloot celebrates the independent spirit of Baristas, but at Bob Evans she points out that "everything about the place said "national chain," even noting that "three women at three different tables [were] wearing identical neon orange T-shirts." Strangely, Skloot sees herself as somewhat of a missionary for Baristas. "Maybe I had an idea that I could convert people—that I could persuade some Bob Evans folks that they should be open to change." But Skloot describes her mission as ending in disappointment and defeat. "Bob Evans people and Baristas people live together all over the United States," Skloot explains, yet "they simply can't understand why anyone in his right mind wouldn't eat the way they do, think the way they do and vote the way they do."<sup>62</sup> Unfortunately, in rural and much of suburban

---

<sup>61</sup> Robert Spector, *The Mom & Pop Store: How the Unsung Heroes of the American Economy are Surviving and Thriving* (New York: Walker & Company, 2009), 7.

<sup>62</sup> Rebecca Skloot, "Two Americas. Two restaurants. One town," *The New York Times Magazine*, October 17, 2004, 78-82.



America, where so-called big box stores and chain restaurants now predominate, independently owned businesses like Baristas often find it very difficult to compete with their much larger competitors. Yet equally lamentable is how many of the consumers who favor independent businesses show outright disdain—often because of feelings of class superiority—for consumers who do not have the means or desire to patronize hip businesses. Corporate chain retailers like Whole Foods, though they borrow strategies from consumer liberation, offer their customers countless opportunities to express their class standing and cultural smugness. Bryant Simon has shown how Starbucks customers, for instance, eagerly consume the chain's coffee because they feel it grants them feelings of cultured affluence and social responsibility. But those same customers also appreciate how patronizing at Starbucks distinguishes them from lower-income consumers, whose tastes they perceive as middle-brow or worse.<sup>63</sup>

To a large degree, hip businesses have become a victim of their own success, or at least the success of their business strategies. More than the big box stores, it is the self-styled hip corporations—the Whole Foods, the Starbucks, the Radio Ones—that most threaten to make the consumer liberation impulse obsolete. Virtually every consumer can recognize the fundamental differences between buying groceries at a big box store and buying groceries at a locally-owned natural food store. It is hard to imagine anyone going to Wal-Mart in search of community, recognition as an individual consumer, or any sort of kinder, gentler marketplace experience. Consumers go to Wal-Mart for their low prices. But because hip corporations have so skillfully taken elements from independent hip businesses and replicated them on a national scale, consumers often mistakenly believe that those corporations have retained the true spirit of hip businesses. Blurring the difference between national and local, the mass and the hip, stores like

---

<sup>63</sup> Bryant Simon, *Everything but the Coffee: Learning about America from Starbucks* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 9-10.

Whole Foods have embraced the appearance of consumer liberation but have rejected its adherence to independent and small-scale community-based retail.

Hip businesses and their consumers who sought liberation in the marketplace never succeeded in displacing mass merchandisers as the dominant form of retail in America, and they probably never will. But in offering alternatives to a single, shared mass consumer culture, hip businesses expanded many Americans' opportunities to consume in ways that comported with cultural and social liberation movements that ignited in the 1960s. Though many Americans prefer the standardization and predictability of shopping in so-called big box chains, a sizable minority of American consumers view those retailers with suspicion. Opinion polling shows that between a fifth and a quarter of Americans do not shop at large discount retailers, and close to a third of consumers harbor "somewhat negative" or "very negative" feelings towards Wal-Mart.<sup>64</sup> The hip businesses of the 1970s, though most of them are either defunct or far less rebellious than they once were, have bequeathed their spirit of consumer liberation to the resurgent independent retail economy of the early twentieth century. Yet the consumer liberation impulse has also given rise to corporations that project hip images while clinging to the principles of mass marketing. If independent retailers, hip or otherwise, want to compete with hip corporations over a sustained period, more of them will need to support small-business organizations like the American Independent Business Alliance, in which they can advertise collectively as well as lobby for zoning laws and tax subsidies that privilege small businesses. More than anything, independent retailers must justify their existence by articulating forcefully their differences with hip corporations. Although small retailers might hope to stay above the

---

<sup>64</sup> "RT Strategies/Cook Political Report Poll: In the past month, have you...shopped at Wal-Mart?" May 2007; "Democracy Corps Poll: Have you shopped at Wal-Mart or other discount stores recently?" December 2008; "NBC/Wall Street Journal Poll," September 2006, all in *iPoll Databank*.

fray of negative advertising, they need to remind consumers not only of the benefits of local businesses, but also the drawbacks of shopping at hip corporations. Hip businesses may never again be able to offer consumers the refuge from the mass market as they did in the 1970s. Nonetheless, millions of consumers in this country want to support independent retailers that are rooted in their local communities and accommodate a wide range of cultural identities—not just those that Fortune 500 companies promote. It remains to be seen, however, whether hip corporations will expand to the point that their smaller rivals can no longer co-exist, or if independent retailers and their patrons will succeed in keeping alive the consumer liberation spirit by supporting alternatives to homogenous, standardized commercial culture in the twenty-first century.

