THE INFLUENCE AND POWER OF VISUAL MEDIA ON ADOLESCENTS AND THE NEED FOR SCHOOL-BASED MEDIA LITERACY INSTRUCTION

by

Paul Steven Noro

B.S. in Art Education, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 1994

M.Ed. in Special Education, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 1996

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

School of Education in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Ed.D in Education

University of Pittsburgh

2009

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

This dissertation was presented

by

Paul Steven Noro

It was defended on

November 12, 2009

and approved by

Noreen Garman, PhD, Committee Chair

Michael Gunzenhauser, PhD, Research Advisor

Alan Fager, EdD, Associate Professor Emeritus

Dissertation Director: Charlene Trovato, PhD, Associate Professor

THE INFLUENCE AND POWER OF VISUAL MEDIA ON ADOLESCENTS AND THE

NEED FOR SCHOOL-BASED MEDIA LITERACY INSTRUCTION

Paul Steven Noro, Ed.D

University of Pittsburgh, 2009

The significance of media literacy pedagogy in American public schools is crucial in helping teenagers comprehend the visual media world in which they live. The world is currently a place where our youth are inundated with visual messages that must be received, interpreted and critically analyzed. The dilemma is not so much in the reception of the visual media because media is so prevalent in our American society; rather the dilemma lies within the interpretation and critical analysis of said messages. The context, purpose and meaning(s) of visual media has within its realm a social, capitalist and consumerism component that is both expansive and influential. The site for this study was a high school in a suburban school district located in the northeastern section of the United States.

This dissertation consists of three theoretical essays. I first explored how power, agency and lack of critical media education each play a significant role in the exploitation of today's youth. I then reviewed current research to draw on a variety of perspectives and constructs in relation to more specific areas of media literacy, such as, effects of visual media on sexuality, alcohol and drug abuse, on body image, on violence and how adolescents form meaning of media and images. I then explored the ways in which teenagers make sense of visual media and how they view their own metacognition in relation to their exchanges with visual artifacts that confronts them on a daily basis. I also observed the ways in which teenagers view and interpret visual images and how these images influence their belief systems.

Exploring these areas and questions helped me to appreciate the complexities of how the media is utilized by corporate America in regard to advertising; the interplay of visual imagery and how, subconsciously, the wants and desires of teenagers are exposed; and the need for public educational institutions to provide a more relevant curricula and policy that reflects our postmodern culture.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

DEDICATION

For:

Jennifer Noro – Sexy, Smart, Talented, Affectionate

Mario Noro – Patient, Sarcastic, Caring

Gianna Noro – Humorous, Loving, Determined

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1.0   CHAPTER ONE

1.1   RESEARCH OVERVIEW

The purpose of this study was to explore and analyze the influence of the visual media on teenagers in terms of behavior, beliefs and preferences. In spite of all curricular initiatives currently taking place in schools (i.e. No Child Left Behind, Response to Intervention, standards-based education), there is an area that has been relatively disregarded, and that area would be the study of media literacy. The results of this study have assisted me in determining the need for a curricular change in our public schools that will encompass media literacy. Furthermore, the advancements made in the area of technology have created a vast arena in which the media interacts innumerable times with school children on a daily basis. This study has helped to determine the effects of these interactions on students and the need for coursework in media literacy at the K-12 level.

1.1.1   Statement of Purpose

Current literature pertaining to the visual media's effects on adolescents has grown almost as fast as the media's convergence on American youth. McNeal (1999) estimates that an increase in the dollar amount spent on advertising and marketing to teens from 1989 to 1999 (12 billion to 24 billion) demonstrates how the media has targeted the teen market. This focus on teens by

corporate America is not an aberration, according to McNeal (2001). In order to earn revenue, more money is to be made in formulating a plan that effectively markets to that consumer profile. Salamon (2001) calls attention to the fact that "teens spend even more than children—roughly $155 billion in the year 2000 alone" (p. E1). This statistic alone illuminates why corporate America views teens as a lucrative target market. Current literature has been devoid of any substantive research in the area of media literacy instruction in American public schools. The readings have only presented me with what "should" happen in our public schools in regard to the instruction of media literacy, but there has not been, to my knowledge, a study that gathered data directly from teens and used this information to substantiate the need for instruction in the area of media literacy. While schools in Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom have already realized the necessity for possessing media literacy as part of their curriculum, the United States currently has no such program of study in place. Giroux (1999) sees the value of educating our youth to be able to "actively question the manufactured myths, lifestyles, and values created by media giants" (p. 165). Giroux goes on to state that media literacy teaches students how to critically interpret the knowledge, values, and power that are produced and circulated through diverse technologies and public spaces while linking such understanding to broader public discourses that invoke the interrelated nature of theory, understanding, and social change.

While Giroux creates a legitimate proposal for instituting media literacy, he, like other authors, does not substantiate his beliefs with data. For this movement toward a media literacy program of study to take place, there needs to be evidence through data gathering, interpretation and processing. In order to make a sound assertion that media literacy in the 21st century is crucial, I needed to glean authentic data from adolescents regarding media's influence on

aforementioned factors. By discerning the gaps between adolescents' responses to media's influence and actual school curricula, I seek to target the imperative need for media literacy instruction in public education.

1.1.2   Epistemology and Theoretical Perspective

I have adopted a social constructionist's stance for my study because I believe that my research is based on how we as a society construct meaning from representations that daily confront one's senses. The ways that these interactions impact ideologies are the targeted areas of research in this study. These representations are "related to the nature and essence of things in the social world" (Mason, 2002, p. 11). My assumption is that American society is tied by conceptual systems, and since my study focused on a particular social group classification, teenagers, the goal was that I would be able to understand how this social group views and makes sense to better understand the world and the power that pervades and influences it. This study is supported by three theoretical frameworks: "power in our society" (Foucault), "agency" (Giroux), and "media education" (Vinson & Ross). These three theoretical frameworks are important to this study in that all four theorists, Foucault, Giroux, Vinson and Ross, provide theoretical perspectives that, seen as a whole, are much more important and relevant than in isolation in describing the power and influence of the media within this postmodern culture.

1.1.3   Power in Society

Foucault views society as a complex operation of power, and "this power [is] exercised through surveillance, monitoring and other forms of regulation of people's lives" (Ward, 1997, p.

3

141). Foucault asks questions that help an individual to make sense of "self" in relation to the power within our society. These questions include: "Why have these views of the self arisen at this point in history? Where do they come from? How do they relate to the distribution of power in society?" (Ward, 1997, p. 142).   Since the focus of this study is to establish the relationships between and among corporate power, agency, and media education, Foucault's theory regarding the pervasiveness of consumerism and corporate influence provides insight into the behavior of teens as consumers. Lynch (1998) writes, "Foucault's analytics of modern power is the claim that all social relations are inflected by power relations, that "power is `always already there,' that one is never 'outside' it" (p. 65). This statement by Lynch reflects Giddens' (1979) theory of how power is part of a system that is based on social integration and based on social integration, particularly, how people not only interrelate but also impress influence on each other due to social context within the structure of the situation. In the next section, titled Agency, I make use of Giddens' theory on agency and the notable commonalities between the work of Foucault and Giddens in terms of power, relations, and social interaction. Similarly that power is always with us and there are rules in how one uses those rules in one person to one person interactions or as a system.

Foucault makes two assertions in regard to power relations (Lynch, 1998):

1. Power is co-extensive with the social body; there are no spaces of primal liberty between the meshes of its network.

2. Relations of power are interwoven with other kinds of relations (production, kinship, family sexuality) for which they play at once a conditioning and a conditioned role.

3. The power that Foucault references comes in many forms; Giroux further addresses these forms of power and spectacle with regard to agency.

4

1.1.4 Agency

Giroux views and "accepts a Foucaultian description of society, and seeks ways to achieve agency within its structures" (Schutz, 1997, p. 3). In a video interview conducted by Kincheloe in 2008, Giroux discusses how agency,

> "is not just freedom from, it's also a freedom to intervene and to change the forces that bear down on your life. You can't talk about individualism without understanding the detour that it has to take through the social because the social provides the conditions for those basic systems to emerge. If the conditions are not there for people to be agents, then how can you talk about choices being meaningful?"

Giroux goes on to explicate that it is important that people make choices on their own in which they can become agents; rather than mimicking a stance, one empowers himself by choosing a route, no matter what that route may be. This interview assisted me to understand more clearly how Giroux views agency in our society. If we are to help teenagers make their own choices, we need to provide critical pedagogy that allows them to do so; otherwise, society is at the mercy of the media's influence and the belief systems that it creates. The power of an individual comes from his or her ability to become an agent for individuality and change. Corporate America wants to influence the way that we think and believe; through education, our schools are able to provide the pedagogy that allows teenagers to make decisions through their understandings of society, which leads to their becoming agents of one's own culture.

While Giroux is the basis for my theoretical framework for this study, I found Giddens' definition of agency to be both relevant and well defined. Comparing how these two theorists define agency has helped me to build a more holistic viewpoint of agency. *Agency*, as defined by Giddens (1979), is a complex social interaction, which is also governed by rules and

resources of social interaction. This social interaction that Giddens describes is a consciousness that "emerges out of a background of tacitly employed mutual knowledge" (p.58).   In a document posted by Giddens (2007), he defines agency as, "specific behaviors or activities in which humans engage" (para. 1). Giddens goes on to characterize *agency* as "the sense and of possibility and potency one has in a situation" (para. 17). In other words, ad campaigns attempt to remold agency. In terms of this dissertation and its relationship to Giddens' work, I view agency as Giddens does, but I view it more as a systems approach within Giddens' framework: the power and social interaction arriving in forms of signifiers used by the media that may have transformative power over a segment of society that it chooses to influence for its own gain. My view of corporate agency is the power of corporations to minimize our democracy while capitalizing on our susceptibilities for profit. Ad campaigns are a good example of how corporate agency works. Corporate agents of social interaction create a social climate or circumstance from where people derive their understanding of the world. Ad campaigns are the tools of corporate agents in this interaction and attempt to control how we make sense of the world.

Giroux views ad campaigns as a representation of "cultural pedagogy that attempts to educate young people about what to think, believe, desire, and feel and how to behave" (Giroux, 1997, p.23). The postmodern culture is a highly visual culture; therefore, the corporate agency employed to influence American youth is limitless. Technology is a marketing tool that has expanded the marketplace to teenagers via satellite broadcasting, Internet, IPods, cell phones, and other technologies. This persistent intensive media bombardment on our youth is yet another sign of the commodification of this demographic group. As Giroux (2000) argues, "corporate culture positions young people as both the subject and object of commodification, as objects to buy and be sold in the marketplace" (p. 12).

Giroux views corporate culture as:

1. Exploiting them (youth) as fodder for the logic of the market (1998, p. 28).

2. Gaining more and more power in American society (1999, p. 148).

3. Producing market identities, values, and practices (1999, p. 149).

4. Teaching young people to be consumers (1999, p. 3).

5. Controlling information and their monopoly over the regulation of public space (1999, p. 4)

6. Shaping children's culture into a largely commercial endeavor (1999, p. 11).

The ability to market directly to our youth and control their behaviors in terms of consumption has become a multi-billion dollar business. Large corporations have dominating power and market their merchandise to teens that have limited ability to critically comprehend the meaning of what they observe through corporate agency. As Giroux (1999) asks, how do we "enable young people and adults to become aware of and interrogate the media as a major political, pedagogical, and social force?" (p. 11). The answer to Giroux's question may be in how American youth, through public education, are able to critically recognize the social interaction, power, and contextual settings that display and use signifiers as social agents of consumerism.

1.1.5 Critical Media Education

The use of image within the context of the media is reinforced through power; this power is reflected "in terms of democracy, oppression, authenticity, and the collective good" (Vinson & Ross, 2003, p.15). Education is the key in helping to instruct our children about the persuasive power that the media exerts in these postmodern times. According to Vinson and Ross (2003),

the "potentially disciplinary ends of this image-power / surveillance-spectacle / technology-SBER-globalization regime can — indeed should, even must—be countered in schools and classrooms, and advance to that viewpoint critical media literacy" (p. 15). This educational reform would need to be integrated across curricular disciplines and include:

1. Theory construction

2. Critique and creation

3. System modeling (Vinson & Ross, 2003, p. 146)

These three elements, when juxtaposed, create a dynamic classroom practice that allows students to construct theory, practice, and experience. It also allows students to investigate the media from their own lives and through this construction be able to make meaning of: Who produces these representations? What is the meaning that they (corporations) are trying to convey? What are the relationships that are trying to be made? Vinson and Ross (2003) believe that any reform would also need to encompass and appropriate image resistant pedagogy that should aim to:

1. Critique the enforcing/manipulative power of media representations (often racist, sexist. classist, nationalistic, imperialistic, Christian, etc.)

2. Empower teachers and students (i.e., citizens) to control their own labor, time, and identities/subjectivities

3. Supercede the spectacular

4. Combat surveillance-based disciplinary practices

5. Counter the problematics of anti-democracy, oppression, inauthenticity and anti-collectivity. (Vinson & Ross, 2003, p. 157)

8

As stated previously, these elements and pedagogy cut across disciplines, but they also join cross-theoretical disciplines as well as transcend media and technological mediums. Currently, public schools generally do not, to my knowledge and research, instruct students how to be more critical when interacting with visual imagery and the media nor do public schools encourage image resistant pedagogy.

1.1.6 Visual Literacy

Fred Banard (1921, para. 2) once said, "A picture is worth a thousand words." In the 21st century this statement couldn't be more accurate; Hoffman (2000) asserts, "words are another person's abstraction of what happened, but a photo captures reality" (p. 219). I wonder how much of what I see is reality in this postmodern culture? With some type of manipulation of most of what one experiences in advertising, the question arises as to whether Hoffman's assertion is accurate. The people behind the scenes----photographers, advertisers, and news professionals-- have certain methodologies that they use to evoke an expression or emotion. These methods may include lighting, color enhancement, the angle of the visual image, or the way that the photo is cropped, enlarged, or taken out of sequence/perspective; this method of manipulation is termed a "paraproxemic device." Using paraproxemic devices, Hoffman (2000) states, "the intent is to capture the viewer's senses and evoke certain emotions or thoughts" (p. 222). Manipulation of our senses is key when designing an advertising campaign that is effective and creates a need, whether it is subconsciously or consciously, in the consumer's mind. In order to resist this manipulation, one must be able to have an understanding of what it is that is being resisted; discernment must follow in order to interpret the manipulation accurately. Glasgow (1994) establishes that, "reading visual images at the interpretation level of comprehension calls for

higher order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation" (p. 494). One way that educators confront this onslaught is by changing our pedagogy to assist students to reason through the surface analysis stage of interpreting images and to evaluate the deeper meanings that images possess. The analysis of visual images in classrooms would mimic the way we discuss text. By uncovering the literal interpretations of an image first, a knowledgable teacher—by means of deconstructing the image—might uncover inferential, critical, and even creative interpretations of the image. By adopting this approach, Newmann and Wehlage (1993) believe that authentic achievement can be attained by using the following criteria: "(a) students construct meaning and produce knowledge, (b) students use disciplined inquiry to construct meaning, and (c) students aim their work toward production of discourse, products, and performances that have value or meaning beyond success in school" (p. 8).

