

## **The Visual Commoditization of Childhood: A Case Study of a Children's Clothing Trade Journal, 1920s-1980s**

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**ABSTRACT** Drawing upon Goffman's insight about ceremonial depiction, this paper explores the visual portrayals of children found in advertisements of a children's clothing trade journal over the period of the 1920s through the 1980s. At issue is how images of children and, by implication, versions of childhood have become constructed by and traded among industry members in the context of an emerging market for children's clothes and other consumer goods. In the process, the researcher opens up for investigation the area of a "commercial iconography of childhood" by analyzing six visual motifs culled from nearly 80 years of commercialized depictions of children. These motifs offer insight as to how market relations have congealed in American/Western childhood and specifically in the ways that exchange value has been inscribed on the bodies of children.