## SOURCES CITED

### ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS

Southern Historical Collection of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
The Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library  
The John W. Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising & Marketing History  
The North Carolina Collection of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture

### MAGAZINES, NEWSPAPERS, AND TRADE PERIODICALS

*Advertising Age*  
*Atlanta Singles Magazine and Date Book*  
*Baltimore Sun*  
*Berkeley Barb*  
*Billboard*  
*Black Business Digest*  
*Black Enterprise*  
*Black Radio Exclusive*  
*Carolina Times*  
*Chicago Tribune*  
*Clothes, etc.*  
*Cosmopolitan*  
*The Crisis*  
*Fortune*  
*Gay*  
*Glamour*  
*Good Times*  
*Great Speckled Bird*  
*Hartford Courant*  
*High Times*  
*Los Angeles Times*  
*Music Retailer*  
*National Review*  
*New York Times*  
*Newsweek*  
*Life*  
*Ms.*  
*Mademoiselle*  
*People Weekly*  
*Rags*  
*Restaurant Business*  
*Single*

*Television Radio Age*  
*Time*  
*U.S. News & World Report*  
*Wall Street Journal*  
*Washington Post*  
*Winston-Salem Chronicle*  
*Women: A Journal of Liberation*

## BOOKS AND ARTICLES

- Abrams, Charles. *The City is the Frontier*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1965.
- Alexander, Kathryn L. "The Status of Contemporary Black-Oriented Radio in the United States." Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1981.
- Allon, Natalie. *Urban Life Styles*. Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Company Publishers, 1979.
- Allyn, David. *Make Love Not War—The Sexual Revolution: An Unfettered History*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2000.
- Altshuler, Alan A. *Community Control: The Black Demand for Participation in Large American Cities*. New York, 1970.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London and New York: Verso, 1991.
- Anderson, Patrick Anderson. *High in America: The True Story Behind NORML and the Politics of Marijuana*. New York: Viking Press, 1981.
- Anderson, Terry H.. *The Movement and the Sixties*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Andreasen, Alan R. *The Disadvantaged Consumer*. New York, 1975.
- Bachman, R. Dwight. *Dynamics of Black Radio: A Research Report*. Washington, D.C., 1977.
- Bailey, Beth. *From Front Porch to Back Seat: Courtship in Twentieth-Century America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Sexual Revolution(s)," ed. David Farber, *The Sixties: From Memory to History*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Sex in the Heartland*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Bailey, Beth L. and David Farber, ed., *America in the Seventies*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004.

- Baldwin, Davarian L. *Chicago's New Negroes: Modernity, the Great Migration, & Black Urban Life*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.
- Banner, Lois. *American Beauty*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.
- Barlow, William. *Voice Over: The Making of Black Radio*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999.
- Barnes, Claude W. Barnes. "Bullet Holes in the Wall: Reflections on the Dudley/A&T Revolt of May 1969," in *American National and State Government: An African American View of the Return of Redemptionist Politics*, edited by Barnes, Samuel A. Moseley and James D. Steele. Dubuque, Iowa, 1997. PAGE AND PRESS.
- Belk, Russell W. "Yuppies as Arbiters of the Emerging Consumption Style," *Advances in Consumer Research* 1. 1986, PAGES.
- Blackford, Mansel G. *A History of Small Business in America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.
- Blaszczyk, Regina. *American Consumer Society, 1865-2005: From Hearth to HDTV*. Wheeling, Ill.: Harlan-Davidson, 2009.
- The Blue and Gold*. Berkeley: The University of California at Berkeley, 1968.
- Bogle, Kathleen. *Hooking Up: Understanding Sex, Dating and Relationships in College and After*. New York: New York University, 2008.
- Booth, Martin Booth. *Cannabis: A History*. London and New York: Doubleday, 2003.
- Boris, Eileen. "Desirable Dress: Rosies, Sky Girls, and the Politics of Appearance," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 69. Spring 2006: 123-142.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984.
- Bowker Annual of Library and Book Trade Information*. New York: R.R. Bowker, 1978.
- Brailsford, Ian. "Ripe for Harvest: American Youth Marketing, 1945-70." Ph. D. dissertation, University of Auckland, 1999.
- Braunstein, Peter and Michael William Doyle, eds. *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s*. New York and London: Routledge, 2002.
- Brecher, Edward M. *Licit and Illicit Drugs: The Consumers Union Report on Narcotics, Stimulants, Depressants, Inhalants, Hallucinogens & Marijuana—including Caffeine, Nicotine, and Alcohol*. Mount Vernon, N.Y.: Consumers Union, 1972.
- Brown, Helen Gurley. *Sex and the Single Girl*. New York: Pocket Books, 1962.