Social messages are an important, yet rarely studied facet of visual imagery and advertising. Glasgow (1994) points out that social messages are contained in images through "juxtapositioning of items that advertisers use to promote a product, social messages that are signified, consumers own biases, cultural references, ethnic, geographical and belief systems" (pp. 496-497). I see visual literacy as an understanding of these social messages through the eyes of a teenage consumer that is navigating through our capitalist postmodern world.

1.1.7   Research Study

For this research study, I examined the influence of media images on teenagers as it draws a parallel to their behavior, beliefs and preferences. I designed five research questions that guided and supported my research, my study, and the interview questions that I designed. The research statements that supported my research were:

1. How teenagers construct and interpret symbols and images and how they make meaning of these visuals.

2. The role that violent media images play in the increase of aggressive behavior in our youth.

3. The role that sexually explicit media images have on teenagers' views of sexual behavior and sales.

4. The contributory effects of media images related to cigarette and alcohol consumption in connection to teenager consumption.

5. How powerful visual imagery and advertising are to consumption of goods and how teenagers make sense of their own body image and awareness

The method for collecting data that I used for this study was semi-structured interviews; these semi-structured interviews helped me to determine to what extent the subjects were able to understand and interpret visual media advertising. In order to make meaning of the interview data through analysis, I made frequent connections to Foucault, Giroux, Vinson and Ross. By connecting the research data to my theoretical foundation of power, agency, and media education, I was able to better analyze the data and make sense of how the respondents made sense of their world. Foucault, Giroux, Vinson and Ross, provide theoretical perspectives that, seen as a whole, are much more important and relevant than in isolation in describing the power and influence of the media within our postmodern culture.

I conducted a study of both male and female high school students between the ages of 14 to 18. The data collection phase of this study included forty interview sessions, two for each respondent, which were conducted over a designated month. The first interview session focused on the respondent's understanding of visual media; the second interview focused on the

respondent's reactions to actual visual advertisements that have been used by corporations. I intended to demonstrate the need for critical pedagogy as a discipline within the framework of media literacy in our public school systems.

1.1.8   Significance

The significance of this study is related to the power that the media has in veneration to large conglomerates that seemingly control information and how that information is represented. For example, according to Giroux (1999), "vast stores of information…are controlled by a handful of multi-national corporations" (p. 2).   Disney Corporation, for instance, holds ownership in "television stations that reach 25 percent of U.S. households; twenty-one radio stations; three music studios; five motion picture studios; and the ABC television network" (Giroux, 1999, p. 2), which also includes the ESPN sports network. This example is just a small component of the power that the media wields and the power players who are wielding it. The importance of this study was to examine the influence that the visual media holds over the teenage market that is worth billions to many large corporations and to ascertain whether there is a need for critical media literacy skills instruction in American public schools as part of the curriculum.

My working hypothesis was that today's youth do not possess a fundamental knowledge or systemic approach for interpreting corporate media images and meanings. Establishing this lack of fundamental knowledge makes evident the necessity for critical media pedagogy in schools. It also became apparent through my study that we as educators may be able to create contemporary classrooms that are relevant to our changing society and support critical thinking skills as they relate to how visual media images influence the behaviors and beliefs of

adolescents.   I believe that I established, through my research, fundamental approaches to accomplishing a pedagogy required to meet the needs of our youth today's classrooms.

As a school administrator presently employed within a public school system, as well as a former graphic designer and art educator, I know the value of being able to critically view visual media images. With the current emphasis by schools and the Department of Education on No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and high-stakes tests that relate to a limited range of importance, but limited scope of state standards, the time, if any spent on the critical understanding of media is non-existent. Through my experience working within the public school system, I believe there is a fundamental need to have critical pedagogy in the area of visual media.

2.0   CHAPTER TWO

2.1   REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to one reporter, "Gloria Hamilton, principal of Greenbrier High School in Evans, Georgia, suspended a student for wearing a Pepsi T-shirt on 'Coke Day'" (Saltman, 2000, p. 57). The event was brought on as part of "Coke in Education Day," in which, after a day of being educated by Coca Cola employees in the areas of marketing tactics and chemistry, students were to be deployed in a specific area in order to spell the word Coke for an aerial photograph; as the aerial photograph was to take place, the student revealed his Pepsi attire, causing a major dilemma for the principal. Another illustration of corporate America in our schools follows:

> In May of 2001, seventeen-year-old Tristan Kading was threatened with suspension from his public high school in Stoningham, Connecticut, when he challenged a McDonald's representative while the rep held "practice interviews" with the school's students in the cafeteria. Triston accused the visitor of fronting for an exploitive company. (Quart, 2003, p. 190)

Coca Cola and McDonald's are only two corporations that target adolescents; many other large corporations like Pepsi, ZapMe!, Channel 1, General Mills, Citibank, IBM, and Campbell's Soup, also view schools and adolescents as functioning in a partnership in which the

14

corporations, according to Saltman (2000), create an appearance of assisting education; but in reality these corporations are marketing to teenage consumers. One only has to look critically as one drives down a street, attends a sporting event, or observes what teenagers are wearing to begin to understand what forms advertising has taken over the years. Advertisers have found many approaches to market their goods to teenagers, from athletic wear to book covers, scoreboards, and school transportation (Brown & Witherspoon, 1998). There are very few times when anyone can walk down a school hallway and not view some type of company logo or design. Critics of marketing in the schools "have noted that there are five basic marketing practices that raise concerns" (Wartella & Jennings, 2001, pp. 559-560):

- Direct advertising in schools

- Free or discounted products

- Curriculum materials with corporate identification

- Direct sales or products in schools

- Fund-raising activities for schools

Each of these five marketing practices can be found in just about any school building from elementary to high school. The images are often disguised in such a way that they are both aesthetically and emotionally pleasing to teenagers. Even so, there are those who are very critical of the way that companies have become so pervasive in our schools. Aidman (1995) recognizes that advertisers view "children as a uniquely profitable three-in-one market: as buyers themselves, as influencers of their parents' purchases, and as future adult consumers" (para. 1). Channel One began to find a niche in schools by providing televisions, satellites, programming, and three-year warranties for two minutes of advertising following each 12-minute news show. This type of in-school advertising has led to controversy over the years about the ethics of mass

15

media having a captive audience in our schools (Aidman, 1995). Alex Molnar (2005), who heads the Center for Analysis of Commercialism in Education at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, states:

> There is a clear distinction between the purposes of marketing and education. Advertising makes no claim to telling the truth. Education attempts to tell the truth, and not because of a special interest but the interest of the entire community. The community and children don't come first in advertising, the sponsor does. (Krayeske, 1999, para. 36)

Schools are just one environment where adolescents are inundated with corporate messages. The postmodern culture is analogous to a large department store filled with advertisements (Potter, 2005). The Internet, along with the ever-growing world of technology and the graphic representations that they pose, are other examples of how our culture has become so visual and so information driven. For instance, the degree in which information increases yearly is 30% each year; that growth equals about 10 exabytes of growth annually (Lyman & Varian, 2003). This information and technology growth translates to advertising and large profits for companies who focus on teenagers as a very lucrative consumer population. Funk, Donnerstein and McCannon (2002) point out that corporations are well aware of the time that teenagers spend viewing some mode of media, anywhere from 33% to 50% of their time to be exact; the messages that are sent out to teenagers are an idealized visual representation of real life that has been created to elicit emotions that create a need for a certain product. The dilemma for today's youth is constructing meaning out of these visual messages and being able to interpret those messages true meaning(s).

The translation of the messages depends on many factors; whether it's the child's developmental level, environment, race, socioeconomic status or experiences, adults and children

all interpret meaning by their own criteria. All of the criteria also are heavily influenced, according to Milner (2004) by "key notions of the theory of status relationships, conformity, association, inalienability, and expansibility" (p. 39).

This research paper explores the relationships referenced above between adolescents as consumers; adolescence ability to make meaning out of images in terms of violence, sexuality, alcohol, cigarettes, and body image; media literacy and educational practices. Through these relationships I hope to demonstrate the magnitude of corporate influence that pervades our society and influences our youth, as well as validating the necessity of educating these youth in media literacy.

2.1.1 Adolescents as Consumers

Through the literature, I was able to ascertain that corporate America has a vested interest in the youth culture; the interest is not exactly a positive one, but one based on consumption for profit. In this section, I call attention to some very disconcerting research studies and discourse relating to corporate America and its focus on teenagers as consumers, willing to spend billions of dollars to make billions more; teenagers that can be influenced by carefully crafting an aura of what is important and what should be important in their lives; and the value that corporations attach to objects that symbolize status and identity for these youths.

The amount spent on advertising to our youth has increased twofold over the last ten years to over $12 billion (Lauro, 1999; McNeal, 1999). Why would powerful corporations spend so much on advertising? Our youth has a great deal of spending capacity, whether it is through their own means or through family members, and the basic foundation is that they spend a great deal of money and are very profitable. According to Salamon (2001), teenage consumers in the

United States annually spent $155 billion just a few years ago. While this figure appears encouraging for the economy, some are cautious about advertising to adolescence directly:

> Some postmodern theorists see advertising not as manipulation or even as a necessary nuisance, but as a central and legitimate part of contemporary popular culture. Marketing and advertising are seen as an absolutely central feature of the symbolic landscape in contemporary societies—as important in the lives of young people as books, music, and movies. (Milner, 2004, p. 160)

Marketing to teenagers may seem harmless enough to some but teenagers are at a disadvantage by not being educated to comprehend their world and their place in the world at this age that Milner (2004) deems, "contemporary popular culture" (p. 160). Giroux's (2000) thoughts on advertising to children is reflective of some postmodern theorists when he states, "childhood is being reinvented, in part through the interest in corporate capital. The myth of the innocent child is all too easily situated into the concept of the child as an object, and then into marketing of the child as a commodity" (p. 14). Giroux (2000) goes on to state, "as culture becomes increasingly commercialized, the only type of citizenship that adult society offers to children is that of a consumer"

(p. 19). Television is the most popular visual media being used by advertisers to market their goods to teenagers; there are more cable stations, infomercials, and advertising than ever before. Studies by Dubow (1995) and Buijzen and Valkenburg (2000) found that heavy saturation of television (almost a third more time than time spent in school by high school graduation) when correlated to consumer spending, demonstrated the power and influence that the mass media holds on youth.

Television is not the only media that focuses on teenagers. Magazines that focus on teenagers, like *Teen Beat, Teen People,* and *Sports Illustrated for Kids,* have all become regulars on magazine racks. The Internet continues to grow as a source of advertising as well, where just in 1998, "it was found that there was already $2 billion being spent on advertising" (Maddox, 1999, p. 30). These advertisements take many forms, such as, newspapers, film, ads on sides of buildings, cabs, billboards, clothing, public toilets, school buses, sporting events, and even on the backs of professional boxers. What does this inundation of advertising mean to our teens? According to Jones (2004), it means that, at the least, U.S. teenagers view over 100,000 messages a year.

Teenagers navigate this deluge of advertising as part of their social and emotional growth. Adolescence is a rite of passage that focuses on fitting in, standing out, and keeping up. Status symbols are very important to teenagers as a way to differentiate themselves as individuals, whether they be ranked or held within a certain status depends mainly on the clothes that they wear, the car that they drive, or other high quality products that they may possess. Manufacturers contrive and attempt to influence teenagers to increase capital; Milner (2004) illustrates an example of this manipulation, as he states:

> At the twentieth century athletic shoes were a good example. The major manufacturers brought out new models of shoes every six months. Since there were several major manufacturers, what was considered cool among young urban males changed even more often. In order to gain status by this, it meant you had to regularly discard one style and acquire another. These concerns have also spread to both male and female suburban students. (p. 56)

Corporations use this technique of selling its goods via peer-to-peer marketing or as it may be called now, seeding. Quart (2003) defines seeding as "giving away merchandise to a high school's most popular cliques in the hopes the brand will spread like wildfire among the in-crowd's teen fashion followers" (p. 38).   Both Nike and Converse have used this technique to great success in the past.   The teenage years are fraught with all kinds of physical, emotional and especially social issues that one must traverse as teenagers make their way to adulthood. The use of seeding as a marketing tool in conjunction with peer pressure is a very powerful tool and this social influence can lead to marketing gold (Quart, 2003). Klein (2002) views the influence of peers on marketing goods as a way for corporations to extend their advertising to an extent, which has never been seen before.

Corporations also are aware of buying patterns of branded clothing at a department store:

An article of branded clothing at the department store; now they buy an entire identity, a whole set of clothes by one manufacturer at that brand's boutique. Kids become Prada girls or Old Navy chicks or Pacific Sun, a.k.a. PacSun boys—and even volunteer their services to these beloved brands to show the extent of their identification and devotion. (Quart, 2003, p. 18)

It has become evident over the years that advertisements that adorn merchandise can, within itself, be a marketing tool (Milner, 2004). One only has to look at what types of graphics adorn most of the shirts that one may see walking down the street, everything from alcohol logos to typeface that indicates the name of the company, to insignias. Klein (2002) sees how the culture has shifted over the past three decades, from basically hiding the logo so others did not know what type of clothing one was wearing to presently wanting to show the name of the company to everyone as a form of status. The logo has now become more significant than the

actual shirt in culture (more significant that the actual shirt in present culture, serving as a keen example of corporate agency's expression through the logo as a substitute for the agency of the individual).

Often, though, according to Ward (2005), "when it comes to regular, everyday attitudes about the world, such as adolescents' beliefs about gender, race, and themselves, the media's role is often overlooked and underestimated" (p. 63). New studies focus "on how media use affects the body, brain, and diverse behaviors" (p. 63). For instance, ads in magazines and infomercials are prime examples of corporations exploiting the self esteem issues that accompany adolescence as a marketing tool. Calvin Klein has been admonished for his ad campaigns, which glamorized, as Giroux (2000) puts it, the "impoverished heroin junkie" (p. 75) appearance. President Clinton himself at the time "asserted that fashion photography had sent the wrong message to the American public by making heroin appear glamorous, sexy, and cool" (Giroux, 2000, p. 75), and created the term "Heroin Chic." It is important to realize that it wasn't only the girls being targeted. Corporations also found that boys viewed themselves just as discontented with their bodies as girls and quickly created marketing campaigns that would promise the "better body" if one just tried this supplement or exercise; what Quart (2003) identifies this tactic as "morphic pathology" or "bigoriexa" (p. 135). Many of the men's body building and fitness magazines show men who are immense by working out and taking these supplements that the magazine advertises; there are also the promises that if one buys…and uses it…then that consumer can develop this body (as shown). The problem is that Giroux is right; the media can falsify and distort whatever it chooses in order to sell their product, thus, providing false hope to many teenagers. Teens also purchase merchandise based on the person is that promotes that product or company. For instance, Lee and Brown (1995) found in their study of African American teens

21

regarding footwear, that overwhelmingly teens made their choices based on one of the most popular basketball players of their time. Consequently, this selection caused many complications with their parents due to the substantial cost of the footwear.

