Between 1946 and 1964, over seventy-six million babies were born in America, comprising one of the greatest baby booms the world has ever known (Jones 2). Their parents, most of whom had lived through the Depression and World War II, found a thriving postwar economy and set out to give their children the best of everything. Thus, children became important consumers, sought out by marketers and advertisers who tried to satisfy their needs and desires. The comic book industry, in particular, achieved remarkable success at attracting baby-boom children, especially boys, who purchased as many as one billion units a year (Goulart 293). However, by 1954, the industry was in a state of chaos, as television began to draw viewers and provide alternative entertainment for comic book readers. Spurred by the damning allegations of Dr. Fredric Wertham, a psychiatrist who charged in his best-selling book *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954) that comic books contributed to juvenile delinquency, the U.S. Senate held hearings to investigate the effects of comic-book reading on America's youth. Following the hearings, the industry enacted a self-regulatory measure that was patterned after the movie industry's Production Code established two decades earlier. Adopted in 1954, the Comics Code limited the kinds of content that would be acceptable in order for a comic book to earn a seal of approval and reach young readers through traditional marketing venues. Crime and horror comics – especially those distributed by Max Gaines's E.C. Comics – which had been previously been bestsellers, lost their popular audiences, and some publishers were forced to go out of business or change their strategies. In *Seal of Approval: The History of the Comics Code*, Amy Kiste Nyberg notes that the impact of the Code began to take hold in 1955-1956, “since most of the comic books on the newsstands in early 1955 were actually created prior to the implementation of the code. But gradually the type of comic book that had caused so much trouble for the industry disappeared, and what remained were romance, teen, and funny animal comics” (127).

Despite the uncertainty that the Code exerted in an industry already confronted with change and economic challenges, many companies did flourish, leading to what came to be known as the Silver Age of American Comics (1955-1969). According to comics fan and Silver Age historian Craig Shutt, the Code "ensured that all the comics coming out had adventures that parents felt safe allowing little kids to read, and little kids read them in abundance because they were a lot of fun on a little-kid level. Writers found creative ways to work within the Code restrictions and produced a generation of all-ages comics in the process" (Shutt 21). One of companies to achieve success under the Code was Harvey Comics – begun in 1941 by Alfred Harvey Wiernikoff, later known simply as Alfred Harvey – which crystallized its orientation and emerged as a powerhouse. The son of Russian Jewish immigrants, Alfred Harvey opposed the Code on principle and became one of its most outspoken critics, but by serving the needs of the nation's youngest comic book readers, his company excelled, becoming one of America's
top comics producers by 1956 (Nyberg xii, 126). Following the Code, Harvey abandoned its horror fare and focused on very young readers – from six to twelve years of age, especially girls – with humorous stories featuring cute, doe-eyed child characters such as Little Dot, Little Audrey, Little Lotta, Casper the Friendly Ghost, Wendy the Good Little Witch, Spooky, Richie Rich, and Hot Stuff the Little Devil. These characters found a ready-made audience among baby-boom children.

In *Comic Books and Development*, Marc Potenza, Paul Verhoeff, and Erica Weiss note “the paucity of research investigating what role comic books might have on child and adolescent development” but speculate that “the fantasy world of comic books provide[s] a realm . . . to explore thoughts and feelings safely” (1573). This observation seems especially pertinent with regard to Harvey Comics’ central themes and their influence on children during the Silver Age of American Comics. On one hand, Harvey Comics – not unlike Dell and Gold Key that cultivated the same audience – reflected the conservatism of their times. At the same time, however, the Harvey Comics’ neighborhood provided a setting for stories that often contradicted popular stereotypes, accepted unorthodox friendships, celebrated individuals’ rights to be different and have fixations, made the frightening seem friendly, and stressed community and cooperation, rather than violence, assertion of power, or action, as a way of solving problems. Through an analysis of Harvey Comics and the target audience they served, one can gain insight into the dynamics of the comic book industry and the institution of childhood in postwar America, as well as the implications of both for the twenty-first century.