- Brownmiller, Susan. *Femininity*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984.
- Buder, Stanley. *Capitalizing on Change: A Social History of American Business*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Campbell, Angus and Robert M. Fogelson. *Supplemental Studies for the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*. New York: Praeger, 1968.
- Cantor, Louis. *Wheelin' on Beale: How WDIA-Memphis Became the Nation's First All-Black Radio Station and Created the Sound that Changed America*. New York: Pharos Books, 1992.
- Carpini, Michael Delli and Lee Siegelman, "Do Yuppies Matter? Competing Explanations of Their Political Distinctiveness," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 50 (1986): 504-507
- Carroll, Peter N. *It Seemed Like Nothing Happened: The Tragedy and Promise of America in the 1970s*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1982.
- Cecelski, David S. *Along Freedom Road: Hyde County, North Carolina and the Fate of Black Schools in the South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994.
- Chafe, William H. *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina and the Black Struggle for Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981.
- Charlene Wallace, et al. v. J.L. Ford, et al.* 346 F. Supp. 156; 1972 U.S. District (1972).
- Chapple, Steve Chapple, *Rock 'n' Roll is Here to Pay: The History and Politics of the Music Industry*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1977.
- Chudacoff, Howard. *The Age of the Bachelor: Creating an American Subculture*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999.
- Cloyd, Jerald W. "The Market-Place Bar: The Interrelation Between Sex, Situation, and Strategies in the Pairing Ritual of *Homo Ludens*," *Urban Life* 5 (October 1976): 293-313.
- Cohen, Lizabeth. *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*. New York: Vintage Books, 2003.
- Cohen, Nancy E. *America's Marketplaces: The History of Shopping Centers*. Lyme, Conn.: Greenwich Publishing Group, 2002.
- Collins, Gail. *When Everything Changed: The Amazing Journey of American Women, from 1960 to the Present*. New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2009.
- Collins, Robert M. *Transforming America: Politics and Culture in the Reagan Years*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.

- Coontz, Stephanie. *Marriage, A History: From Obedience to Intimacy or How Love Conquered Marriage*. New York: Viking, 2005.
- Countryman, Matthew J. "From Protest to Politics: Community Control and Black Independent Politics in Philadelphia, 1965-1984," *Journal of Urban History* 32 (September 2006): 813-861.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006.
- Cross, Gary. *The Cute and the Cool: Wondrous Innocence and Modern American Children's Culture*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Davis, Leo C. *Which are You—A Man or a Woman; or Jeans, Slacks, Shorts, the Pants-Suits, and other Abomination*. Bedford, In.: L.C. Davis, circa 1972 to 1976.
- Decker, Wallace David. "The Status of Student Dress and Appearance Codes in Public Schools." Ph. D. dissertation, University of Missouri-Columbia, 1989.
- D'Emilio, John and Estelle B. Freedman. *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*, second edition. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997.
- Denisoff, Serge. *Solid Gold: The Popular Record Industry*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1975.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Inside MTV*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1988.
- The Desert Yearbook*. Tuscon: University of Arizona, 1984.
- Dettmer, Elke. "Blue Jeans: Worldview and a Way of Life." M.A. thesis, University of California at Berkeley, 1982.
- Douglas, Mary and Baron Isherwood. *The World of Goods*. New York: Basic Books, 1979.
- Douglas, Susan J. *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination: From Amos 'n' Andy and Edward R. Murrow to Wolfman Jack and Howard Stern*. New York: Times Books, 1999.
- Drake, William. *The Connoisseur's Handbook of Marijuana*. San Francisco: Straight Arrow Books, 1971.
- Draves, William A. *The Free University: A Model for Lifelong Learning*. Chicago: Association Press, 1980.
- Echols, Alice. *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.
- Entwistle, Joanne and Elizabeth Wilson, eds. *Body Dressing*. Oxford: Berg, 2001.