In creating a need of these products by teenagers, corporations must find ways in which to stimulate the target audience. Fox (1996) found, that "kids desire the values that have been associated with those products—intangible values that, like sex appeal, are impossible to buy" (p. 20). In juxtaposition with the Fox (1996) study, Churchill and Hill (1979) determined that teens will often purchase merchandise that will make them popular and part of "the group" based on what they view on television. New World Teen (1997) explored what teens are watching in a study that they conducted and found, not surprisingly, that MTV was the network that teens watched most often. Chip Walker (1996) found that teens who watched more MTV were more likely to wear certain hip clothes and use hair products than other teenagers. These teens were also more likely to purchase items that were advertised frequently on MTV programs. The New World Teen study clearly reveals the correlation between watching a cable channel that is: hip with young adults and teens, abundant in advertising, and forthright in the profits that are made. Based on the New World Teen study, it is quite easy to conclude that the more visual exposure that one experiences to the merchandise as well as to the individual who is using or wearing the merchandise, the more plausible the result, which is that teens will more likely buy the product (Fox, 1996). Besides just seeing an object, corporations and advertising agencies do an excellent job of invoking some type of feeling between the object and the person to create a selling point. As Williamson (2002) states, "the technique of advertising is to correlate feeling, moods or attributes to tangible objects" (p. 31). In order to correlate these feelings, the advertisement usually will tap into something that is known to bring out some type of emotion, such as, a hip

22

phrase or something natural that is relevant to their life. As Williamson (2002) explains, "it is not the ad that invokes feeling, it simply invokes the idea of a feeling; it uses feeling as a sign which points to the product" (p. 31). The use of celebrity endorsers to enhance merchandise to teenagers is an example of advertisers wanting to invoke a feeling between the object and the buyer (teenager). Why do teens trust celebrities over non-celebrity endorsers? According to Atkin and Block (1983), teens recognize celebrities as possessing more quality traits than they do non-celebrity endorsers. Depending on one's feelings toward a celebrity, the product could be enhanced greatly in terms of "wanting or needing the product." In May 1999, *Forbes* magazine created a power list based not on the wealth of a celebrity but on the endorsement power that the person possessed. Michael Wolf (1999) explains that celebrities and products have morphed into each other. There is an association or an analogy being made between the celebrity and the product. As an example, it is very difficult to think of golf professional Tiger Woods without thinking of Nike. These two items have a direct connection because Tiger plays golf and uses the Nike equipment while playing. However, there are endorsements where there is no direct connection; for instance, George Foreman has made a living as a boxer, but now he sells grills for a living. There really isn't any connection. No one knew that George Foreman cooked or even used a grill, but in the age of mass consumerism, American culture has believed George Foreman is a cook. There may be some who don't even know that he was a boxer at all. According to researchers, the connection is especially powerful with merchandise sold to teens; status is very important to teens as is how they view themselves in comparison to others.

Williamson (1978) acknowledges that advertisements do produce meanings but also produce false associations. These associations create false desires and this is done through the juxtaposition of objects. These objects produce status and how teens define themselves by being

in possession of these objects. These objects also pressure teens that may be socioeconomically disadvantaged to feel as though they need to keep up with other teens that are deemed "in" by our culture's unspoken standard. Since having money available makes acquiring status symbols easier, not having the ability to acquire funds can create a problem. Some teens find jobs to obtain funds to buy brand clothes; others, according to Cox, Cox, and Moschis, (1990), find other ways to acquire money, such as, shoplifting. Other teens may go as far as selling drugs as they succumb to the social pressures that accompany this age group (MacCoun & Peter, 1992).

Through the research that has been brought forth in this section, one may conclude that maintaining a corporate focus on adolescents as consumers is highly profitable. With corporations using status (via peer to peer marketing), logo identification, multi-media exposure to images, along with billions and billions of dollars in corporate allocations toward advertising, one may theorize that teenagers are viewed by corporate America as mere objects to be used for capital gain. If teenagers are to become literate in the interpretation and meaning of media imagery, then it is important that media literacy become more of a focus in our schools. The focus of the pedagogy needs to be on how teens make meaning of the images and symbols that they come into contact with daily. In the next section I will explore how teens construct and interpret meaning of images in the areas of alcohol and cigarettes, violence, sexuality and body image.

2.1.2 Making Meaning of Media and Images

In this section I develop the five critical areas that form the research sub-questions and interview questions for this research study. The interplay between how corporations construct images that they hope will persuade teenagers to buy their product and how teenagers form their own

meanings of these images is the focus of this section. This section is broken down into five

critical areas of focus. These areas encompass:

1. How teenagers construct and interpret symbols and images and how they make meaning

   of these visuals.

2. The role that violent media images play in the increase of aggressive behavior in our

   youth.

3. The role that sexually explicit media images have on sexual behavior, fashion, and sales.

4. The contributory effects of media images related to cigarette and alcohol consumption in

   connection to teenager consumption. 5.

5. How powerful visual imagery and advertising are to consumption of goods and how

   teenagers make sense of their own body image and awareness.

2.1.3   Constructing and Interpretation of Images and Symbols

According to Kist (2000) and Kress (2002), "the term *text* has assumed prominence as an

overarching concept for all manner of works, such as novels, picture books, advertisements,

electronic media, film, artworks, and even theoretical performance." It is important to realize

that while teenagers view the context of a symbol or text through their own experiences, as well

as their social and cultural perspectives, they use unknowingly semiotics as a way of decoding

these signs. Callow (2005) supports this claim by stating that "style and choices, will also be

influenced by the individual's own feelings, experiences, and beliefs" (p. 11). Sturken and

Cartwright (2001) define semiotics as "a tool for analyzing the signs of a particular culture and

how meaning is produced within a particular cultural context" (p. 366). Sturken and Cartwright

(2001) go on to state that "It is important to remember we use semiotics all of the time without

labeling it as such or recognizing our interpretive acts" (p. 29). However, a teenager views the "product, which initially has no 'meaning', must be given value by a person or object which already has a value to us, i.e., already means" (Williamson, 2002, p. 31). The deception of several advertisements can be in the feelings that they produce. A teenager may see an advertisement for a new soft drink, while the advertisement may depict a person enjoying their friends on the beach, playing volleyball, and laughing. It is actually the advertisement that is generating these feelings. This product, according to Williamson (2002), "may go from representing an abstract quality or feeling, to generating or being that feeling; it may become not only a 'sign' but the actual referent of that sign" (p. 36). Williamson makes a critical point with this statement by substantiating what Michael Wolfe elaborated on earlier, that advertisers create a false correlation between two or more objects to elicit a feeling or emotion. This is especially effective with those of us that have self-esteem issues or want to fit in socially; when one thinks of a population that most fits this criteria, teenagers are the first to come to mind. The emotions that are generated by teens are important to corporate America because the emotions themselves create a circumstance to satisfy this feeling. It is doubtful that the purchase actually satisfies the needs of the teen. According to Williamson (2002), "It is one thing for a product to mean happiness, it is another for it to be, or create happiness" (p. 36).

Developmental levels, experiences, and maturation play a vital role in how teenagers interpret the world around them. Calvert (1999) and Collins (1983) note that there are mental tasks that assist teens' need to be able to interpret the world. These tasks include being able to sequence important actions, being able to understand underlying messages through conjecture, making sense of details in both a way that is clear and understandable being able to interpret the underlying concepts that are not apparent, and being able to appraise images in some manner.

26

These mental tasks that Calvert and Collins point out would allow teens to take a more critical view of what they see and not be reactive. Often times, teens are susceptible to advertisements by not having the knowledge to be able to critical deconstruct the images.

Selecting important information for processing requires the capacity to be able to take what is essential from a message and dismisses what is not essential either consciously or unconsciously (Calvert, 1999; Collins, 1983). This ability to critically evaluate media messages is not an easy task; a teen must be developmentally ready in order to be able to decipher and critically interpret the implicit meanings that are imbedded in the message, such as what is needed to interpret text certain levels. By acquiring the knowledge to read images critically, coupled with the assurance that the images themselves are developmentally appropriate, Dorr (1980) believes that teens are also able to recognize organizational restrictions and economic compositions within images that characterize various media. How adolescents interact with these images or concepts in advertisements is how they make meaning. For instance, a *sign* "is a simple thing—whether object, word, or picture—which has a particular meaning to a person or a group of people. It is neither the thing nor the meaning alone, but the two together" (Williamson, 2002, p. 17). Williamson goes on to define that a "*sign* consists of both a Signifier, the material object, and the Signified, which is the meaning" (p. 17). Sturken and Cartwright (2001) use a Benetton advertisement as an example of how something as simple as a clothing symbol may be interpreted in innumerable ways. Sturken and Cartwright assert that:

In certain contexts, this image might mean civil unrest, wartime violence, etc., each of which constitutes a different sign. Hence, the production of a sign is dependent on social, historical, and cultural context. It is also dependent on the context in which the image is

presented (in a museum gallery or a magazine, for instance), and the viewers who interpret it. (p. 29)

While advertisements carry meaning through message, the advertisement itself is generally deceptive. Companies use manipulation and carefully planned misleading tactics to sell their goods. Potter (2005) points out that "Major advertisers know that their products differ from their competitors in very minor ways, so there is no point in making claims that their product is clearly superior in some way" (p. 138). Potter goes on to claim that, "puffery" (p. 138) is used when making assertions that cannot be substantiated. Puffery is a term used that, according to Jamieson and Campbell, suppresses the truth. For example, Jamieson and Campbell (1988) found that companies would compare their product against a non-identified product suggesting that their product is much better than the other product. Companies would also make claims, for example, that their product is improved, or, their product is the best selling product of its kind. Each claim cannot be substantiated and there is clear evidence of manipulation of those who believe what they see and hear at face value. As Potter asserts, "Thus, advertising messages are designed to use puffery to trick us into believing there is more to the product than there really is" (p. 139). While a product may be improved slightly at best, it becomes a circumstance of what to believe is true and what to believe is false. It is also important to remember that "advertisers increasingly market commodities by selling images of the self and the other: the self that we desire to be and the other that we desire" (Milner, 2004, p. 172). Within this "desired state," there are four areas that are of concern due to the susceptibility of adolescents to media: violence, sexuality, alcohol/cigarettes and body image. These four areas are the most critical according to the readings on media literacy and will now be explored in this chapter.

2.1.4 Violence

According to media researchers, technology has led to easier access of violent material than at any point in American history; the Internet has played a significant role in advertising violence through visual images. Easy access to materials, which should be extremely limited for children and adolescents, is now readily obtainable with the power of search engines. In line with this understanding, Slater, Henry, Swaim, and Anderson (2003), found that teens turn to disruptive media, particularly websites that contain violent content; this search for violent media is caused when teens feel as though they are detached from family. There is no lack of websites that contain violent material; in fact there has been an increase in teens visiting violent websites, from violent pornography (Bjornebekk & Evjen, 2000) to sites of hate groups, as well as sites that contain information on firearms Tarpley (2001). These findings are distressing considering the teen violence that has permeated American culture and schools over the past decade. If there is any correlation between visiting violent websites and actual teen violence, there is limited research to substantiate that claim at this time (e.g., Slater et al., 2003). However, I reference several studies in this chapter that establish that there is a relationship between violent media and teen violence. Giroux (2000) points out that following the Columbine High School murders in Littleton, Colorado, in April 2001, there was a call from "adults and educators to censor the Internet, banish violent video games, and restrict online services for young people"

> (p. 13). Giroux (2000) believes it is important to:
>
> Acknowledge that the new electronic technologies allow kids to immerse themselves in profoundly important forms of social communication, produce a range of creative expressions, and exhibit forms of agency that are both pleasurable and empowering,

adults profoundly mistrust the new technologies—in the name of protecting childhood

innocence. (p. 13)

While Giroux does not dismiss the correlation between violence and the media, he does

see the need for teens to be engaged in the media in order to better understand the power of

technology as a communication, social and learning tool. The Internet is not the only means of

viewing violent images; American television also provides young people with a steady diet of

violent content. A study by McIntyre and Teevan (1972), discovered that the more aggressive the

programs watched by teens, the more likely aggressive behavior would manifest

This study was completed at a time (1972) where the violence on television was, in

comparison, minor in relationship to the television violence that is acceptable for today's teens.

However it does demonstrate that the violence that teens view may have an effect on their

behavior. Comstock and Strasburger (1993) take a unique perspective to the violent behavior

viewed by teens. They see that teens are now viewing the way adults solve problems or issues

with each other as a society is through the use of violence. This violence creates an aura of right

and wrong, which subtly justifies the method used to solve the area of concern. This perspective

that Comstock and Strasburger (1993) espouse is supported by a study completed by the

University of California (1996-1998), which found that there was a high percentage of television

violence (61%) and that this violence was glamorized. This study didn't derive any conclusions

as to the association between violent behavior and violence viewed on television, but it did

reveal that there is a high level of violent content being viewed by teens that makes the violence

look appropriate. There are many different opinions as to the effects that viewing violence causes

on its participants. Some researchers, such as, Brown and Pennell (2000), Dorr and Kovanic,

(1981), and Hopf, (2001), believe that the social and environmental context in which teens reside

lend themselves to an increase in violent behavior due to what they view on television. Other researchers, Slater, Henry, Swaim and Anderson (2003), have suggested that someone's disposition plays a role on the effects that viewing violent television has on violent behavior. A longitudinal study over a 22 year period by Huesman, Eron, Lefkowitz, and Walder, 1984, found that aggressive behavior is abundantly available in the media as well as at home, at school, and in the neighborhood" (p. 1133). Researchers state that, "However, there is a genetic factor that is also deemed as a cause that may play a role in many cases" (p. 1120). In other words, exposure to TV violence during early childhood was predictive of higher levels of aggression at age 19.

In addition to television, "electronic games are now well established as one of the most popular choices in an array of leisure activities available to most children and adolescents" (Strasburger & Wilson, 2002, p. 119). Along with this popularity is the fact that the games have, depending on their rating, a high level of violence. The research in this area seemingly is a little more definitive than the research that linked television and teen violence. For instance, Anderson and Dill (2000) acknowledge through their study that, "experimental evidence suggests that use of violent computer games can exacerbate aggressive thoughts and impulses" (p. 789), while Grossman and DeGaetano (1999) state that there is evidence to suggest that exposure to violent video games lead anywhere from minimal all the way to a desensitization of teen effects toward violent acts. One may say that these studies probably relate to teens that, as stated before, may already have some type of genetic predisposition to aggressive behavior. This is not always the case, especially in the data that Anderson (2001) discusses during a presentation at Iowa State University. During this presentation Anderson (2001) points out that increased aggressive behavior was not only linked to teens that had predispositions toward aggressive behavior but also to those that did not have a predisposition toward aggressive

31

behavior. Perhaps most astonishing is that Anderson (2001) asserts that "playing a video game for as little as 20 minutes causes:

- An increase in aggressive thinking

- An increase in aggressive affect (e.g., anger)

- An increase in physiological arousal (e.g., heart rate)

- An increase in aggressive behavior

- A decrease in prosocial (helping) behaviors" (p. 1).