Although Harvey Comics found their niche among American children in the 1950s and 1960s, the company had been around long before, publishing in a diverse array of comics genres. The earliest Harvey comics date back to the beginning of what collectors call the Golden Age of Comic Books (1938-1955), which featured such iconic fare as *Action Comics*’ Superman, who first appeared in June 1938, and *Detective Comics*’ Batman, in May 1939. Alfred Harvey, who was born in Brooklyn on October 6, 1913, began his professional career at the age of fifteen by drawing up to two dozen advertising cartoons each week for five dollars each. Like many of his predecessors, he was lured by the success of Max C. Gaines and others in the comic book industry in the late 1930s. Determined to make a go of it, he took a job at Fox Comics, best known for its popular comic *The Blue Beetle*, and eventually became managing editor. By 1940, Alfred grew restless working for Fox and set out to form his own company, first known as Alfred Harvey Publications, then Family Comics, then Home Comics. He served as president, eventually employing his twin brother Leon, as vice president and editor, and their older brother Robert, as vice president and business manager. The three brothers renamed the company again, this time simply as Harvey Comics Publications, Inc., by the late 1940s. Alfred’s first book was a novelty in comic book publishing: a digest-sized book entitled, appropriately enough, *Pocket Comics*, featuring Harvey’s first star, the acrobatic super heroine, The Black Cat. The Harveys expanded their line by acquiring titles such as *Speed Comics* and *Champ Comics* from Alfred Harvey’s former employer, Fox Comics. They also licensed and published superhero material such as *Green Hornet* and war titles such as *War Victories Adventures*.

As the 1940s progressed, superheroes began to lose their appeal (Shutt 9), and Harvey Comics tried something new to lure readers: licensing comic strip properties such as Ham Fisher’s *Joe Palooka*, Al Capp’s *Li’l Abner*, and Milton Caniff’s *Terry and the Pirates*. By the end of the decade, Harvey had phased out most of its superhero titles and introduced its “Comic Hits Revival” series, which reprinted popular newspaper comic strips. The move, which reverted to a standard practice popular in the mid 1930s, proved cost effective: Harvey paid a nominal licensing fee rather than hire a staff of artists and writers to create new stories, and
readers scooped up tales of characters with whom they were already familiar. Other reprint titles ensued, including *Steve Canyon*, *Kerry Drake*, *Sad Sack*, *Dick Tracy*, and *Blondie*. Harvey also, in 1950, started an anthology titled *Family Funnies*, later called *Tiny Tot Comics*, that introduced comic strip characters, such as Mandrake the Magician and Flash Gordon, into comic books. Harvey's extensive foray into reprints taught the company a great deal about the appeal of different comics characters. Over time, a number of child characters appeared in the back pages of their issues, including Richie Rich, Little Lotta, Little Dot, and Little Audrey, all of whom would play major roles in the company's image in years to come [Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3, Figure 4].

By the early 1950s, as interest in newspaper reprint books began to wane and after brief forays into the romance and horror comic genres, Harvey redirected its emphasis and began building a compatible set of characters in a community known as Harveyville, later Harvey World. Acquiring characters that had appeared in Famous Studios' animated shorts, Harvey created a line of comics that was expressly designed for an audience of young children and dealt with many of the social and emotional issues that youths were facing in their own lives. Further, in an era marked by divisive race, gender, class, and generational conflicts, Harvey Comics unwittingly offered characters that gave their child readers blueprints for tolerant and cooperative behavior that often contradicted popular stereotypes. Although Harvey Comics continued to publish widely in the standard comics genres for the next few decades, the Harvey World titles became its signature, making characters like Little Dot, Casper, and Richie Rich synonymous with the Harvey name in the public mind.
In Harveyville, child protagonists predominated. Certainly, this phenomenon was nothing new: action revolved around child characters in previous comic strips and books as diverse as the *Yellow Kid*, *Katzenjammer Kids*, *Captain and the Kids*, *Pim Pam Poum*, "*Beano*" with the *Bash Street Kids*, *Buster Brown*, *Little Orphan Annie*, *Frankie Doodle*, *Dennis the Menace*, *Nancy*, *Henry*, and *Little Lulu*. However, while these early strips may have appealed to children, they also targeted adults, who were the primary readers of newspapers. The Harvey protagonists, on the other hand, were especially meant for children; thus, Harvey recognized and validated this special audience — with its distinctive psychological profile, character, and needs — that up to this point had been either ignored by the comics industry or offered funny animal stories. These young children, who were attending elementary school and had recently begun to read, were cognitively becoming more aware of themselves and their surroundings, developing their identities, and navigating relationships with family and peers; they enjoyed humor and reading about other children in similar situations. Reading for fun gave them a feeling of control in the reading process, as well as something to talk and laugh about with their friends (Norton 140). By purchasing their own comics, children felt a sense of ownership over their content, and as comics historian Denis Gifford notes, comics publishers were aiming their wares not at parents but specifically "at kids with hot dimes to spend" (48). Craig Shutt affirms that content and affordability were key factors in the comics’ appeal. "Part of the reason [the Silver Age] was so cool," he writes, "was that there were all kinds of comics from all kinds of publishers aimed at all kinds of kids — and you could get eight to 10 of them for a dollar!" (17). Thus, even the youngest of baby-boom children, whose parents felt reassured by the post-Code fare, purchased inexpensive Harvey comic books themselves, providing them with a sense of independence and self-esteem that they would forever associate with comics. The characters and stories contained therein offered additional benefits.