- Ehrenreich, Barbara. *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment*. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1983.
- Ellerston, Roland Vernon. "A Legal Evaluation of Dress Codes in a Selected Sample of Public School Districts in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area." Ph. D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1969.
- Fairclough, Adam. *A Class of Their Own: Black Teachers in the Segregated South*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007.
- Faludi, Susan. *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against America Women*. New York: Crown, 1991.
- Farber, David Farber. *The Age of Great Dreams: America in the 1960s*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1994.
- Fergus, Devin. *Liberalism, Black Power, and the Making of American Politics, 1965-1980*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009.
- Ferreti, Fred. "The White Captivity of Black Radio," *Columbia Journalism Review* 9 (Summer 1970): 35-39.
- Fishburne, Patricia, Herbert I. Abelson, and Ira Cisin. *The National Survey on Drug Abuse: Main Findings 1979*. Rockville, Md.: National Institute on Drug Abuse, 1979.
- Fox, Richard Wightman and T.J. Lears. *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1983.
- Frady, Marshall Frady, *Jesse: The Life and Pilgrimage of Jesse Jackson*, 1st ed. New York: Random House, 1996.
- Frank, Thomas. *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.
- Frazier, E. Franklin. *Black Bourgeoisie*, second edition. New York: Free Press, 1957.
- Franklin, V.P. "Introduction—New Black Power Studies: National, International, and Transnational Perspectives," *The Journal of African American History* 92 (Fall 2007): 463-467.
- Freidan, Betty Friedan. *It Changed My Life: Writings on the Women's Movement*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998.
- French, Scott. *The Complete Guide to the Street Drug Game*. Secaucus, N.J.: Lyle Stuart, Inc.: 1976.
- Gaines, Steven and Sharon Churcher. *Obsession: The Lives and Times of Calvin Klein*. New York: A Birch Lane Press Book, 1994.

- George, Nelson. *The Death of Rhythm & Blues*, 1st ed. New York: Penguin, 1988.
- . *Post-Soul Nation: The Explosive, Contradictory, Triumphant, and Tragic 1980s as Experienced by African Americans*. New York: Viking, 2004.
- Gerhard, Jane F. *Desiring Revolution: Second-Wave Feminism and the Rewriting of American Sexual Thought, 1920-1982*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.
- Gibson, D. Parke. *The \$30 Billion Negro*. New York: Macmillan, 1969.
- Gitlin, Todd. *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*. New York: Bantam Books, 1993.
- Glasgown, Douglas. "Black Power Through Community Control." *Social Work* 17 (January 1, 1972).
- Glickman, Lawrence. *A Living Wage: American Workers and the Making of Consumer Society*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997.
- . *Buying Power: A History of Consumer Activism in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.
- . *Consumer Society in American History: A Reader*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999.
- Godwin, John. *The Mating Trade*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1973.
- The Good Housekeeping Woman's Almanac*. New York: Newspaper Enterprise Association, Inc., 1977.
- Goodman, Jordan, Paul E. Lovejoy and Andrew Sherratt, ed. *Consuming Habits: Drugs in History and Anthropology*. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Gordon, Suzanne. *Lonely in America*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976.
- Gostin, Lawrence O. and Zita Lazzarini. "Prevention of HIV/AIDS Among Injection Drug Users: The Theory and Science of Public Health and Criminal Justice Approaches to Disease Prevention." *Emory Law Journal* 46 (1997): 587-696.
- Gottdiener, Matt Gottdiener. "Unisex Fashions and Gender Role-Change." *Semiotic Scene* 1 (1977): 13-37.
- Grady, Ronald Walter. "High School Dress Codes and Due Process of Law." Education specialist thesis, Eastern New Mexico University, 1973.
- Graham, Gael Graham. "Flaunting the Freak Flag: *Karr v. Schmidt* and the Great Hair Debate in American High Schools, 1965-1975." *The Journal of American History* 91 (September 2004): 522-543.