What is so compelling is that this behavior occurs only after a very short time of playing a video game. In my view, with high definition and the technology to create more realistic video games, the relationship for violent acts related to playing video games is going to increase in the future. Funk & Buchman (1996) see key predictor variables of violent behavior and playing video games as being: "gender of player, grade level, type of game" (p. 226). These types of variables are consistent with the influence that retired Lt. Col. David Grossman believes violent video games impress on our youth when he co-authored the book with Gloria DeGaetano, *Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill.* The book simply asks if society is teaching children how to kill (Grossman & DeGaetano, 1999). According to Grossman and DeGaetano (1999), video games are used as a method for teens to train and practice how to kill as well as influencing the techniques and scenarios that may take place if a similar situation were to occur. Michael Carneal, Dylan Klebold, and Eric Harris, are all names associated with killing rampages focused on classmates. In each of these cases the use of violent video games was shown to have had either influenced how the murders were carried out or how video games were used to practice how to kill. The influence that video games provide is not the only issue; Grossman and DeGaetano (1999) point out that video games is a method of increasing operant conditioning

skills, and that "operant conditioning is a very powerful procedure of stimulus response training, which gives a person the skill to act under stressful conditions" (p. 73). These games also provide very realistic situations for the children who play them. Grossman and DeGaetano, (1999) state that "these 'games' are actually killing simulators, and they teach our children to kill, much the same way the astronauts on Apollo 11 learned how to fly to the moon without ever leaving the ground" (p. 72). It is also worth noting that the simulators used by the United States Army (Multipurpose Arcade Combat Simulators), for conditioning soldiers to shoot at human targets is nothing more than a supercharged Nintendo game (Grossman & DeGaetano, 1999). Strasburger and Wilson (2002) also believe that "much of the violence is portrayed in formulaic ways that glamorize, sanitize, and trivialize aggression" (p. 80). In my experience with playing these types of games, I agree that violent games do trivialize and glamorize death and violence. They also help to build problem-solving skills in realistic conditions and situations and desensitize the player to the ramifications of death and violence.

While media violence is of a serious concern to me, I believe that the sexualization of youth in today's culture is more disconcerting. In the next section I review the implication of sexual media content and its influence on teen population.

2.1.5 Sexuality

The media of the postmodern age has become a major conduit to sexually explicit material. Cable television, teen and women's magazines, and especially the Internet have opened the door to easy access for teens to view advertisements that create a culture where young boys and girls are exposed at young ages to more intense sexual material. Giroux (2000) views corporate advertisements that depict children in suggestive positions, simply as, the

33

"millennial corporate culture interested only in commodifying or sexualizing children" (p. 16). "This corporate culture's promotion of the sexualization of children as an advertising gimmick to satisfy consumers and shareholders alike have eroded the distinction between childhood and adulthood" one researcher stated (Giroux, 2000, p. 16). This erosion, in my view, can be seen in young girls who participate in beauty pageants, as well as the mature nature in which young girls are marketed in music videos, magazines and advertisements. This current trend in advertising, according to Giroux (2000), means that the "commercial culture has removed childhood from the civic discussion of rights, public responsibility, and equality, and turned it into a commodity" (p. 18). According to Giroux (2000), "in such a perverse climate, innocence represents more than fertile ground for a media machine that increasingly legitimates the cultural face of corporate power" (p. 21). A clear illustration of this "perverse climate" would be from the work of Corrine Day. Day's (1996) photos for *The Face* would consist of placing children in various promiscuous positions within a seamy environment rife with debris. These photos placed children in positions and environments that sexualized them in ways that one could interpret based on their own subjectivity and life's experiences.

Milner (2004) recognizes that when using scantily clad woman and men in advertisements, that the "implicit message is that you can be more like this supermodel if you own this dress or car, and hence you will be more sexually desirable" (p. 173). Milner (2004) goes on to state, "desire in general, sexual desire has tended to become more abstract" (p. 173) and that "instead of desire being stimulated by interaction with concrete real persons, sexual fantasies and ideals are often shaped by images of movie stars or supermodels" (p. 173). The fear is that, "when sexuality becomes abstract desire and sexual liaisons become another consumer choice, it is appropriate to ponder whether this constitutes liberation or a new form of

social and personal alienation" (Milner, 2004, p. 173). Huston, Wartella, and Donnerstein, (1998) have found that current research has been unsuccessful in associating a related sexual connection to media due to the fact that research studies overall are in their early development. One may ascertain from the studies referenced that more research needs to be completed to prove definitively that there is a causal relationship between promotion and sexualization of teenagers and the concept of teenage desire and needs; until that time, the commodification of youth will persist. The government will not step in due to the protection provided under commercial speech. With regulations related to advertising limited, corporate advertising is testing the parameters of social mores, perhaps even past what society deems appropriate. Sexually explicit images are so pervasive and so vital as a marketing tool for corporations that teen girl magazines, "spent 345.8 million in 2002 alone" (U.S. Census, 2002) on advertising. Why do they spend so much money? I believe that this occurs because the teen market is such a significant and profitable market for large corporations that these companies feel that spending millions of dollars into advertising in these teen magazines is money well spent. According to Brown and Pennel (2000), teens will often take the messages that they read and view in the media and hold them to the same high standards as messages that they receive from parents, friends, or authority figures. Unfortunately, "this clash between the media's depiction of sexual relations and the real-life experiences of youth contributes to their difficulties in making healthy sexual decisions" (Brown, Steele, & Walsh-Childers, in press).

In the most popular teen magazines, teenagers will find "little more than catalogs filled with products, and the 'sell' is relentless. Page after page hypes new clothing, accessories, and makeup; photos of celebrities come with prices and retail sources for the clothing they're wearing" (Buddenberg & McGee, 2004, p. 147). One will also find sexually related articles

accompanying these products, such as, "I was a teenage prostitute," "A cute butt in 3 weeks, " and Paris Hilton on what it is like to be filthy rich" (Buddenberg & McGee, 2004, p. 146). As Higgonnet (n/d) posits that the sexualization of young girls is also created through a juxtapositioning of adults who may dress like young girls, (e.g., wearing pigtails) and through those who promote teens as sexual icons whom other teens admire and want to emulate by purchasing the products. The contradiction in messages that we continue to send our young children is best summed up by Jones, Forrest, Goldman, Henshaw, Lincoln, Rosoff, Westoff, and Wulf (1985):

> American teenagers seem to have inherited the worst of all possible worlds regarding their exposure to messages about sex: Movies, music, radio and TV tell them that sex is romantic, exciting, titillating, premarital sex and cohabitation are visible ways of life among adults they see and hear about…. Yet, at the same time, young people get the message good girls should say no. Almost nothing they see or hear about sex informs them about contraception or the importance of avoiding pregnancy. (p. 61)

Just how much are American teens are being bombarded with this sexually explicit material? Kunkel, Cope-Farrar, Biely, Farinola, and Donnerstein (2001) found that there was a 12% increase in sexually explicit content on television in just one year and that 80% or more of magazines, movies, and sitcoms, contain sexually explicit material. The long-term effects of sexualized advertising are far reaching and much more disturbing than one would originally think. Few studies related to sexuality and the amount of content viewed has been completed. Prior researcher is limited, "only one of the studies was longitudinal, and four out of the six are now more than a decade old" (Strasburger & Wilson, 2002, p. 177). Studies by Laumann, Paik, and Rosen (1999), Brown and Newcomer (1991), Peterson and Kahn (1984), and Peterson,

Moore, and Furstenberg (1991), have all exposed relationships between the amount of television watched, the shows being watched, and sexually promiscuous behaviors. If someone were to posit that this relationship between television and sexual behavior among adolescents is something that can be substantiated through additional longitudinal research, then it is my hope that this research has begun. From the obvious lack of longitudinal data that has been collected and examined, one can only hypothesize what effects sexually explicit advertising have imprinted on American teens who are now adults. Currently, The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development is conducting large-scale longitudinal studies, including small-scale research studies on other fronts (Ward, 2005).

Theoretical perspectives depict a common thread of behavioral influence by the media. For example, according to Comstock, (1989) the disinhibition theorists accept that experience is the determining factor of behavioral predispositions in children. These behavioral experiences are consistent with a research study conducted by the National Institutes of Mental Health (1982), in which they found that children's predispositions are related to the persistent exposure of viewing television, which in turn has made these children more accepting of inappropriate behavior. These "behaviors" that are attributed to television exposure are not only sexual in nature, but include, according to Ward (2005), "obesity, attention problems, body image dissatisfaction, …and lower self esteem (among ethnic minority viewers" (p. 69). Other theoretical perspectives, such as cultivation theory, super-peer theory, priming theory and social-learning theory, are all belief systems that are of the opinion that sexual behavior in children is in some way related to media exposure (Bandura, 1986; Peterson, J. L., Moore, K. A., & Furstenberg, F.F., 1991). Another trend that has become commonplace in our postmodern culture is mainstream pornography. Pornography is not only viewed in the sense of the narrow

scope of the porn industry, but also in the everyday visuals that one experiences, from magazine covers to videos and commercials. Whether the source is music videos from:

> Motley Crue or Eminem; Jenna Jamison playing herself on NBC's "Mister Sterling; Vivid girls pictured on Sims snowboards; the pornography business is the central setting for the Fox TV show "Skin," the Showtime realty series "Family Business," and the movies "The People vs. Larry Flint" and "Wonderland" (Buddeberg & McGee, 2004, p. 157).

Pornography has become increasingly acceptable in American society. Unfortunately, according to Giroux (2000), "corporate culture's appropriation of childhood innocence and purity is rarely fodder for serious discussion" (p. 17). One could hypothesize that adults view one's youth as a commodity; something to make profit from; and to even think these large corporations even care about youth is an insult to our intelligence. Pornography is big business, corporate business, and as long as educators do not change pedagogy to be more critical of business elites and the political power that threatens school children, who are not developmentally prepared for these type of images.

Strasburger and Donnerstein (2000) have concluded that unless violence of some sort is involved in a media image, then pornography is not detrimental. While pornography may not "create" a violent person, it may aid in eliciting violent behavior. Studies by Weaver (1994), Donnerstein (1984), and Linz and Mamlamouth (1993), indicate that pornography that "does" contain violent sexual behavior has resulted in increased violent behavior and a more insensitive disposition in relation to women. Pornography itself is very broadly defined and interpreted differently among different people; it is difficult, at least within my scope, to determine what specifically is meant by violent sexual behavior. However, desensitization, loss of sympathy

toward women, and uncommon sexual practices seem to be consistent across the literature and more easily defined. For this study, I am more interested in the desensitization of sexual aggression due to images that have been viewed in advertisements, R-rated movies, and other non-x-rated media images. Considering that my subjects for this research study are between the ages of 14-18, I believe that I will be able to gather data that is more reflective of their knowledge of sexual aggression based on advertisements, R-rated movies, and non-x-rated images because their exposure is more likely in these areas rather than of hard-core pornography.

Since educators do not have coursework to assist teens in the analysis, dissemination and general discourse of this topic due to the nature of the subject matter, professional teachers are apathetically promoting "that acting aggressively toward a woman is expected and normal" (Strasburger & Wilson, 2002, p. 186). Buddeberg and McGee, (2004) share my view when they state, "It's disturbing to wonder what quality of relationships, marriage, and family life will be in store for boys and girls growing up in such a culture" (p. 164).

2.1.6   Alcohol and Cigarettes

Currently, there are many debates as to whether or not to abolish alcohol ads due to the influence that these ads may inflict on teenage alcohol consumption. However, there hasn't been any evidence to this point as to a contributory effect between alcohol advertising and teen alcohol consumption. Since the relationship between image advertising and alcohol consumption has not been established, "Alcohol advertisers," according to Kelly and Edwards (1998) "will attempt to focus the debate on First Amendment rights" (p. 58). There is also debate as to which type of advertising is more harmful to teenagers, image or product.

The image advertisement, with contrasting degrees of subtlety, suggests that the depicted lifestyles can be attained by use of the product. Image advertisements rarely make any explicit mention of product quality. In contrast, product advertisements focus on claims about the merit of the product (e.g., the taste is delicious or product performance is excellent) (p. 47). Image advertising is much more prevalent in our postmodern culture than ever before and teens are generally influenced by how something looks rather than tastes. "Although parents, peers and other environmental influences are important in shaping these beliefs and, ultimately, drinking behaviors, alcohol advertising also may be an important source through which children learn about this drug" (Grube & Wallack, 1994, p. 254). The way that alcohol is portrayed on television is noteworthy as an important source of information on alcohol. According to Madden and Grube (1994), "Alcohol drinks are the most common beverages portrayed on television" (p. 297). Studying when these advertisements are shown most frequently, we find that they are both related to sporting events, whether it's attending the game or watching it on television. Researchers have found that "as many as "six hundred eighty-five alcohol (beer, wine, wine cooler) commercials were broadcast in 443.7 hours of sports programs" (Madden & Grube, 1994, p. 298). That number, along with a substantial number of on-site advertisements/promotions makes it very easy to see why this has become such a problem with teens in American society. When a teen attends a professional football game or a NASCAR race, he or she is often inundated with promotions that include "logo types on the sides of cars and giant blow-up beer cans" (Madden & Grube, 1994, p. 298). In 2001 alone, "there were 208,909 alcohol commercials" (Madden & Grube, 1994, p. 298). Consequently, 56 percent of students grades 5-12 say that alcohol advertising encourages them to drink" Why else, in 2000, would "advertisers spend $770 million dollars on TV ads?" (Riccio 2002, p. 14). A study

completed by Atkin and Block (1983) provides a good reason: teenagers felt that drinkers possessed characteristics that are valued by this culture, such as, being successful, athletic, and attractive. Even though this study was completed in 1983, it is my belief that these characteristics are even more valued in today's culture, which is more visual than it was 24 years ago. Many ads depict people in a social situation where there is laughing, fun activities, the people are attractive, and the setting is a beach or mountain scene. These types of ads are not surprising to Buddenberg and McGee (2004); they share that many ads represent scenarios in which young people are socializing and having a convivial time. These alcohol advertisers who work for the alcohol distributors are criticized for their use of image advertising in lieu of product advertising, which focuses more on lifestyle and less on the essential importance (Snyder & DeBono, 1985).

Advertisers utilize inventive tactics that they believe to be most effective in appeal to adolescents. Cowley and Underwood (2001) found that "few commercials in the 1990s fail to employ some combination of rock music, young attractive models, humor, or adventure. "Beach babes," frogs, lizards, and dogs are all commonly seen in beer commercials" (p. 45). There is also the new beverages that have come out that are flavored and taste more like sweet pop or candy than other beverages on the market. These types of drinks have been dubbed, "learner drinks for kids." These learner drinks are related to the hard lemonades that are now available and have cool nicknames, such as, "Doc" Otis and One-Eyed Jack " (Cowley & Underwood, 2001).