In addition to targeting the youngest readers, Harvey proved to be an anomaly in another way: in a male-dominated industry, it established various series of comics starring girls for an audience of girls. Sherrie Inness, who has written extensively on girls’ culture, observes that "in many ways, girls are inconsequential. Due to their youth and gender, girls are granted less social stature than men or boys. They are relegated to an inferior society because of the cultural stereotype that girls and their culture are insipid and insignificant, unworthy of close attention" (Inness, *Delinquents* 1). However, Harvey took baby-boom girls seriously, providing titles for their enjoyment and edification and, in so doing, sent messages regarding the acceptability of certain values, actions, and attributes. As Inness asserts, such implications in popular culture are revealing: "How girls are shaped and molded suggest a great deal about how a society views itself and how it sanctions or rewards certain behaviors. Studying girls and their cultures can reveal as much about adult culture as children’s culture" (Inness, *Millennium* 3).

One of Harvey’s first little-girl characters, Little Audrey, first appeared in theatrical cartoons in 1947 and in a 1948 comic published by St. John; however, Harvey attained the rights to publish her book in 1952 and then purchased the rights to the character completely from Paramount Pictures in 1957. Loosely patterned after the very successful Little Lulu, she became popular with children by the mid 1950s and by 1960 even had her own television show. "Look for me on TV," proclaimed a blurb on the cover of her comic books, accompanied by a TV-shaped image of Audrey below the TV-shaped Harvey logo featuring Matty Mattel, cartoon mascot of Mattel Toys. Wearing a little red dress with puffed sleeves, white ankle
socks, and black Mary Jane shoes and her hair pulled in two ponytails, one atop her head and one behind, both tied with blue ribbons, Little Audrey appears to be an unlikely comics protagonist. However, she is appealing precisely because she is so normal, allowing little girls to identify with her, as she embarks on a myriad of activities: boating, fishing, camping, painting, reading, flying a kite, playing baseball, helping others, playing jokes on her family and friends, and reacting to modern media such as television and billboards. Audrey is smart, independent, confident, and adventurous, as evidenced by the artwork on the covers of her comics. The covers have a powerful impact as they are the first images children see as they approach the newsstand. Good covers help children to decide which comic books to choose.

Figure 5, Figure 6, Figure 7

"I have an idea," Audrey frequently intones, as she figures out some ingenious way to solve problems or get around rules, such as attaching a fishing line to hang from her airborne kite in order fish in a "no fishing" area. [Figure 8] She emerges as a trickster and a fix-it character who handles childhood experiences and mishaps with aplomb. In her comics, Audrey has license to daydream, and in these dreams she confronts her fears and frustrations and usually triumphs over them, in essence becoming a hero. Thus when she returns to real life (clearly differentiated with the dream world in Harvey Comics so as not to confuse children), she can better cope. Audrey's parents scoff at her daydreams, pronouncing them silly and frivolous, and easily become annoyed by them. Oftentimes, it seems, they do not understand the meaning of Audrey's daydream rambles and thus feel left out of her fantasy world. This underscores a key theme in Harvey Comics and in the generation gap of the 1960s and 1970s: parents not being able to understand their children. Children in Harvey Comics always seem to be one-up on adults, exhibiting a higher vision. They show control, exhibit greater tolerance,
Rather than spending time at home with her parents, Little Audrey is more likely to venture out. Most of the action of her comics takes place outdoors with her friends, where she is part of a neighborhood peer group. Melvin, her boyfriend, is in the gang too, and their relationship plays an important role in the comics. Sometimes Melvin and Audrey act like boyfriend and girlfriend, even husband and wife; other times they are combative. This typifies the love/hate relationship often shared by little girls and boys. In essence, Little Audrey and her friends recreate a child's peer group and confront common childhood problems. Melvin, for example, must learn to deal with his clumsiness and Audrey with Melvin's mischief and life's rules. They both address the issue of getting along with family and friends, including people of different genders, races, socio-economic groups, and body types. For example, while Audrey is white, one of her best friends is a black boy named Tiny. Most importantly, in Little Audrey comics, child characters realize their problems, cope with them, and help one another. Thus, these stories can help child readers to do the same, making them feel better about themselves. This becomes especially true for little girls. Audrey, whose panties may peek from under her dress and whose mother often spanks her, navigates in a sometimes sexist and regressive world; nevertheless, what predominates in her storylines is her character: a little girl protagonist – a rarity in baby-boom comics – who reads, thinks, figures out solutions, and has things in control.