- Green, Adam. *Selling the Race: Culture, Community, and Black Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.
- Greene, Christina. *Our Separate Ways: Women and the Black Freedom Movement in Durham, North Carolina*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.
- Habermas, Jürgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991.
- Hale, Grace Elizabeth. *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1998.
- Harlow, Eve. *The Jeans Scene*. New York: Drake Publishers, Inc., 1973.
- Haupt, Enid A. *The Seventeen Book of Etiquette and Entertaining*. New York: Van Rees Press, 1963.
- Heath, Joseph and Robert Potter. *Nation of Rebels: Why Counterculture Becomes Consumer Culture*. New York: Harper Business, 2004.
- Heilbrun, Carolyn G. *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973.
- High Times Encyclopedia of Recreational Drugs*. New York: Stonehill Publishing Company, 1978.
- Hill, Daniel Delis. *Advertising to the American Woman, 1900-1999*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2002.
- Hill, Eric T. *Assessing Travel Behavior by Blacks in the United States: A New Perspective*. Tampa: University of South Florida, Center for Urban Transportation Research, 1994.
- Hirsch, Paul. *A Progress Report on an Exploratory Study of Youth Culture and the Popular Music Industry*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: Survey Research Center, University of Michigan, 1970.
- Historical Statistics of the United States: Millennial Edition, Volume 2—Work and Welfare* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
- Hoffman, Abbie. *Woodstock Nation: A Talk-Rock Album*. New York: Vintage Books, 1969.
- Hollander, Stanley. *Was there a Pepsi Generation before Pepsi Discovered It? Youth-based Segmentation in Marketing*. Chicago: American Marketing Association, 1992.
- Horkheimer, Max and Theodore W. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (London: Verso, 1979); Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertizing and the Social Roots of Consumer Culture*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976.
- Horowitz, Daniel. *The Anxieties of Affluence: Critiques of American Consumer Culture, 1939-1979*. Amherst, Mass., 2004.

- Horowitz, Helen Lefkowitz. *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987.
- Horse, Kandia Crazy, ed. *Rip it Up: The Black Experience in Rock n' Roll*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.
- Hurley, Andrew. *Diners, Bowling Alleys and Trailer Parks: Chasing the American Dream in the Postwar Consumer Culture*. New York: Basic Books, 2001.
- Hunter, Gary Jerome. "'Don't Buy from Where You Can't Work': Black Urban Boycott Movements during the Depression, 1929-1941." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1977.
- Isenberg, Alison. *Downtown America: A History of the Place and the People who Made It*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.
- Israel, Betsy. *Bachelor Girl: The Secret History of Single Women in the Twentieth Century*. New York: William Morrow, 2002.
- Jacobs, Meg. *Pocketbook Politics: Economic Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Jaykawker 1988. Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1988.
- Jenkins, Philip. *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Johnston, Lloyd D., Patrick M. O'Malley and Jerald G. Bachman. *Drug Use, Drinking, and Smoking: National Survey Results from High School, College, and Young Adult Populations, 1975-1988*. Rockville, Maryland: National Institute of Drug Abuse, 1989.
- Johnson, Pamela Schuelke and Sabrina Claire Chapman. *Dressing for Education the First Fifty Years: Highlights of the JMU Historic Clothing Collection, 1908-1959*. Harrisonburg, Va.: 2005.
- Johnson, Sylvia Laufe. *The Greater Atlanta Single's Guide*. Atlanta, Ga.: Southern-Lite Publishing Company, 1980.
- Joseph, Peniel E. *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era*. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Joyce, George, Norman A. P. Govoni and Joint Comp. *The Black Consumer: Dimensions of Behavior and Strategy*, 1st ed. New York: Random House, 1971.
- Kahn, Ashley, Holly George-Warren, and Shawn Dahl, eds. *Rolling Stone—The Seventies*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1998.

- Kammen, Michael. *America Culture American Tastes: Social Change and the 20th Century*. New York: Basic Books, 1999.
- Kasson, John F. *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century*. New York: Hill & Wang, 1987.
- Keiser, Sandra Keiser. "The Relationship of the Movement and Changes in American Women's Dress Patterns Between 1848-1975." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Stout, 1975.
- Keith, Michael C. Keith. *Talking Radio: An Oral History of American Radio in the Television Age*. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2000.
- Kelley, Norman, ed. *R&B, Rhythm and Business: The Political Economy of Black Music*. New York: Akashic, 2002.
- Kennedy, Elizabeth Lapovsky. *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community*. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Kern-Foxworth, Marilyn. *Aunt Jemima, Uncle Ben, and Rastus: Blacks in Advertising, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994.
- Kimmel, Michael Kimmel. *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men*. New York: Harper Collins, 2008.
- Kirk, Andrew G. *Counterculture Green: The Whole Earth Catalog and American Environmentalism*. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2007.
- Kramer, Michael J. "The Psychedelic Public and Its Problems: Rock Music Festivals and Civil Society in the Sixties Counterculture." In *Media and Public Spheres*, edited by Richard Butsch. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Lansley, Renee N. "College Women or College Girls: Gender, Sexuality, and In Loco Parentis on Campus." Ph.D. dissertation, The Ohio State University, 2004.
- The Last Whole Earth Catalog*. Menlo Park, Calif.: Portola Institute, 1971.
- Leach, William Leach. *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture*. New York: Vintage Books, 1993.
- Lee, Martyn J., ed. *The Consumer Society Reader*. Malden: Mass., Blackwell Publishers, 2000.
- Lerner, Michael A. *Dry Manhattan: Prohibition in New York City*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007.
- Levine, Arthur. *When Dreams and Heroes Died: A Portrait of Today's College Student*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1980.