Cigarette advertisers also have unique marketing strategies similar to alcohol in the way they advertise their products. For instance, in an ad for KOOL cigarettes, the cigarettes are placed in a forest environment. This type of contradiction is used often in cigarette ads, and

points out "that advertisements work on concealed, unconscious and irrational levels; juxtaposing things not only unconnected but in this case actually opposed, but giving these juxtapositions the status of a "natural order" (Williamson, 2002, p. 128). The use of cartoons, i.e., Joe Camel, can be viewed as a very effective juxtaposition, a child's affection for cute, safe, and funny cartoon characters to the dangers of cigarettes. How effective? According to Difranza, Richards, Paulman, Wolf-Gillespie, Fletcher, Jaffe, & Murray (1992):

> After the first 3 years of introducing the Old Joe Camel campaign, the preference for Camel cigarettes increased from 0.5% of adolescent smokers to 32%. During the same time period, the sale of Camels to minors increased from 6 million to 476 million, representing one quarter of all Camel sales and one third of all illegal cigarette sales to minors. (p. 3282)

These statistics, while startling, exemplify the power of image advertising. The power of the image is so influential that limitations had to be placed on advertising, which included the demise of Joe Camel. In a 1998 settlement, the tobacco industry agreed to guidelines that limited the advertisements that could be placed in a magazine where children are predominantly under the age of 18. However, through a loophole, the three largest tobacco companies continue to advertise as always because their belief is that the settlement that was agreed to earlier stated that these were only guidelines to follow and not firm legislation (Kuczynski, 2001). In fact, advertisers working for the tobacco industry have already found ways to infiltrate our schools using color theory and sophisticated imaging techniques. In one case, a tobacco company was nice enough to supply book covers to all of the students. According to Kowalski (2002), the book cover text read, "Think. Don't Smoke." The word "don't" was a dissimilar color than the other text, which made the book cover read as, "Think Smoke." Kowalski (2002) also wrote

about a unique way of morphing an image: when looking at the design, the first time one may see one design, but on taking a second look, "The snowboard looked like a lit match, and the clouds looked more like smoke than clouds" (p. 6). The way that these images are depicted, as in the advertisements employed by the tobacco company in particular, have played a major role in swaying adolescents in their consumption of the product. Also evident is the influence of these images and the creative marketing that is used as teens interact with visual images and try to make meaning of them, while hopefully looking past the surface meaning (ex. Joe Camel) of the image.

2.1.7   Body Image

Teens are well known to be very discontented with their appearance but now the self-condemnation has reached epic proportions. Author Mary Pipher stated this opinion in the June, 1996, *People* magazine, that:

> That virtually all women are ashamed of their bodies. It used to be adult women, teenage girls, who were ashamed, but now you see the shame down to very young girls—10, 11 year old. Society standard of beauty is an image that is literally just short of starvation for most women.

> This societal image of beauty is propagated by the mass-media driven corporate advertisers who are able to push what perfection is, what the ideal body is supposed to look like, and what body size is acceptable in society by "beauty standards." This quotation by Pipher is laden with irony because it is found in what most would think is a key contributor to the pressures being placed on teens to obtain the ideal body shape and what they see as those being condemned for not having this "ideal" shape. Levine and Smolak (1996) have encompassed

43

seven key components that educe these types of body image beliefs. These components include: importance of look; how one limits the definition of beauty; the high standards that one defines as beauty; the linking of slender to beauty; detestation of fat and fat women; prominence of dieting and fashion; and establishment of gender roles based on idealistic beliefs. These components are made evident in the images one sees every day on TV and in magazine and newspaper ads. It is rare to see a "normal" or "slightly" overweight model leading a fashion or advertising campaign.

The media has set a tone for what is to be deemed beautiful. Society holds girls that look as if they are "just short of starvation" (Pipher, 1996) to a higher standard than we do women that are overweight based on appearance. Body image is so pervasive in our society that in a study of 2,500 middle school teens by Krowchuk, Kreiter, Woods, Sinal and Durant (1998), "it was found that 50.6% of girls and 30.5% of boys were trying to lose weight and 4%" (p. 887)." Researchers found, "of those trying to lose weight 13.1% vomited or used laxatives and 12.7% used diet pills" (p. 888).   The incidence of "clinically defined" eating disorders is alarmingly high as well among teenagers. According to Strasburger and Brown (1998), there currently may be as many as 1 in 100 middle-class females that experience anorexia nervosa and as many as 5% of our young women battling bulimia (BMA, 2000).

The media as a whole has placed incredible pressure on young women to measure up to the current culture of what these teens view on television, music videos, etc. Many women who influence teens and who these teens venerate have been in the media themselves for suffering from eating disorders. A study conducted by Field, Carmargo, Taylor, Berkey, Roberts, and Colditz, (2001), found that "in a 1-year period, we observed that approximately 1% of the preadolescent and adolescent girls began to purge at least monthly to control weight" (p. 1186).

It was also found through this study that "personal, peer, and cultural factors…and maturational development" (p. 1186) were independently associated with the onset of purging. All of the research studies reviewed focused primarily on females, due to what seemed like a stigma that is related to female teenagers only dealing with the dilemma of eating disorders, but according to Brand, Rothblum, and Solomon (1992), there has been a rise in the number of males now affected by an eating disorder. Unfortunately, little research in the area of male eating disorders have been completed, which makes it difficult to look for a strand of consistent influences over a span of studies and time (Field, Carmargo, Taylor, Berkey, Roberts, & Colditz, 2001).

The media often exaggerates and augments visual images and products associated with beauty and sociocultural ideals in a manner that is going to promote merchandise for consumption. For instance, a study conducted by Pope (1999) found that over a 34-year period, biceps and chests on male action figures grew to massive proportions; These sociocultural ideals for males are not dissimilar from the ideals held for young girls, where the ideal girl is viewed a size 5 tall and slender girl with blonde hair, blue eyes, and a size 5 (Nichter & Nichter, 1991). I have observed the change over time in what is now considered a respectable male physique in comparison to just a few decades ago. The change is mimicked by the change in action figure proportions; the change has coincided with the constant bombardment of exercise apparatuses being advertised on television, the increase in male fitness and bodybuilding magazines, and the male physiques being showcased on television programs.

Nutritional supplement companies and manufacturers such as Abercrombie and Fitch have created obsessions among young men. Quart (2003) asserts that, "in just five years, these firms have created a greater sense of inadequacy among boys about their bodies than ever before" (p. 129). Although this ideal of the male form has been thrust more and more on our

society, it is still slight in comparison to the advertising that is focused on females. Overall, according to Signorielli (1997), "56% of the ads targeting females, compared with just 3% of the ads aimed at males" (p. 29). This claim is substantiated by the disparity between models used in magazine advertisements, "82% of woman compared to 18 % of men" (Signorielli, 1997, p. 9). It is also important to point out that advertising is more focused on "females (63%) compared to males (4%)" in the area of grooming products (Signorielli, 1997, p. 28). Giroux (2000) views the "increasing use of advertising that depicts the ideal modern American female as young, extremely thin, sexually alluring, and available, it becomes clear that the processes at work in the objectification of young children are not altogether different from the social relations that take place in other sites" (p. 60). The "ideal modern American female," so to speak, may also be used for negative objectification as well by the media; there is an obsession with the fluctuating weights of Alicia Silverstone, Calista Flockhart, television stars and female models (Strasburger & Wilson, 2002). One researcher states, "there is also undue pressure not to be fat given the commercial pressure to eat and the rising rates of obesity spurred on by commercials for fattening and sugary foods" (Quart, 2003 p. 132).

However, the undue pressure to not be fat given commercial pressure seems to also be promoted, given the data by Byrd-Bredbenner and Grasso (2000). According to a study completed by Byrd-Bredbenner and Grasso (2000, p. 59), "of the 17.5 hours (108 ads) children view the most according to in regards to food are (in percentages):

- Food and restaurants 37%

- Low-nutrient beverages 16%

- Desserts and snack foods 15 %

- Breads and cereals 11%

- Convenience entrees 6%

- Fruits and vegetables 4%

- Dairy products 2%

Gortmaker, Must, Sobol, Peterson, Colditz, and Dietz (1996), "suggest that there is a modest body of fairly consistent evidence demonstrating the direct effect of food promotion (in the main, television advertising) on children's food preferences, knowledge and behavior" (p. 20). In fact, Gortmaker, et al., (1996), also found that teens watched an average of 5 hours of television a day and that this link between hours of television watched coupled with physical inactivity has led to an increase in childhood obesity. The media promotes the world of image and product association; it also endorses the advertisements, which elicit a behavior that is calculated and deliberate. Williamson (2002) sees the behavior that is elicited from the person in relation to a product as "a sort of Pavlov dog syndrome at work whereby after seeing certain products linked to certain feelings for a long time, by association the product alone come to create, to 'be' the feeling" (p. 37). This feeling is generally one of fun when it comes to children. Reece, Rifon, and Rodriguez (1999) concluded that the most efficient way to captivate a child is by designing a product to look exciting and delicious.

One of the most "exciting" advertising images of the twentieth century would be Ronald McDonald. In fact, Ronald McDonald ranks only second to the Marlboro Man as a recognizable image of the past century. Over time, McDonald's has found itself working with other corporations in cross-promoting a brand. As indicated by Schlosser (2002), in his book *Fast Food Nation,* this is "intended to create positive feelings about McDonald's, making consumers associate one thing that they liked with another" (p. 50). Ads would link the company's french fries "to the excitement and fanaticism people feel about the NBA." Toy crazes have also been

47

a strategic approach employed for the sales of fast food; "Pokemon cards, Cabbage Patch Kids, and Tamogotchis—have been abetted by fast food promotions. A successful promotion easily doubles or triples the weekly sales volume of children's meals" (Schlosser, 2002, p. 47). The words "Supersize Me" have become synonymous with the fast food industry and marketing. As stated in an article written by Raeburn, Forster, Foust, and Brady (2002) in *Business Week,*

> According to Agricultural Department, fast-food hamburgers have swollen from an ounce of meat to six ounces or more. An eight-ounce bottle of soda is now a monstrous one-quart tumbler. And the original order of McDonald's fries, at 200 calories, pales next to today's 610-calorie Supersize Fries.

In 2004 "McDonald's fought off a lawsuit from two teenagers who accused the company of failing to provide necessary information about health risks" (Ives, 2004, p. 3). More research needs to occur in order to determine the influence of the media on the prevalence of teenager eating disorders, but there also needs to be more education of American students' because the fast food companies are not going to take responsibility as Ives (2004) reports. In the next section I will take a look at what our schools can do to help our youth make sense of corporate America and image advertising.

2.1.8   Media Literacy and Educational Practices

In this section I will define what media literacy has become in relation to the postmodern era; what I see as the need for critical discourse of media literacy in our public schools; and what a dynamic classroom may look like that is focused on the media literacy and the culture of democracy the 21st century.

48

Literacy is a word that most readers understand as it relates to reading text or speaking a language; I cite an earlier reference of Kist (2000) and Kress (2002) as I did earlier in this chapter, "the term *text* has assumed prominence as an overarching concept for all manner of works, such as novels, picture books, advertisements, electronic media, film, artworks, and even theoretical performance." It is important to realize that while teenagers view the context of a symbol or text through their own experiences, as well as their social and cultural perspectives, they use unknowingly semiotics as a way of decoding these signs. For the most part, humans continue to grow in their ability to read and speak their language as we grow older. The pedagogy of our educational system is focused, but in the area of media literacy we seem to become stationary at best because in very few classrooms are students able to have discourse about how they interact with the media in their lives and how these interactions have changed their beliefs and preferences. Potter (2005) states that societies:

> Level of media literacy now is the same as it was when you first became a teenager. Your information base is not likely to have grown much in other areas—about how messages are produced and programmed, who controls the media, the economics of the industry, and how the media exert subtle effects on you and your society. (p. vii)

Along with the belief that American society is amateurish in the understanding of media literacy, Potter (2005) reasons that, "people have allowed the media to program them" (p. vii). This "programming" is a direct effect of not being able to disseminate information that is received on a daily basis. When one thinks about this statement, one needs to remember that the amount of information produced will be "between 1 and 2 exabytes of unique information per year, which is roughly 250 megabytes for every man, woman, and child on Earth " (Lyman & Varien, 2003). That is a lot of information to decipher and process. To be able to compensate for

this influx of information, one has to be educated in media literacy. Pungente (1996) views media literacy as " understanding how media messages are constructed and how they influence values, beliefs and behaviors" (p. 9). Jane Tallim (2007) defines media literacy as:

> The ability to sift through and analyze the messages that inform, entertain and sell to us every day. It's the ability to bring critical thinking skills to bear on all media— from music videos and Web environments to product placement in films and virtual displays on NHL hockey boards. It's about asking pertinent questions about what's there, and noticing what's not there. And it's the instinct to question what lies behind media productions— the motives, the money, the values and the ownership— and to be aware of how these factors influence content.

The common theme in both of these definitions is that students need to be able become more critical in their approach to media messages in order to discern what is an accurate representation of a message and what is misrepresentation. Agreeing with my theme, Megee (1997) states that media educators concur on the following "basic tenets of media literacy: Access, Analysis, Evaluation and Production" (p. 24). Megee (1997) goes on to assert that if society continues to neglect through education and parenting, the examination of television's curriculum, then society is disregarding the world and culture that school children know. Whether it is the International Reading Association or the National Council of Teachers of English, there are a growing number of organizations that want to push for the term literacy to include media literacy. Hepburn (1999) reflects on media literacy using terms like, "deceptive imagery," "distortions," "visual power," and the need for students to examine camera and sound techniques, interpret the social civic messages or themes of a program, investigate the emotions, and compare TV life with real life" (p. 353). The purpose and implication is simple: responsible

adults must find a way to inform and educate youth in being able to critically understand and interpret the world in which they live.

From the readings, one may be able raise doubt as to whether or not our current educational practices prepare our students for what they must mitigate in terms of power, politics, and ethics. According to Giroux (1998):

Young people need to become critical agents able to recognize, appropriate, and transform how dominant power works on and through them. To achieve this, they need forms of educational practice steeped in respectful selfhood that do not collapse social into personal problems or systemic oppression into the language of victim-blaming. In short, they need a pedagogy that provides the basis for improvisation and responsible resistance. (p. 32)

Giroux (1998) goes on to state that in the postmodern age "teens and other youth learn how to define themselves outside of the traditional spheres of instruction such as the school and home" (p. 32). Learning is no longer constrained to home and school; children learn from the images and text that they come into contact with and interpret on a daily basis. The interpretation of these images have a profound effect on the way these children dress, behave, whom they idolize, and what they purchase as consumers. Giroux (1998) substantiates the "edification effect" that takes place in our world by stating, "learning in the postmodern age is located elsewhere—in popular spheres, organized around rap music, daytime television, fanzines, Hollywood films, sprawling shopping malls, and computer hacker culture" (p. 32). This postmodern ways of learning is generally absent from the school curriculum. The insight and awareness of imagery within American culture related in terms of pedagogy in schools was for the longest time founded within discipline-based art education (DBAE). Disciplined-based

51

art education endured from the beginning of the 1960s to the 1990s and consisted of four major aims in which one needs to be able to achieve: to learn the skills required for performance; to be able to critically examine art and discuss it; to understand the cultural and historical perspective that predetermined the work; to understand the values that art provides us in terms of aesthetics and the relationship to the social context of that time (Eisner, 2002):

> Advocates of DBAE claim that it provides a more comprehensive approach to art education than other approaches, that it addresses the four sorts of things that people do with art: they make it, they appreciate its qualities, they locate its place in culture over time, and they discuss and justify their judgments about its nature, merit, and importance. (Eisner, 2002, p. 27)

One could determine from the literature that within DBAE's focus, pedagogy, and aims, there is a lack of attention to addressing the culture significance of media and the reading of images within the media. This does not mean that the four major aims of DBAE are not important; these aims allow work in the arts to assist students in the development of complex and critical thinking skills. The cognitive development of art education is aimed more toward: "reflection about their own thinking process—and that encourage them to articulate about their judgments about art…to train designers who understood the social context their work was to serve and who could approach design problems mindful of that context" (Eisner, 2002, p. 37-38). One could also ascertain from the research literature that while the cognitive domain of arts education promotes a more clear comprehension of the cognitive in conjunction with the affective domains, it does not undertake a critical stance of media and visual literacy from a postmodern culture standpoint.