This is also the case with Little Dot, one of Harvey's original characters who starred in her first comic book in 1953. Unlike Audrey, Dot Polka, who wears a red dress with black polka dots and a white Peter Pan collar, has a fixation – dots. Essentially, Little Dot is a one-joke character; all of her humor stems from her obsession with dots. However, this idea has tremendous possibilities, for the world really is made up of millions of circular-shaped objects. Since dots are everywhere, it is perhaps not so strange for Dot to be aware of them and like them. Although Dot's fixation is a bit odd and funny, it is harmless and safe – just like many children's obsessions; thus, she gives children permission to be different. Essentially, Dot is normal, albeit with a single quirk. Her parents, however, neither understand nor accept this. Dot's father, especially, spends a great deal of time and energy trying to get Dot to give up dots – but to no avail. The implication here is that Dot is even more normal than her parents. Everyone has obsessions – as the numerous stories about Dot's eccentric uncles and aunts underscore – and Dot simply indulges hers. In the Little Dot's Uncles and Aunts series, Dot's own obsession becomes secondary; she, however, has great insight – more than her parents – into the obsessions motivating her uncles and aunts. She shows tolerance, understanding, and amazing powers of observation, seeing dot-shaped items everywhere and using them creatively to solve her problems and those of others. Like Audrey, Dot has a higher vision. Also like Audrey, she dreams, and her dream sequences, characterized by endless numbers of dots, show grand imagination, providing another outlet for her to demonstrate her love of dots. [Figure 9, Figure 10]
Little Lotta Plump, another original Harvey character whose first comic book appeared in 1955, exemplifies another obsession. The story lines of Little Lotta comics revolve around a couple key points: the corpulent Lotta's voracious appetite and love for food and her superhuman strength. Just as Little Dot's father tries to stop her habit, so too does Little Lotta's, but his meddling causes further problems: by trying to prevent his obese daughter from eating, he only inspires her to gorge more. Big and blond, Lotta is likable and competent, but sometimes her weight and strength get her into trouble. Like Audrey and Dot, she is accepted as a part of the gang, not discriminated against due to her body type. Her strength enables her to act like a superhero, moving things out of the way or helping her shy, diminutive, bespectacled boyfriend Gerald. She solves crimes and catches robbers, hoping one day to be a member of the Bonnie Dell Police Department. Her underlying message can be particularly powerful to young girls: be happy with yourself, your weight, and those different from you, and use your strength to your advantage. [Figure 11, Figure 12]
In another title, *Casper, the Friendly Ghost*, Harvey creates a different neighborhood gang—one set in the fantasy world of Enchanted Forest. Casper made his debut in Famous Studios animated cartoons in 1945, and after a few unsuccessful attempts by St. John to make Casper the star of a comic book, Harvey came out with its version of *Casper, the Friendly Ghost* in 1952. Casper comic books sold briskly during the postwar years, as evidenced by their annual circulation of 36,000,000 in Casper's heyday. Their appeal may be linked to psychologists' suggestion that comic books allow "for a safe and unique medium to explore new and potentially threatening ideas" (Potenza 1573). Unlike other ghosts in popular culture, Casper is friendly, not scary, fulfilling the same role for children as friendly dinosaurs or dragons over which they have control. Casper is the star of a bright fantasy world, not one associated with death and gravestones. In order to preserve this concept, Harvey does not give Casper an origin story; it is implied that he was born a ghost.