- Lichtenstein, Nelson. *The Retail Revolution: How Wal-Mart Created a Brave New World of Business*. New York: Metropolitan Press, 2009.
- Lipset, Seymour Martin. *Rebellion in the University*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976.
- Loury, Glenn C. *Race, Incarceration, and American Values*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008.
- Lurie, Alison. *The Language of Clothes*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1981.
- Manos, James Anthony. "An Investigation of Student Attitudes Toward Business." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern California, 1974.
- Marable, Manning. *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America: Problems in Race, Political Economy and Society*. Boston: South End Press, 1983.
- Margolis, Jack S. and Richard Clorfene. *A Child's Garden of Grass: The Official Handbook for Marijuana Users*, revised edition. New York: Pocket Books, 1976.
- Mariani, John F. *America Eats Out: An Illustrated History of Restaurants, Taverns, Coffee Shops, Speakeasies, and Other Establishments that Have Fed Us for 350 Years*. New York: Morrow, 1991.
- Marihuana: A Signal of Misunderstanding—First Report of the National Commission on Marihuana and Drug Abuse*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972.
- Marsh, Lisa. *House of Klein: Fashion, Controversy, and a Business Obsession*. Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2003.
- McRobbie, Angela. "Bridging the Gap: Feminism, Fashion and Consumption." *Feminist Review* 55 (Spring 1997): 73-89.
- Daniel Miller, *A Theory of Shopping*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998.
- Mintz, Steven. *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood*. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004.
- Mjagkij, Nina, ed. *Organizing Black America: An Encyclopedia of African American Associations*. New York: Garland Publishing, 2001.
- Moore, Curtiss D. *How Poor People Can Increase Their Income*. Winston-Salem, N.C., 1967.
- Morrow, Kelly. "Navigating the 'Sexual Wilderness': The Sexual Liberation Movement at the University of North Carolina, 1969-1973." M.A. thesis: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2006.

- Murphey, Kerry. "Controlling Drug Paraphernalia." In *Handbook of Drug Control in the United States*, edited by James Inciardi. New York: Greenwood Press, 1990.
- Music Video Retailer: Directory of Record and Tape Stores*. Chestnut, Mass.: Larkin Publications, 1985.
- Naplac Ltd. 1977-78 Paraphernalia Dealers Handbook*. Oak Park, Michigan: Nalpac Ltd., 1977.
- Neal, Mark Anthony. *Songs in the Key of Black Life: A Rhythm and Blues Nation*. New York and London: Routledge, 2003.
- . *Soul Babies: Black Popular Culture and the Post-Soul Aesthetic*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- . *What the Music Said: Black Popular Music and Black Public Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Newman, Mark. *Entrepreneurs of Profit and Pride: From Black-Appeal to Radio Soul*. New York: Praeger, 1988.
- 1964 Sooner*. Norman, Okla.: The University of Oklahoma Publications Board, 1964.
- Northcroft, George E. "Marketing Interactions between Consumer and Retailer in the Black Consumer Market". PhD dissertation, St. John's University, 1970.
- NPD Research, Inc. *Consumer Purchasing of Records and Pre-recorded tapes in the United States: A Three Year Trend Report—1979-1980-1981*. New York: Recording Industry Association of America, Inc., 1983.
- Oladipupo, Raymond O. *How Distinct is the Negro Market?* New York: Ogilvy & Mather, 1970.
- Oldenburg, Ray. *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Community Centers, Beauty Parlors, General Stores, Bars, Hangouts and How They Get You Through the Day*. New York: Paragon House, 1989.
- Ownby, Ted. *American Dreams in Mississippi: Consumers, Poverty & Culture, 1830-1998*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999.
- Palladino, Grace. *Teenagers: An American History*. New York: Basic Books, 1996.
- Panos, Robert J. and Penny L. Edgert, *Black Youth: Characteristics Related to Geographical Location*. New York: National Scholarship Service and Fund for Negro Students, 1972.
- Parkin, Katherine J. *Food is Love: Food Advertising and Gender Roles in Modern America*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006.