Today, art education has adapted the standards approach and has broken away from the DBAE discipline that pervaded art education for three decades. Through the standards based approach recently adopted by both national and state art education guidelines, there is greater emphasis on more critical thinking of contemporary visual communications and messages. For instance, the Pennsylvania Academic Standards for the Arts and Humanities (2002) under Standard 9.2, Critical Response, students are to explain and apply the critical examination processes of works in the arts and humanities: compare and contrast, analyze, interpret, form and test hypotheses, and evaluate/form judgments. The standard is ambiguous enough; while it is a step in the right direction, a direct link to media literacy is missing.

The art education discipline that does assume a critical stance of media literacy from a viewpoint of interpretation and decoding of images is visual culture education. Visual culture education "focuses on using the arts to promote an understanding of visual culture" (Eisner, 2002, p. 28). Through Eisner's (2002) perspective, there is great importance in this focus:

> Reading images as texts in order to reveal their political and often covert purposes is one form of reading. Another is developing the student's ability to use the arts to understand the values and life conditions of those living in a multicultural society. In this view, art education becomes a form of ethnology. (p. 29)

Eisner's assertion that art education needs to undergo a transformation that is relevant to American culture is legitimate. The problem arises when one views the educational system over the last fifty years. Even though many educational changes have occurred over this period of time, there is still the unconscious or conscious attempt to resist teaching media literacy in our schools. Giroux (2000) regards any effort to alter the nation's classrooms into places where

discussion and analytical dialogue are commonplace as futile. The fact is, the ability to think critically in regard to politics is considered improper and unprincipled in today's schools.

Giroux (2000) maintains that the current educational system is more conducive in educating our "students as consumers, and train young people for the low-paying jobs of the new global market place." (p. 85). In order to combat this political and corporate attempt of maintaining control of the youth market, it must first be realized by public education that technology and the broadening or our marketplace via a global market has transformed American culture. Along with this transformation there has been an increasing focus on our teens as a commodity by corporate America. That is why, as Eisner (2002) states, with these changes in literacy's within the postmodern age (electronic, aural and image-based), that educational practices need to be modified to suit the needs of the students who negotiate the terrain of our popular culture. Currently, I believe from his experience in education that existing educational practices view visual culture as existing interactively with students. Vinson and Ross (2003) believe "visual culture exist interactively with everyday life, and that it involves both the visual and the cultural, such that schooling only exists within the conjunctions of the visual, the cultural, and the everyday" (p. 25).

The dilemma with aligning critical media pedagogy that is drawn from our popular culture to implement in schools is that the media itself has the power to transform our beliefs about education "and that the press and popular outlets serve to connect our understandings of classroom practice itself, and that they form an intermediate bridge between schools and society and between the micro worlds of teaching and learning" (Vinson & Ross, 2003, p. 35). Negative media propaganda notwithstanding, democracy must drive the educational needs of its culture to help American schoolchildren understand the power of media, images, and of the

controlling of the images through capitalism or politics. The purpose of education, most think, has always been to develop well-educated children to become viable citizens of our society. If this statement is accurate, then professionals must educate children to comprehend not only the world, but also how they will interact, critically analyze and comprehend advertisements, images, and the media through their understanding of agency. By having achieved greater understanding of one's society and enhancing our ability to critically analyze the media, citizens have a better chance of achieving democracy. Vinson and Ross' (2003) states that:

> Advocates for a radically democratic schooling, one in which such pedagogical practices as authentic instruction, authentic assessment, transformative, culturally relevant teaching and learning, multicultural education, whole language, multilingual education, and democratic education itself (among others) can both claim space and make serious and broad-based difference. (p. 141)

This advocation of "culturally relevant schooling" alluded to by Vinson and Ross, parallels Kellner's (1995) assertion that views students in the postmodern culture as requiring skills to be literate in critical media. In order to be literate in this era of image-advertising, Kellner (1995) believes that it is essential that our youth be able to comprehend what role the media plays in establishing bias for both individual and groups of people. It is also important that young people be able to offset the continual barrage of the media in order to counteract advertisers' attempts to control teens via political, economic, pedagogical powers. What would this change in education look like in terms of critical media pedagogy? According to Sinclair (1996, p. 27), there are four principles that help to promote a strong media literacy program:

1. All media are a construction achieved by a process of selection of images, codes and conventions.

2. Audiences develop their own meanings from media texts. These meanings could be those intended by the producers for a target audience, or they could be oppositional readings of the intended message. Who is represented? Who is left out? Media literacy is an excellent site for discussions about bias, equity and justice.

3. Creators of mass media are subject to commercial implications and reflect many influences. Once again, as students begin to make their own media, they quickly come to understand how the pressure of outside factors shapes a media text.

4. All media contain values and ideology. In other words all media represent the producers' point of view and aesthetic preferences. No media text is ideologically neutral.

The work of Giroux (2000) seems to be in accord with Sinclair's concepts in terms of a school's responsibility to help its students recognize what skills, knowledge and vocabulary are needed to make sense of the outside world and what power-relations occur daily in our lives. What a formalized media literacy program can is a connection between education and the outside world that is personal and relates immediately to a teenager's life. It brings the realization of how our society is intertwined with political and corporate power and how these variables are linked to almost everything in society to some extent. If Sinclair's principles were addressed within an educational system, it would help to diminish the corporate power that one attributes to a lack of education in critical media pedagogy. Through Giroux's writings, one is able to extrapolate that increased public awareness and critical pedagogy in schools would be the last topic that corporate America would want to have students gain knowledge of but it is the only way that the threat that is posed by a continuously growing corporate culture can be halted and the power brought back into the public's hands.

I view our schools as a place to help educate our students to interact with their culture and corporate America, not in an adversarial role, but in a symbiotic relationship where there is equal understanding and appreciation. Both Giroux and I are of the same mind: there needs to be a critical pedagogical shift in order to accomplish both goals. In order to address this influence over students and the educational system, either intense or a substantial rise in the instruction of cultural studies would be essential. Cultural studies looks at the whole rather than the part; according to Giroux (1994a), "Cultural studies is largely defined through its analysis of the interrelationships between culture and power" (p. 281). Cultural studies allows the participant to observe the competing relations in relation to power domains and helps students to develop a more critical view of an image driven world and the role that corporate America plays in the power that derives from these images.

At present, media literacy programs have already been instituted over the past couple of decades in "Australia, Canada, and parts of the United Kingdom" and "Germany and Latin America have media literacy as parts of their school curricula" (Strasburger & Wilson, 2002). Australia, for example, has made it mandatory that schools provide media education for all students K-12. This core curriculum incorporates production art along with the study of semiotics within the same art program (Brown, 1998). Why then do Americans fail to incorporate media literacy courses in our schools? Consequently, America is the most media saturated country in the world (Sizer, 1995)! Actually, a media literacy curriculum has been discussed and deliberated seriously in the past decade. Kubey (1998) and Hobbs (1998) report that New Mexico and North Carolina have statewide initiatives in place and developments toward a curriculum is taking place in Wisconsin and Minnesota; in fifteen states there is at least some form of media literacy concepts included in the curriculum. And while talks of media

literacy initiatives are growing in states across the country, Potter (2005) believes that "we need to monitor whether this talk about the importance of media literacy and its inclusion in mission statements translates to meaningful implementation." If there were to be an implementation of media literacy in American schools, using one or a combination of the theories identified earlier in this paper, what would be the barriers to the instruction? Several of these barriers include:

- Lack of agreement in the determination regarding education (Brown, 1998).

- The limited funds available for educational expenditures that derive from the federal government (Kubey, 1998).

- The high cost that it takes to train teachers and sustain a commitment to the instruction of media literacy (Potter, 2005).

- Lack of agreement among academics as to what media literacy is and what the objectives should be (Potter, 2005).

Barriers to classroom instruction of media literacy based on research reports include a lack of time, space, proper training at the college level (Brown, 2001), and the appropriate materials to teach the course (Koziol, 1989). These barriers, while immense and challenging to surmount, can be overcome. Potter (2005) points out one way to overcome these barriers: societal techniques. By utilizing "societal techniques, the focus is exerting power on a particular part of the industry, the government, or some institution to increase public awareness about a problem or to bring about some particular change" (p. 323). Potter (2005) goes on to state, "contacts are also extremely important. By linking up with other powerful people and groups, you could become part of something that could potentially have enough power to get attention of the large media companies" (p. 323). However, even if one is going to use societal techniques to implement a media literacy course, there is still a need for money to support the cause. If the

monetary resources were to be found, then the next step would be to design the instruction. The instruction may differ depending on whose theoretical framework the instructor may follow but the main focus of the instruction would be to inform and sensitize teens to the intent of media's images and pressure. An example would be that students would be able to observe how the media choreographs scenes that may be taken for reality, such as staged fights. These students could observe how the fight is planned and acted out to look real when no one actually is hurt (Brown 2001; Potter 2001; D.G. Singer & J.L. Singer 1998; J.L. Singer & D.G. Singer 1998). Stienberg, (1995) agrees that modeling these types of representations for children is the most radical way to instruct critical media literacy/critical media pedagogy. This type of instruction develops toward an in-depth study of the formal mechanics and production that takes place in contemporary media. However, Stienberg (1995) points out that before one can understand the formal mechanics involved in the production of contemporary media, a student would need to begin with an interrogation of media images, starting with the written and visual. Ideally, this foundation will help students examine pop culture's role in the dilemmas that one faces every day from visual imagery.

According to Vinson and Ross (2003), "critical media literacy entails a multiple and dynamic classroom practice encompassing at least three distinct, though related, elements: (1) construction; (2) critique and creation; and (3) system modeling" (p. 146). The belief is that, "at best, each of these would contribute to a radical pedagogical project consistent with resisting the hegemonic tendencies of controlling images and image power" (Vinson & Ross, 2003, p. 146).

How might these lessons in media literacy and critical media studies work in the real world? The Singers (Singer, D.G., Zucherman, D.M., & Singer, J.L., 1980) developed an eight lesson critical viewing curriculum for students that is designed to instruct our children in the

inter-workings of production, special effects, distinctions between media reality and reality, television violence and stereotyping.

For media studies to be effective in schools, educators, students, and others interested in schooling to cherish the goals of democracy, authenticity, the collective good, and to actively confront the many dangers of oppression" (Vinson & Ross, 2003, p. 160). Most importantly, "it would accept and interrogate the attachment between image and everyday life and the importance of one to the other" (Vinson & Ross, 2003, p. 160-161). For this to happen, there would need to be a transformation from the current and preexisting forms of maintaining the status quo that permeates the educational system and society, and move toward an educational system, in which educators would question, analyze, and oppose the various forms of corporate and governmental power, influence and exploitation.

2.1.9   Conclusion

One can easily ascertain from the research that there is a fundamental and essential requirement for students to be educated in our high schools in the art of critical media literacy. Many countries have already seen the need for media studies to be included in their curriculum but where the need may be the greatest and where much of the media is generated in the world, the United States, there seems to be no eagerness to educate our youth in the art of deciphering the authentic from the imaginary and vice-versa.

Corporate America recognized over than 15 years ago that teenagers had the most expendable cash accessible. The media is not just a niche in our society but a significant vehicle for persuading consumers (teenagers) to buy a product in order to assimilate with their peer group. The visual media is ubiquitous, appearing in television ads, games, sports, billboards,

newspapers, on what people wear, or pervading our schools with Coke Days. There seems to be a plethora of corporate marketing inundating our youth on a daily basis. The message that they are sending our youth is violence, sexuality, alcohol, cigarettes, what is deemed physical beauty, and how to look. The research in this paper clearly illustrates that visual media messages that are employed by corporate America indeed may produce a profound effect on what school children think, consume, and what they deem important. Via the Intranet, television, and the physical world in which they lie, teenagers have become a pawn for media moguls to exploit. The need for educating our teenagers in the art of marketing and how to decipher the meanings conveyed through these interactions is vital when one examines the ramifications, such as bulimia, alcohol exposure, sexual promiscuity and physical aggression. At this time, our schools do not offer courses in media literacy, nor does it seem likely to happen in the near future. The only way that media literacy courses will be offered in high schools is to educate our Department of Education at the federal and state levels, as well as the local school boards. The advertising age is upon every citizen, and the world itself has transformed into a large corporate conglomerate that has enveloped adolescents and has great power and control over the teenagers of today. Only education and an awareness of marketing and corporate strategies will help these young people make the right choices in the future.

3.0   CHAPTER THREE

3.1   METHODOLOGY & METHODS

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of media images on teenagers in regard to their behavior, beliefs and preferences. The research questions that supported the foundation of this study were: 1.) How teenagers construct and interpret symbols and images and how they make meaning of these visuals; 2.) The role that violent media images play in the increase of aggressive behavior in our youth; 3.) The role that sexually explicit media images have on sexual behavior, fashion, and sales; 4.) The contributory effects of media images related to cigarette and alcohol consumption in connection to teenager consumption; 5.) How powerful visual imagery and advertising are to consumption of goods and how teenagers make sense of their own body image and awareness. In order to connect the research questions to visual images, I chose images that contained depictions of violence, sexuality, alcohol, cigarettes, and body image. From this study's concluding data, I illustrate the requisite need of a curricular amendment that will include mandatory coursework in the area of media literacy through a cultural studies program K-12. The University of Pittsburgh Institutional Review Board approved all parts of the study protocol. Twenty high school teenagers aged 14-18 were recruited from a pool of 1,500 students from a suburban school

district 20 miles outside the city of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Participants were recruited to represent contrasting levels (low to high) of socioeconomic status within this suburban school district. Extended in-depth interviews were conducted so that I would be able to collect as much comprehensive information as possible.

3.1.1 Methodology

The methodology that I used for this study is semi-structured interviews; these semi-structured interviews have helped me to determine to what extent the subjects are able to understand and interpret visual media advertising. Following this methodology, I prepared questions prior to the interview, allowing each person to describe his experiences pertaining to the question's area of the query. In this way, I was able to guide the interviews. As Rubin and Rubin (1995) advise, "The results are imposed obligations on both sides. The qualitative researcher's philosophy determines what is important, what is ethical, and the completeness and accuracy of the results" (p. 2). The qualitative interview provided me with the ability to be a little more informal, therefore allowing me to dig deeper into core belief systems that govern responses to media stimulation. According to Alasuutari (1998), "the interviewer follows up an interview with more questions for clarification or understanding. The key is to establish rapport and trust" (p. 145). It was also important that I pursued themes or concepts as the interview was in progress. This ability to pursue concepts and probe further allowed me to ask questions to pursue leads or to ask for verification of meaning if I believed that the interviewee was not answering the question completely or leaving important information out of his or her answer.