Yet while Casper's world is fantasy, it still bears resemblance to a child's real world. Not unlike other children, Casper tries to make friends and be good; however, his intentions are often thwarted. Afraid of Casper's ghostly appearance, potential friends run away in terror, and Casper is left alone. A Cinderella figure, Casper, under the domination of the evil Ghostly Trio, is often prevented from doing all the good that he would like. Ultimately, though, Casper helps and befriends those who are different from and initially afraid of him, making his audiences aware of the inadvisability of prejudicial snap judgments and the value of unlikely friendships. He prepares children for growing up in a world of diversity.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s Casper became extremely popular with children and their parents alike, becoming second only to Disney's Mickey Mouse in worldwide recognizability (Arnold 25). He appeared on television in *The New Casper Cartoon Show*, which debuted on ABC on October 5, 1963, and featured new made-for-TV cartoons based on comic book stories. The show ran on Saturday mornings through 1969, always keeping "new" in the title, even though new episodes, twenty-six in all, were produced for only the 1963-1964 season. Casper merchandise, including coloring books, glasses, towels, storybooks, and toys, appeared everywhere, and Casper characters even made personal appearances to promote good causes. By the 1970s, Casper was a spokesperson for UNICEF, General Electric, Collegeville Costumes, NASA's Apollo 16 flight to the moon, Major League Baseball's National League, the American Dental Association, the Boy Scouts of America, and Ralston-Purina's Sugar Chex (Arnold 19). Because of his high recognition as Harvey's most famous icon, he was able to pave the way for other characters in his fantasy neighborhood, including a series of comics featuring his galloping ghostly horse, Nightmare.

Just as Casper defied the stereotype of the scary ghost, so did his friend Wendy, the Good Little Witch prove that not all witches are wicked. Wendy appeared in her first and only theatrical cartoon, *Which is Witch?*, released on May 2, 1958, and her first comic, *Wendy the Good Little Witch #1*, in August 1960 after a few trial issues in *Harvey Hits* during 1958 and 1959. Like Casper, Wendy is a Cinderella figure who must cope with her evil elders, the green-faced Witch Sisters. Also like Casper, she is essentially good, attempting to use her magic to bring about happiness and good luck. As is the case with most children, however, all that Wendy attempts does not always turn out as planned. Sometimes her magic goes awry so that she more closely resembles Mickey Mouse in "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" than a good little
To contrast Casper and Wendy, the Enchanted Forest features Spooky the Tuff Little Ghost – distinguishable by his big, black nose, freckles, derby, and Brooklyn accent – whose main objective is to create mischief. However, no matter how hard Spooky tries, he cannot be all bad because he inevitably gets mixed up: when he sets out to create mischief, it backfires. The result, much to Spooky’s frustration, is that he has helped someone, not scared someone. When this happens, he just snickers, suggesting that just perhaps he does not feel overly angry at what he has done. Accompanied by his girlfriend Poil (Pearl), who tries to dissuade him from scaring people, Spooky provides a good counterpart to Casper’s goody-goody image, and he also underscores the need to look beyond one’s tough exterior.

Hot Stuff the Little Devil, who appeared in his first comic, *Hot Stuff #1*, in October 1957, resides in another Harvey neighborhood. Similar to Spooky, Hot Stuff specializes in mischief but essentially does good, suggesting that children may misbehave but are inherently kind. Further, in the tradition begun by Little Dot and Little Lotta, Hot Stuff tells children that it is acceptable to have a fixation, in his case, his preoccupation with his hot, sizzling body. Collectively, Hot Stuff, Casper, Spooky, and Wendy sent a message to their baby-boom audience to look beyond appearances. As Harvey historian and collector Mark Arnold writes, “An interesting aspect of Harvey Comics is their ability to take characters who would traditionally frighten little children and make them happy and harmless” (30). Devils, ghosts, and witches are usually terrifying, the stuff of which nightmares are made. These Harvey characters, however, are not what on the surface they seem and use cuteness to placate a child’s fears.