- Patterson, James T. *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Payton, Benjamin F. "The Other Side of Integration," in *When the Marching Stopped: An Analysis of Black Issues in the '70s*. New York: National Urban League, 1973.
- Peacock, John. *Fashion Sourcebooks: The 1950s*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1997.
- Peck, Abe. *Uncovering the Sixties: The Life and Times of the Underground Press*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985.
- Peiss, Kathy. *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986.
- Putnam, Robert D. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York, 2000.
- Redd, Lawrence N. "Radio Deregulation: The Impact on Black Families and Nonprofit Social Agencies." *Journal of Black Studies* 22 (December 1991): 216-238.
- Reilly, Maureen. *California Casual Fashions, 1930s-1970s*. Atglen, Pa.: Schiffer Publishing, Ltd., 2001.
- Rensenbrink, Greta. "Reshaping Body Politics: Lesbian Feminism and the Cultural Politics of the Body, 1968-1983." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 2003.
- Reynolds, Barbara A. *Jesse Jackson: The Man, the Movement, the Myth*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1975.
- Richard Johnson et al. v. Joint School District No. 60, Bingham Country*. 95 Idaho 317; 508 P.2d 547 (1973).
- Ringer, Robert. *Looking Out for Number One*. New York: Funk & Wagnall's, 1977.
- Roget, Marie and Hector Roget. *Swingers Guide for the Single Girl: Key to the New Morality*. Los Angeles: Holloway House Publishing, 1968.
- Rosen, Ruth. *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America*. New York: Viking Press, 2000.
- Roszak, Theodore. *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and its Youthful Opposition*. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1969.
- Rotskoff, Lori. *Love on the Rocks: Men, Women, and Alcohol in Post-World War II America*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002.
- Russoff, Garry. *The Gourmet Guide to Grass*. Los Angeles: Pinnacle Books, 1974.



- Samuel, Lawrence R. *Brought to You By: Postwar Television Advertising and the American Dream*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001.
- Santelli, Robert. *Aquarius Rising: The Rock Festival Years*. New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1980.
- Sarig, Roni. *Third Coast: Outkast, Timbaland and how Hip Hop Became a Southern Thing*. Cambridge, Mass., 2007.
- Scanlon, Jennifer Scanlon. *Bad Girls Go Everywhere: The Life of Helen Gurley Brown*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. *The Gender and Consumer Culture Reader*. New York: New York University Press, 2000.
- Schell, Robert E. and Elizabeth Hall. *Developmental Psychology Today*. New York: CRM/Random House, 1979.
- Schulman, Bruce. *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society and Politics*. New York: Da Capo Press, 2001.
- Scott v. Union Free School Board*. 61 Misc. 2d 333; 305 N.Y.S.2d 601; 1969 N.Y. Misc. (1969).
- Scranton, Philip, ed. *Beauty and Busines: Commerce, Gender, and Culture in Modern America*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Shuford, Robert Weir. "Anarchism and Social Action in America: A Case Study of an Alternative Health Care Facility." Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1974.
- Shuman, Michael H. *The Small-Mart Revolution: How Local Businesses are Beating the Global Competition*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.: 2006.
- Silk, Leonard and David Vogel. *Ethics and Profits: The Crisis of Confidence in American Business*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976.
- Silver, Christopher and John V. Moeser, *The Separate City: Black Communities in the Urban South, 1940-1968*. Lexington, 1995), 54;
- Skocpol, Theda. *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003.
- Sloman, Larry Sloman. *Reefer Madness: The History of Marijuana in America*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1979).
- Smith, Catherine and Cynthia Greig, *Women in Pants*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2003.
- Smith, Suzanne A. *Dancing in the Street: Motown and the Cultural Politics of Detroit*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000.