The interview also contained five advertisements that possessed content related to fitness, beauty, purchasing and violence. I asked the interviewees to answer prompts (See Appendices

A—Interview Questions & F—Media Advertisements and Questions) specifically designed to determine their beliefs, behavior and preferences based on these advertisements.

The interview took place at a high school in an environment that was quiet and free from distraction; I used a tape recorder and a pad to take notes during the interview. I hired a professional to transcribe the interviews from the audiotape. The questions I asked were questions that related to power, persuasion, control, democracy, and pedagogy; I based these questions on the theoretical framework drawn from the frameworks of Giroux, Foucault, and Vinson and Ross.

3.1.2   Selection of Study Participants

I selected my study participants on a number of factors to provide the most meaningful data for my research study based on stratification criteria. I first referred to Glesne and Peshkin (1992) who define stratification as, "thinking in terms of important variables related to the problem; thinking of important stratification criteria is a good place to begin" (p. 25). I chose students between the ages of 14 and 18, because of the intense attention within the last twenty years of large corporations, through visual media, on adolescents as consumers. The teenage market is now a multi-billion dollar business; this growth can be largely attributed to the massive increase in discretionary spending among this particular age group (Lauro, 1999; McNeal, 1999; Salamon, 2001).   I interviewing both male and female students, I could determine the differing effects that images have, if any, according to gender. I also attempted to include a maximum variation sampling of these same students based on socio-economic status. This was intended to determine how students from varied socioeconomic statuses view media images. By altering the selection of the participants, I attempted to learn as much as possible about my topic from the

identified population (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). However, according to Title 1 guidelines that indicate socioeconomic status in schools, there was not enough of a range of low and high SES participants to provide me with enough data to infer a relationship between SES and the way a teen interprets the visual media. I do not know why I was unable to obtain greater participation by low SES students in this study. In this school status is important, and differences in status are at times pronounced. With that in mind, it was not surprising that they might not want to share their experiences with someone who they feel may judge them in a way that is negative.

3.1.3   Participants

For this study, I am seeking to acquire an in-depth understanding, which means that I spent extended amounts of time with a few respondents within a limited number of sites (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). According to Glesne and Peshkin (1992), "the strategy of participant selection in qualitative research rests on the multiple purposes of illuminating, interpreting, and understanding---and on the researcher's own imagination and judgment" (p. 27). The parameter designed for this study will allow me to obtain a deeper understanding of their responses to media. The boundaries of the population being studied were set within the parameters of:

- Age: 14-18 years of age
- Gender: males and females
- Suburban setting
- Context: students attend the same suburban school district 15 miles outside of a major city.
- Number of subjects: ten males and ten females (N=20).

I first conducted a random sample of the school population in order to obtain data for this research study. To accomplish this, I advertised at the high school for those students who may be interested in being a participant in my research study. From this pool of students who were

interested in participating, I chose, depending on the number of students who wanted to participate, every third student in alphabetical order from those students divided up by gender (male/female). This sampling framework allowed me to make inferences based on the data collected that will transfer across the population in terms of gender.

3.1.4   Methods of Data Collection

The data collection method that best benefited this study was face-to-face guided interviews. The guided interviews allowed me to glean more in-depth information on each "participant's everyday life world and his or her relation to it" (Kvale, 1996, pp. 30-31). Since this study was based on the interactions of teenagers and the world of visual media, the in-depth interview had a great deal of benefits.

I believed that the face-to-face structured interview would provide rich detailed answers, reflect the concerns of the study's purpose, provide flexibility to obtain more significant data, and allow "room to pursue topics of particular interest" (Leidner, 1993, p. 238).

3.1.5   Methods of Analysis

Coffey and Atkinson (1996) suggest that the "analysis of qualitative data begins with the identification of key themes and patterns" (p. 26). In order for me to analyze my data, I tape-recorded each interview and then had these interviews transcribed into written text. These transcriptions allowed me to begin coding the data in order to link segments or instances of the text into categories. From these categories, I made a determination as to which prevailing concepts could be drawn from the data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Coding was a very important

part of the data interpretation process because it allowed me to decisively link "the original 'raw data,' that is, the textual material such as interview transcripts or field notes on the one hand and the researcher's theoretical concepts on the other" (Siedel & Kelle, 1995, p. 52). However, the identification and process of the data was flexible as I began to view the data as a whole and began to observe the formations of other concepts or categories emerge. This flexibility allowed my research to be more factual and true to the findings. I also scribed notes that captured the affect of the subject during the interviews as the affect, tone, or physical behaviors were found to be an important variable to the study.

3.1.6   Informed Consent

I met with all of the participants who were chosen randomly (Appendices D - Parent Notification & E -Student Notification) to address the study, explain the consent forms (under and over 18 years of age), and to address any issues that the participants may have in regard to the study. I then asked each interviewee to sign and date a consent form if he or she chose to participate.

The consent forms included (Appendices B – Under 18 Years of Age & C – 18 Years of Age or Older):

- Information about the study and what will be done with the data.
- That the interview will be tape-recorded.
- That the information will be transcribed, edited, analyzed, and included in the published dissertation.
- That the participants will have the opportunity to review the edited transcription to make sure that the interpretations and meanings are accurately represented.
- That the participant may withdraw from the study at any time.
- That parental or guardianship consent will be required on the consent form if a participant is under 18 years of age.
- Parental or guardianship written consent will be followed up with verbal consent in person or through telephone communication for participants under the age of 18.

Ethically, my main concern was to obtain informed consent and to make sure that all of the information pertaining to the transcription of the interview and the rights of the participants were honored and any questions answered.

3.1.7 Data Analysis

The task of situating raw data within a theoretical framework and then organizing, managing and analyzing the qualitative data was effectively accomplished by collaboratively analyzing data and utilizing the capabilities of N-Vivo 8. This computer-assisted data analysis software was invaluable, yet ultimately dependent on the integrity of the coding system procedure, node tree creation, and question construction.

As I began the task of making meaning through qualitative analysis of 35 hours of audiotaped interviews relating to visual culture and adolescents, I had to delineate my theoretical framework and the constructs of the literature review. It was important that I thoroughly understood the concepts of power, capitalism, commodification, exploitation, influence, democracy, visceral response, and the need for a visual culture pedagogy as articulated by scholars and researchers like Giroux, Foucault, and Vinson and Ross. While Giroux makes a legitimate proposal for media literacy curriculum, he, like other authors, does not substantiate his beliefs with data. The charge of this dissertation was to adequately analyze and present data in relation to my theoretical framework, and then to build upon that framework and analysis to assert the need for critical media pedagogy. This research presents meaningful contributions to visual culture theory and useful contributions for the practice of critical media pedagogy in public schools. However, since the sample results from subjects of the same race, from the same

school district, the ability to apply these results may not be the same in school settings where there may be greater diversity in race and socioeconomic status.

I decided to use a computer assisted data analysis program at the suggestion of a professor, Maureen Porter, who explained to me that the program would be useful in interpreting data and adequately supporting conclusions that may be drawn from the data. After transcribing the audio, I used N-Vivo's features that allowed me to slow the tape speed enough that I could type the responses accurately. At the time of the transcriptions, I created headers for each subject, choosing pseudonyms for each minor as required by the University of Pittsburgh Institutional Review Board (IRB) for research involving adolescent subjects. I created pseudonyms using random name choices. With the interview data separated into two sections -- Interviews Session One and Interviews Session Two -- I uploaded the sections into the raw data hopper.

3.1.8   Limitations

There were several limitations that I had to consider as I embarked on my research study. First, since the subjects were randomly selected from a suburban school with a very diverse socioeconomic population within 20 miles of a major metropolitan city, the results would be limited by ability to generalize information to populations that do not have the same diversity or parallel suburban environment; secondly, participants of this study may have responded in a manner consistent in what they perceived I would predict, regardless of their natural inclination in reference to their behavior, beliefs and preferences toward media images. Conversely, some participants may have guessed the study hypothesis, disagreed with the premise that media images have any influence over their behavior, beliefs, and preferences, and therefore suppressed

their beliefs and feelings regarding the power of media images; thirdly, there was no way to account for the amount of exposure that each participant in the study sample has experienced in his or her lifetime and how this affected the results; lastly, since the participants of this study were teenagers and required parental consent, some participants may have been reluctant in being truthful, knowing that parents had the right to review the protocol after editing.

I believed that by conducting in-depth interviews over a number of occasions as needed, that I was able to control the research study's limitations. The experiences discussed by the participants may have had commonalities across all experiences at some point during the interview process; these interviews allowed me to delve further into the personal experiences of participants based on their exposure or lack thereof and would allow me to follow up with additional questions that would help me to draw on themes or consistencies. Also, the images about which the participants shared common experiences provided information that may not have been available during the interview sessions.

3.1.9   Researcher Subjectivity

The foundation for this study was clear: to determine the influence that media images exert on our teenagers in terms of their behaviors, beliefs and preferences. When I first began this research study, I had some strong preconceived notions about media literacy and the power of the media on our youth. As I began to research the literature, review research journals, and visit Websites on media literacy, I found that there was a passionate movement across the world whose foremost objective was to educate our youth in becoming literate in media images. Some of what I had discovered was that within many schools across the world, curriculums now included the study of media as part of their arts or cultural studies instruction. This led me to

wonder how educated our children in the United States were on the influence of media images. I considered that children today in wealthier nations have grown up in a media saturated culture unlike what I grew up in and were probably more aware of their environment and the power of the media than I had expected. That aside, I was very anxious to collect and examine the data from this study so that I could better understand what teenagers of today's culture comprehend about media literacy. Still, while I believed that our schools are not as yet to the point where they need to be in terms of the instruction of media literacy, I was not as sure as I once was as to what our teenagers understood about the media's influence on them and their behaviors, beliefs, and preferences. I believe that the data from this study demonstrates a lack of understanding of American culture and the media that I was not aware of when I began this study. Since this fact may be revealed in the data results, I am very receptive to alternative interpretations that are not in conformity with my own. These alternative interpretations may lead to further discourse in relation to media literacy in future classrooms.

4.0   CHAPTER FOUR

4.1   THE INFLUENCE OF VISUAL MEDIA ON ADOLESCENT BEHAVIORS AND AFFECT---THE FORMATION OF PERSONAS, PREDJUDICE, AND BODY IMAGE IN OUR CULTURE

I would like to begin Chapter 4 by introducing the respondents and the school district to the reader. The more that one can familiarize themselves with the respondents the more that they may begin to understand why a particular respondent may perceive the world in relation to the visual media they interact with daily.   Knowing the respondents may also help to find consistencies among their beliefs and the way that they view American society. The respondents range from freshman to senior class status and are evenly divided between males and females (10 each). The respondents are all Caucasian, which is not reflective of the school district itself, which I will explain in more detail when I provide additional information related the school district. Listed below are the respondents who were a part of my study and the pseudo names that were assigned to them for confidentiality purposes.

4.1.1 Respondent Information

The information provided with each respondent is based on their perceptions of themselves through questions that I asked them during the interview process. Their answers gave me a sense of how they view themselves and their relationship to our world. It also provided me with insight into how each respondent interacts with the media based on their view of self. I hope that each reader will make some type of connection to the respondents and will be able to come up with their own theories of how the respondents make sense of the media world.

Alex
Male-Junior
Alex is an impressive young man, physically. Alex plays football for his high school team. His size is somewhat deceiving because he is a very nice easy-going young man who sees himself as being very funny and usually bases everything on his sense of humor.   Alex believes that his parents see him similarly - as being funny but also as charming. Alex would like to be an electrician one day and start his own electrical company.

Beth
Female-Sophomore
Beth is a very nice person who is soft spoken and views herself as being funny. She thinks that having a sense of humor is a good way to gain attention while in a group of people. Beth believes that her parents view her as being very determined and with a lot of morals and goals that are unlike most other students. In the future, Beth would like to be involved with music because she considers herself expressive. Beth feels that she may end up in the education field.

Evan
Male-Senior
Evan is a person who seems to be very laidback and easy-going; he is involved in track and field and may continue this sport while he is in college. Evan views himself as being very driven and determined; a person who is loyal to things, people, and groups. His friends would describe him as laid back but fun. In the future, Evan views himself as being in some sort of advertising management position because of his interest in advertising campaigns and commercials. According to a personality test he completed recently, he would do well as an inventor or perhaps something that requires in depth analysis and clear thinking.

Fred
Male-Junior

Fred is a very quiet person who at times has difficulties expressing himself clearly. He is involved heavily in baseball but also enjoys playing video games. Fred views himself as a very shy person and believes his friends view him as quiet and mainly comfortable with people that he knows. In the future, Fred thinks that he would like to be an accountant, which ironically fits the perception of what accountant personalities are most like.

Gia
Female-Freshman
Gia is a very nice girl who is pleasant and exudes confidence. Gia views herself as trying to be the best at anything that she tries. She is determined and intelligent. She believes that her friends view her as soft spoke yet very responsible. In the future, Gia has aspirations to either be a lawyer or a pediatrician.

Ian
Male-Junior
Ian is a student who plays both baseball and basketball for his school and other teams in the off-season. Ian views himself as being extremely confident, someone who conveys confidence when he enters a room; he also views himself as being outgoing and funny. Ian believes that his friends see him as athletic and wanting to be the center of attention. In the future, Ian sees himself as being involved in sports management or in sports law.

Jake
Male-Senior
Jake is a very nice person who I perceive is also being very confident. He is interested in knowing what is going on in the world and sees one of his most endearing qualities as being in "The Zone." Jake believes that his friends view him as quick to judge, but open minded and determined. In the future, Jake would like to follow in his father's footsteps and be involved in business, but his love for politics may lead him to be a lawyer instead.

Jamie
Female-Senior
Jamie plays basketball for the high school team and gives off self-confidence and individualism. Jamie views herself as out-going, quick on her feet, and always willing to try new things. Her friends would describe Jamie as nice, friendly, laid-back, creative, and a kind of go-with-the flow-person. In the future, Jamie sees herself as either being an occupational therapist, involved in sports medicine, or being an educational support teacher.

Jenna
Female-Senior
Jenna is small in stature and seems to have a fashion sense about her. Jenna views herself as trying to always find the positive in something instead of worrying about whether or not something is going wrong, and doesn't like to stress over things if she can avoid it. She doesn't see herself as being a follower, but a person who is independent in her actions. In the future, Jenna would like to be involved in business as it relates to advertising, someone who comes up with the concepts, sort of a director, a mix of both.

Jessica
Female-Senior
Jessica is a very nice girl who is dressed as though she cares deeply about her appearance and her fashion-statement. Jessica views herself as being very religious and her religious convictions guide her in her decision-making. She is very connected to her church and a lot of her friends and the activities that she pursues are involved in her church. Jessica's friends view her as being very athletic and outgoing, who loves to be around her friends. She believes that her friends also see her as someone who is trustworthy and dependable. In the future, Jessica would like to go in the profession of medicine, whether it is as a plastic surgeon, anesthesiologist, or as an emergency room doctor.