A final Harvey children’s neighborhood that baby-boom children embraced stars Richie Rich, the Poor Little Rich Boy, who appeared in his first starring comic book series in 1960 after being a successful back-up feature in *Little Dot* and *Little Lotta* for a number of years. At one time, blond, good-looking Richie Rich, in his blue shorts, black jacket, and big red bow tie, starred in thirty-eight different comics series, more than any other American comics character (Benton 95). In addition, Richie has starred in a Saturday morning cartoon show and had several games, books, and playthings named after him. By 1977, all Little Dot, Little Lotta, Little Audrey, Wendy, Spooky, Stumbo, and Baby Huey comics titles were canceled and replaced with Richie Rich titles, making Richie Harvey’s longest running character and biggest moneymaker (Arnold 34). The richest kid in the world, Richie gets an allowance of $100,000 a week. His family has more money, businesses, property, homes, jewels, and treasures than all the Rockefellers and European aristocracy combined. One might suspect that money has tainted the Rich family, but such is not the case. The Riches are warm, friendly, courageous, humorous, intelligent, and exciting – not at all conniving or greedy. A happy family, the Riches care for each other and give generously to others. Undoubtedly, Richie’s parents are more understanding and compassionate than Audrey’s, Lotta’s, or Dot’s, perhaps because money enables them to be. The implied statement of the series is that the more money one has, the less one has to worry. The less one worries about money, the more one can concentrate on the important things – human relationships. Again, the Harvey scenario contradicts the stereotype: the Rich family is not greedy, aloof, or uncaring, just rich.

Richie Rich plots, like those of many other Harvey characters, revolve around a neighborhood gang, and Richie enjoys having friends less wealthy than he. Supporting characters such as his girlfriend Gloria Glad, rival girlfriend Mayda Munny, cousin Reggie Van Dough, and Dollar the Dog fill the picture. However, the focus in Richie Rich stories is, of course, money. In a
Of all Harvey characters, Richie Rich seems to have held the greatest appeal for children, perhaps because of his emphasis on money. As baby-boom children grew up, they became more entrenched in reality, more aware of the power of money. In an increasingly materialistic age, they may have seen Richie as a sort of consumer's hero. At the same time, Richie's wealth and technological inventions were so over-the-top as to be pure fantasy, not really tied to anything familiar, accessible, or desirable. Thus, baby-boom children adopted Richie Rich, enjoying his comics' gags involving wealth and money but realizing their absurdity. Against a fantasy backdrop, Richie was really just another likable kid in the neighborhood. [Figure 13, Figure 14]

The Harvey neighborhoods that were a mainstay of many baby boomers' early childhoods have not endured. By the end of 1971, Harvey stopped publishing its entire line in order to retool all comic books into fifty-two-page giants instead of the standard thirty-six, a change that lasted a year. The same year marked the beginning of the major Richie Rich expansion. By the mid 1970s, as the latter part of the baby-boom generation passed the Harvey target audience's age and Harvey's circulation declined, Harvey had canceled most of its titles. Richie Rich continued to be a huge moneymaker – with a record-breaking thirty-two titles on newstands in a two-month period in 1979 – while Hot Stuff and Casper survived in comics in a more limited way. On July 7, 1982, the last regularly issued Harvey Comics appeared on the newstands, followed by two more previously printed ones around September 5, 1982. The changing climate in how comic books were distributed by eliminating them from the grocery and convenience stores and shipping them only to comic book stores was a major blow to the continuation of Harvey as a publisher and hastened its closure in 1982. Charlton and Fawcett (Dennis the Menace) Comics suffered similar fates in the early to mid-80s.
Harvey's future seemed uncertain as various members of the Harvey Family, including Alfred's son Alan, struggled for control and eventually put the company up for sale. At stake were the licensing rights to Harvey characters, potentially worth more than the sale of any comic books (Pustz 16). [Harvey vigorously defended its copyright protection, filing a $50 million case against Columbia Pictures 1984 blockbuster movie Ghostbusters, claiming that the movie's logo included the image of a ghost that copied Fatso in Casper's Ghostly Trio; the U.S. district court dismissed the case (“Who Ya Gonna Call” 77).] In 1989, Alfred Harvey, the last surviving of the Harvey Brothers, fell into a coma from which he never recovered (dying in 1994). The same year Jeff Montgomery of HMH Communications paid a reported $6 million for most of the Harvey World characters (with the exception of a classic comic strip character Sad Sack) and renamed the company Harvey Entertainment; it was the object of a takeover attempt in 1999 and acquired by Roger Burlage. Bart Bush of Norman, Oklahoma, who in 1979 founded the first fanzine devoted to Harvey, lamented the transition of one of the most influential comics companies of the post-Code years saying, “Harvey Comics published by Harvey are now history” (Bush, Letter).