- Southern Campus/Bruin Life*. Los Angeles: University of California at Los Angeles, 1960.
- Spector, Robert. *The Mom & Pop Store: How the Unsung Heroes of the American Economy are Surviving and Thriving*. New York: Walker & Company, 2009.
- Spiegel, Don and Patricia Keith-Spiegel, eds. *Outsiders U.S.A.: Original Essays on 24 Outgroups in American Society*. San Francisco: Rinehart Press, 1972.
- Staples, Robert. *The World of Black Singles: Changing Patterns of Male/Female Relations*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981.
- Starr, Joyce R. and Donald E. Carns, "Singles in the City," *Society* (February 1972): 43-48.
- The Statistical Abstracts of the United States*, 93rd edition. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1972.
- The Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1984*, 104th edition. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1983), 46.
- Stephens, Ronald W. Stephens. "Legal and Constitutional Basis for Hair and Dress Codes in Washington Public Schools." M.A. thesis, Pacific Lutheran University, 1973.
- Stiegerwald, David. "All Hail the Republic of Choice: Consumer History as Contemporary Thought." *The Journal of American History* 93 (September 2006): 385-403.
- Sullivan, James. *Jeans: A Cultural History of An American Icon*. New York: Gotham Books, 2006.
- Tate, Katherine et al. *The 1984 National Black Election Study Sourcebook*. Ann Arbor, Mich., 1988.
- The Templar*. Philadelphia: Temple University, 1963.
- Torbet, Laura. *Clothing Liberation: Out of the Closets and Into the Streets*. New York: Praeger, 1973.
- Troy, Gil Troy and Vincent J. Cannato. *Living in the Eighties*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Turow, Joseph. *Breaking Up America: Advertisers and the New Media World*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1997.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census. *Statistical Abstracts of the United States: 1973*, 95th edition. Washington, D.C.; U.S. Department of Commerce, 1973.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Minority-Owned Businesses: 1969*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1971.
- Van Deburg, William L. *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965-1975*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

- Vandergrift, Paul F. Vandergrift. "Comparison of Two Approaches to Public/Noncommercial Radio in Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill, North Carolina." M.A. thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1977.
- Veblen, Thorstein. *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. New York: Modern Library, 1899, 2001.
- Villemez, Wayne J. and John J. Beggs. "Black Capitalism and Black Inequality: Some Sociological Considerations." *Social Forces* 63 (September 1984): 117-144.
- Walker, Juliet E. K. *The History of Black Business in America: Capitalism, Race, Entrepreneurship*. New York: Macmillan Library Reference USA, 1998.
- Ward, Brian. *Just My Soul Responding: Rhythm and Blues, Black Consciousness, and Race Relations*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.
- . *Radio and the Struggle for Civil Rights in the South*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004.
- Weems, Robert. *Desegregating the Dollar: African-American Consumerism in the Twentieth Century*. New York: New York University Press, 1998.
- Werner, Craig Werner. *A Change is Gonna Come: Music, Race & the Soul of America*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006.
- . *Higher Ground: Stevie Wonder, Aretha Franklin, Curtis Mayfield and the Rise and Fall of American Soul*. New York: Crown Publishers, 2004.
- Whitburn, Joel. *The Billboard Book of Top 40 R&B and Hip Hop Hits*. New York: Billboard, 2006.
- White, Edmund. *City Boy: My Life in New York During the 1960s and '70s*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2009.
- Wiese, Andrew. *Places of their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.
- Williams, Gilbert Anthony. *Legendary Pioneers of Black Radio*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1998.
- Wilson, William Julius Wilson. *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- Winick, Charles. *The New People: Desexualization in American Life*. New York: Pegasus, 1968.
- Wise, Nancy Baker and Christy Wise. *A Mouthful of Rivets: Women at Work in World War II*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994.
- Wolfe, Tom. *Hooking Up*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000.

- Yankelovich, Daniel. *New Rules: Searching for Self-Fulfillment in a World Turned Upside Down*. New York: Random House, 1981.
- Youth in Turmoil: Adapted from a Special Issue of Fortune*. New York: Time-Life Books, 1969.
- Zarkin, Kimberly A. and Michael J. Zarkin. *The Federal Communications Commission: Front Line in the Culture and Regulation Wars*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2006.
- Zelizer, Viviana. "Culture and Consumption," in *The Handbook of Economic Sociology*, ed. Neil J. Smelser and Richard Swedberg. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Zook, Kristal Brent. *I See Black People: The Rise and Fall of African American-Owned Television Radio*. New York: Nation Books, 2008.
- Zukin, Sharon. *Point of Purchase: How Shopping Changed American Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Social Space of Shopping: Mobilizing Dreams for Public Culture" in *Public Cultures: Diversity, Democracy, and Community in the United States*, Marguerite S. Shaffer, ed. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008

#### FILMS AND VIDEOS

- Adler, Lou. *Up in Smoke*. Paramount, 1978. VHS.
- Newman, Edwin. *Reading, Writing and Reefer*. NBC News, 1978.
- Parker, Alan. *Midnight Express*. Columbia Pictures, 1978. DVD.