It is a history that needs to be studied. In the twenty-first century, scholars have continued to assess the content of early comics, as well as the comics' long-term influence on their target audience and on subsequent media, but scant scholarship – a paragraph or at most a page in standard comic book histories – exists on Harvey. The privately held company gave out little information, financial or otherwise, beyond standard character profiles. Readers learned little, for example, about the contributions of longtime editor Sid Jacobson, who served from 1951 to the present, and continues to shape the Harvey image. Further, the content of Harvey comics – including the distinctive artwork of Warren Kremer, Ernie Colon, Marty Taras, Howard Post, Sid Couchey, and many others – has been especially hard to study because older Harvey Comics in usable condition are difficult to locate. Because Harvey Comics were read by the youngest readers who usually destroyed them in the process or passed them along to others, they are scarce, and even comics collectors have a difficult time assembling complete series. As Harvey fan and collector Bart Bush asserts, “it is easier to collect a whole set of Supermans or Spider-Mans than Caspers or Little Dots” (Bush, Letter).

However, the audience for classic Harvey Comics remains a fruitful area for study. In Comic Book Culture: Fan Boys and True Believers, Matthew Pustz writes, “Many Americans – especially males – have read comics, with varying levels of involvement, as children and hence have some vague familiarity with the medium. Some people read or looked at a friend or relative's comics, some received comics as gifts, and some even bought comics. A few people were even seriously involved with comics for a time. Most of these readers, though, abandon comic books at some point, deciding that they are not interesting (or, more likely, not cool), too expensive, or too juvenile” (4). This may have been the case with some in the vast audience of baby-boom children who read Harvey Comics as children. More likely, however, Harvey's childhood tales proved to be a bridge to other titles and to comics culture in general. Craig Shutt asserts that Harvey "offered a quantity of titles designated for younger kids excited by comics but not yet excited by super-heroes" (18). Other readers, especially girls, transitioned from Harvey Comics to Archie, both of them based on humor, engaging characters, and the interaction among those in a peer group (Norton 140). According to Don Thompson and Dick Lupoff in The Comic-Book Book, in 1973, "well over 90 percent of American children still read comic books, and – perhaps more surprisingly – approximately 50 percent of American adults do the same" (10). Nearly two decades later, Dan Fost reported in American Demographic that "many of the members of the baby-boom generation who read comic books during the 1950s are still reading them in the 1990s, and comic book publishers are actively focusing marketing
efforts on these grown-up fans. The comic book industry still considers children important customers, but baby boomers are the core of the business” (Fost 16). Recalling the childhood pleasures that comics brought them, they are also likely to frequent comic book stores and become comics collectors.

The implications of this are substantial. Comics publishers are reprinting material from earlier eras to allow baby boomers to give their children and grandchildren the same media experiences as they had (Fost 16). A line of Harvey reprints, for example, has recently begun publication. Harvey characters Richie Rich, Casper, and Hot Stuff have also made their way into a new series of graphic novels, distributed in ibook and ebook forms by Simon and Schuster at www.komikwerks.com. The first volume, *The Ultimate Casper Comics Collection*, contains approximately 176 pages and sells for $14.95. In 1990 Mark Arnold of Saratoga, California, began publishing *The Harveyville Fun Times!*, a fan publication devoted to Harvey history, reprinted material, interviews with artists, and current Harvey news. *The Best of the Harveyville Fun Times!*, published in 2006, is available as an ebook from http://www.lulu.com/thft. In recent years Harvey news has been extensive, ranging from the releases of movie versions of *Richie Rich* (1994), directed by Donald Petrie and starring Macaulay Culkin, and *Casper* (1995), directed by Brad Silberling and co-produced by Steven Spielberg and starring Christina Ricci; the debut of a musical version of Casper performed in Pittsburgh by the Civic Light Opera; various Richie Rich, Casper, and Wendy television specials and straight-to-video releases; a line of Harvey ‘Toon Tumblers, and food promotions, such as a Classic Media and General Mills’ Halloween promotion featuring Pillsbury Shaped-Refrigerated Cookies in the forms of Casper the Friendly Ghost and Wendy the Good Little Witch. Harvey characters, which remain a familiar part of baby boomers’ childhoods, linger in popular culture, showing up on a myriad of licensed properties and items.

Depending on one’s childhood memories, this ubiquity of Harvey nostalgia items both infuriates and comforts baby boomers. Not all of them share a fondness for Harvey Comics, especially those who found them too childish and objected to the restrictions in the comics industry following the Code. Consider, for example, the following cases in point. On December 7, 1992, Mark Arnold, the publisher of the Harvey newsletter *The Harveyville Fun Times!*, participated in a radio talk show on KITS in San Francisco to discuss his publication, along with another guest whose fanzine was titled *Murder Can Be Fun!*. The program host disparaged Harvey Comics saying, "They were the worst! They were the most pathetic comic books ever turned out" (Arnold, “Family”). Thus, what was supposed to be a simple promotional visit and a chance to talk about the two publishers’ respective endeavors turned into a session in which Arnold had to defend his position that Harvey Comics even warranted a fanzine. Contrast this with the Heroes Convention at the Charlotte Convention Center in North Carolina, a major event held each June. In 2004, conference organizer H. Shelton Drum, a baby boomer who had just turned fifty the previous March, reflected in his biographical profile in the conference program on what got him started in the comics industry. His earliest influences, he recalled, were “‘kiddie’ comics, including the Harvey line: Hot Stuff, Stumbo, Baby Huey and the like” ("The Long and Winding" 4). These led to a life-long love of comics and a satisfying career in the field.

Harvey Comics, both shunned and valued, provide an interesting lens through which to view both the evolution of the comics industry after the Code and the baby-boom childhood experience in America. Designed for the youngest of comic book readers, who enjoy repetition and predictability, Harvey Comics were frequently discarded as children grew older, and they do not attract collectors with the same intensity as their Marvel or DC counterparts do. Nevertheless, they often marked a child’s first experience, and often a very positive one, with
reading and the comic book world. For this reason, many baby boomers who were youngsters during the Silver Age of American Comics recall them fondly, thereby fueling recent nostalgia movies and merchandise featuring popular characters in the Harvey line. Harvey Comics filled an important niche in the comics industry with classic titles that included little-girl protagonists – Little Audrey, Little Lotta, Little Dot, and Wendy the Good Little Witch – who defied stereotypes and sent a message of acceptance of those who are different. In the comics industry, where products are primarily geared to young males, Harvey Comics gave little girls stories about them. Although overshadowed in comics scholarship by action comics' counterparts, Harvey made a significant contribution to the comics industry, addressing diversity, class, and body-type issues. The creation of the Harvey World gave comics' youngest readers insight into unorthodox friendships and a comfortable and therapeutic place to spend their leisure time. The benign denizens of Harvey World used cooperation and quick wit to solve problems, presenting an alternative to the culture of conflict embodied by the more popular superheroes, and providing a point of entry for the huge generation of baby boomers to become cultural consumers in their own right.

References


Harvey Comics’ cornerstone was the familiar omnipresent Casper The Friendly Ghost - a television show & comic book that my brothers and I avoided like the plague. This was one of the rare comics they sold that was fairly likable...as long as you weren't any older than, say, 10. Weak story lines with a few one-liners & occasionally amusing panels. Find this Pin and more on Comics by Desmond Kemp. Tags. Old Cartoons. Original Vintage Art Sticker Title: Flaming 8 Ball Devil Girl Artist: Vince Ray Series #VR51 Limited Silkscreen printed on high quality clear mylar. Long Lasting, Fade Resistant Stick on Cars, Guitars, Boats, Surfboards or Skateboards Size: Approx. The comic book industry, in particular, achieved remarkable success at attracting baby-boom children, especially boys, who purchased as many as one billion units a year (Goulart 293). However, by 1954, the industry was in a state of chaos, as television began to draw viewers and provide alternative entertainment for comic book readers. One of companies to achieve success under the Code was Harvey Comics – begun in 1941 by Alfred Harvey Wiernikoff, later known simply as Alfred Harvey – which crystallized its orientation and emerged as a powerhouse. After six years of working in and traveling through a number of different countries where white people are in the numerical minority, I’ve come to realize that there is one place being white is not only a hindrance, but negative — most of the developing world. In high school, I travelled to Tanzania as part of a school trip. There were 14 white girls, 1 black girl who, to her frustration, was called white by almost everyone we met in Tanzania, and a few teachers/chaperones. Us mixing cement and laying bricks for 6+ hours, them undoing our work after the sun set, re-laying the bricks, and then acting as if nothing had happened so that the cycle could continue. Basically, we failed at the sole purpose of our being there.