Maddy
Female-Sophomore
Maddy seems to be a very quiet person by first impressions. Maddy also sees herself as being quiet by first impressions but as you get to know her she believes that you see someone who is outgoing, sarcastic, and blunt, not into long drawn out conversations. Maddy also sees herself as someone who uses humor in pressure situations to help her through difficult times. Maddy believes that her friends see her as being not too athletic (is involved in track and cross-country), but someone who is sarcastic and organized. Her parents see her as academically sound and someone who likes to shop. In the future, Maddy would like to possibly be a veterinarian but is still undecided at this point.

Mario
Male-Senior
By first impression, Mario seems very laid back and has little interest in fashion. Mario views himself as being laid back and able to not become frustrated over situations that may frustrate others. Mario's friends also see him as being laid back along with being funny and nice. In the future, Mario would like to be a musician or at least be in the field of music in some facet.

Mary
Female-Senior
Mary seems to be very fashion conscious and nice at first impression. She views herself as someone who is not swayed by what people think, an independent thinker, someone who will stand up for her beliefs. Mary's friends view her as quiet, one who enjoys easy-going activities, such as movies and shopping. Mary is athletic and is currently a cheerleader for the high school.

Mike
Male-Senior
Mike presents as an extremely out-going individual, someone who is very confident and sure of his decision making skills. Mike seems to support my view of him by claiming that he is outgoing; not afraid of hardly anything. He also stated that he likes to try different things and do anything that keeps him loose, "you know, chill." Mike believes that his friends view him as a little crazy and also outgoing. In the future, Mike sees himself as working in sports marketing because of his love for spots and because, as he puts it, "I'm a pretty good bullshitter."

Nancy
Female-Sophomore
Nancy is probably the respondent who I see as being the most fashion conscious at first impression. Nancy views herself as someone who is an independent thinker, has a great sense of humor, and one is a good leader. Her friends see her as someone who is funny, outgoing and at times annoying, but enjoys making people laugh. In the future, Nancy hopes to attend college but is still not sure what her profession will be, she hopes to find direction in her career path by the end of her first year in college.

Nick
Male-Sophomore
Nick is a football player who seems quiet, calm and laid back. Nick views himself as creative, especially in his writing. He disclosed to me that his friends see him as someone who is outgoing and not afraid of anything; he also believes that he is viewed as someone very nice and conscientious about other people's feelings. In the future Nick would like to be a journalist, or at least involved in some capacity with the art of writing.

Rick
Male-Senior
My first impression of Rick was that he is laid back and very intelligent. Rick views himself as being very responsible, hard working, and focused, his friends view him the same way. In the future, Rick sees himself as someone who would like to manage a company. He believes that his ability to lead and his ability to rationally delegate assignments would lend to him being successful in the field.

Samantha
Female-Sophomore
Samantha is a very nice girl who views herself as being very responsible for age. She contributes her ability to be very responsible on the divorce of her parents at a young age. Samantha also sees herself as someone who is artistic, which allows her to relax and be laid back. Samantha's friends view her as artsy and athletic, someone who can laugh things off and not take too much seriously. In the future, Samantha would like to become an emergency room doctor who would dedicate some of her time to travel to Africa to help those in need.

Tracey
Female-Junior
Tracey seems, by first impression, to be individualistic and kind. She sees herself as someone who is very artistic but is well rounded enough to have "school smarts" across academic disciplines (math, science, English). Tracey believes that her friends view her as artsy, energetic, talkative, and very friendly. In the future, Tracey would like to work in the arts in some capacity. She talked with me about a website that she created in 7th grade that has items that she designed for distribution. Tracey seems very goal oriented and shared with me that she is the graphic designer for several school committees and is heavily involved in the creation of the school calendar.

Trent

Male-Freshman

Trent seems, at first impression, to be disgruntled in some way…it is just a feeling that I had when first meeting with him. Trent views himself as an actor, someone who believes that his whole life is a show and is always putting on, as he puts it, "weird little things." His friends view Trent as a split personality, someone who is wacky and wild some of the time, but then can turn around and be down low and kind of boring. This assessment seems to support the fact that his sense of humor can also be polarized, one day wacky and another day "dry". Trent is not so sure what the future will bring him in terms of a profession, but he does see himself either acting in some capacity or being involved in the arts.

4.1.2 School District Information

The school district where I conducted my study is located in a suburban community northeast of downtown Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The school population is made up of over 4,000 students and represents a wide range of social, economic, cultural, and religious backgrounds. The student population is made up of more than 10% Socio-Economically Disadvantaged students and less than 1% of students who are English Language Learners. The school district has a student enrollment of over 90% white students in comparison to the less than 10% representing other ethnic groups. I was not able to obtain a broad range of socioeconomic levels within my study as I first intended, due to the lack of interest on their part.

"I don't think that Paris Hilton is as stupid as she appears on TV.

I don't think that's possible" Gia, November 2008.

Mary Pipher (1996) pointed out that while it has always been adult and teenage females who felt shame for their body type, girls as young as ten and eleven years old now feel these inadequacies. And it does not stop there - generally speaking, females have been the target of clothing ads, weight loss ads, skin products, etc…however, more recently, there has been a surge

77

to inform the male population that these products can also help them to achieve a look that fits with the in crowd.

With bodybuilding, fitness, men's fashions and grooming products as popular as ever, males can now feel the same pressures as beleaguered females. In 2003, Quart identified a five-year period in which corporations made a concerted effort to focus on the male consumer through fashion (e.g. Abercrombie and Fitch) and male fitness. Quart (2003) claims that these visual images created an awareness of insecurities regarding male physiques that has never previously occurred in our society.

These well thought out and developed marketing strategies create an insecurity in which these corporations are more than eager to find a panacea for a nominal fee. This nominal fee, according to Peter Zollo (1999), who heads a marketing research firm that focuses on teenagers, has led to an increase in spending among teenagers from $63 billion in 1994 to $94 billion in 1998. With this much money at stake, there is very little chance that the focus of Corporate America is going to turn away from the teenage market any time soon. Insecurities surrounding teens, both male and female, centering around their physical self-image, show that there is too much money to be lost, however; not enough teens with critical media literacy skills to comprehend it all.

In this chapter, the focus is on how teens make sense of their interactions with media images that contain connotations that result in a shift in their affect and behavior. I will first analyze the data collected during my interviews to determine if there is a belief that the media creates cultural adoration among personalities that are popular in our society. Respondents will then be asked to view two visual advertisements (GNC and Nike) that consist of a male and female athlete and answer questions. From the analysis of the data collected, I am hoping to

show a relationship between visual imagery and the personas and prejudices that pervade our society. I will then look into the possibility that the media has created a cultural prejudice against people that are overweight individuals within our society. Through the use of these marketing practices and techniques, I hope to substantiate how media images have an effect upon how teenagers view their physical selves.

4.1.3   Media Creation of Cultural Adoration

"Yeah, I guess. They probably think that just because they are skinny

and stuff that they're better than everyone else" Fred, November 2008.

When I started to review the data, I found that teenagers today find images of male/female models or actors/actresses, to promote a "look" that allows them to receive cultural adoration from those in American society.   All of the males and females in this research study believe that the media structures and assembles the perfect scenarios that allow images to make the statement that they want made (e.g. Britany Spears & Lindsay Lohan). The data indicated that no matter if the respondent was a senior or a freshman, the responses comprised of a consistent viewpoint about how the power of our media creates adoration. From a cultural perspective, I posit that the data reveals a society that is superficial in its adulation of others due to the power of the media. Corporations invest large sums of money to promote a "style" or a physical "look," that they know will make them considerable profits in return. This leads me to speculate that a self-defeatist belief by teens may emerge that unless one is found to be attractive by media standards, or is considered more talented than others, one should not even bother trying

to meet these standards because the media promotes those with an elevated level of both attributes, and spends the rest of the time ridiculing those that do not have these "positive" qualities (e.g. Charles Barkley, Oprah).   Beth is seemingly aware of this issue, "Yeah, I think that we definitely hold them higher than any person should be just because of the spotlight that they are in their daily life, but they're definitely not better than us in any way."   While Beth believes that, "they're definitely not better than us in any way," there is no indication from Beth's data, or any other respondent's interview data, that they believe they are just as good as those individuals…that they have a legitimate chance to ever attain that level of success. With that, I believe that there is an emotional component that cannot be overlooked; that the bar has been set so high by the media, that even at a young age there is a view that, "Why should I even bother to try?"

The data also told me that respondents' viewed those that are considered "good-looking" by our societal standards to have an advantage over those that are not. Responses from Trent and Gia are consistent with other respondents' views regarding those that are held to a higher standard due to their physical beauty. Trent believes that if "you're cute, then you have a way higher status than someone that's hideously ugly." Gia added that, "I think that there are people who have just as much talent as them as acting goes but aren't good looking, so they don't get the roles." Terms such as: skinny, nice looking, hot, perfect, and pretty, were used consistently from the respondents when describing what attributes they considered important in being popular or famous. Mario's response encapsulates the sentiments held by the respondents when he stated, "They're all thin, and all got perfect hair or a perfect face. I've never seen anybody that has some sort of flaw make it really big." It's hard to argue with the respondent's view that if you are more attractive that you have a better opportunity to obtain fame and notoriety over

someone who does not. In my view, most of reality television is centered on young, attractive individuals who find fame, some long term, based on nothing more than their physical appearance and personality that appeal to young adults. In rare cases, a role is assigned to someone who is unattractive by society standards and achieves the same notoriety with the same ease. Sex sells, and attractive males and females sell products.

4.1.4   Creation of Personas through Visual Imagery

"Especially with actors and actresses, if you are young, you're pretty, don't have wrinkles, you aren't fat. You're going to get more roles because that's what people like to see" Nancy, November 2008.

When I think of someone like Paris Hilton, Ozzy Osborne, Dennis Rodman and Vin Diesel, I think of contrived personas. The media, in conjunction with a person who has marketability, creates an image that can be marketed for a lucrative payday for both parties. A good analogy would be a professional wrestler like Hulk Hogan. Hulk Hogan has changed his persona several times in his career because it made him both more popular with fans as well as helping the World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE), Hogan's employer increase profits. Personas are big business and people such as: Paris, Ozzy, and Dennis, have made a great deal of money off of their personas. What is important is being able to tell that what one sees is not always reality. Ozzy Osborne is a great example of corporate designed personas. If teenagers believe in Ozzy's demonic appearance and his satanic lyrics, then they may believe that Ozzy is the anti-Christ; he has certainly turned this persona into a profitable business for years - thrilling both teens and adults alike. If one would then watch his television show, The Osbornes, then one

81

would view someone who is yes, crude, but a family man who cares about his kids and whose wife guides much of his career. The Osbornes are the antithesis of how one would think that a heavy metal rocker who has demonic-like tendencies would live, but if one knows anything about the media, and is able to critically analyze its power, it really isn't surprising.

I was interested to see whether the respondents believe that personas were a creation of the media, or whether the personas observed were reflective of their selves. The data that I collected (Table 4.1) demonstrate that most respondents believe that the media creates personas. Only two respondents, one female and one male, believe that the media does not use visual imagery to create reputations; both of these individuals are senior classmen. In these cases, the respondents felt that famous individuals were either chosen by our society, who can't get enough of them, or that they were thrown into the spotlight.

Table 4.1 Personas of Individuals are Created by the Media

	Gender = Female	Gender = Male
No	1	1
Yes	8	6

The theme that was consistent throughout the data was the belief by the respondents that the media helped to created personas that allowed individuals to make millions of dollars off of this deception. In reality, the merging of these fictional personas with a product has helped corporate America earn profitable revenue. If it were not profitable to corporate America, then most likely it would not exist.

The data also established that many of these personas rarely go unnoticed. Many of the respondents frequently repeated the same individuals (Lindsay Lohan, Paris Hilton, Jessica Simpson) during their interviews, while also describing how difficult it was not to see them

constantly on TV. The respondent's went on to describe how they would still end up wanting to see what happens next in a celebrities troubled lives; reality television has certainly brought the lives of these stars into our homes in a personal way that in some cases, ends up being one long commercial. The data also supports that these famous individuals may be acting as they do because they continue to stay relevant as long as they are in the throws of the media.

The data that I collected from the respondents was quite telling; it seems, if the data could be generalized, that our society has created a lot of skepticism when it comes to the media and corporate America. One of the best examples of this belief was by Jamie, "…they could be the smartest—but Jessica Simpson, you know, Chicken of the Sea. She's like, 'is it really chicken or buffalo wings?' …That little commercial and that little tidbit made her millions of dollars." Jamie went on to elaborate that, "the media wanted her to be stupid; so she was stupid." Ian is just as cynical about the media as he states, "They will make people look the best possible way to sell a product." In both of these cases, one could certainly theorize that today's teens are savvy enough to know what they see is not always true and that they do understand the manipulation that occurs when they view images that promote a product or related message about a product. I had to laugh when I looked at the data from Fred, who believes that, "By telling people that if you don't look like this, there is no point in living." Fred may be taking the messages from the media to the extreme, but in theory, he is not far off. The media spends a lot of time and money to influence the thinking of adolescents and their belief systems to one that would be more profitable. While Fred is intense in his statement, he does make a point that may be felt by many in his generation.

One of the most reflective responses was by Samantha. Samantha took an introspective look at herself and of her generation by asserting that "we're easy to mold and shape…we're like

in a transition. We're not set in any ways yet." This statement by Samantha provided me with insight into how at least one teenager was able to see a connection between their developmental stage in life and the media. Samantha also stated how the media uses "models and those people that you think are above you and they show them smoking or using tobacco and you think if they do it that's cool and you should do it." This statement, along with the previous statement shows that Samantha has the ability to be reflective as well as the ability to critically analyze what the media is trying to persuade her to do as a consumer.

Overall, teenagers seemed to have a critical understanding, or at least a cynical approach, in the way that they view the media's creation of personas. There were only two respondents that did not believe that media was the sole reason that personas were developed. Jenna believes that the media creates personas, but at the same time, "I think for others, they do that so they will be in the media." Jenna is skeptical that the media should be totally at fault…that we should also look at the person who is trying to make a name for themselves by their actions that got them there in the first place.

Mario believes as Jenna, that the media certainly has created personas, but at the same time,

> "The casting companies started picking these people, and the viewers saw these perfect
> people and said, 'Oh, my God, they're perfect, and that's when it started.' Then the
> viewers became people in casting companies and then they started looking for people that
> looked perfect."

Jenna's belief that people do what they can (e.g. Mike Tyson, Lindsay Lohan, etc.) to not only gain notoriety but to maintain it is legitimate. For example, I have from time-to-time watched reality shows and have witnessed an interesting individual who stands out from the others on the

show. This individual may have true talent depending on what the show's focal point is, but there are also reality shows where the more outrageous you are the more attention you receive. Once the show has ended, society may notice that this individual is in the tabloids, other reality shows, game shows, talk shows, etc., and that their behavior is becoming even more and more outrageous. I speculate that this behavior is all still media driven, but I also think that it is important to posit that an individual who is coming off of a show that was popular can also keep themselves center stage by keeping their name in the paper. Dennis Rodman is a perfect example, even though he made a lot of money playing professional basketball, he made more money by keeping his name in the paper for his extreme behavior. While the media kept his name in the paper, it was Dennis who married model Carmen Electra and wore a wedding dress; he even appeared recently on the reality show, The Apprentice, in which he acted offensive once again.

Mario's belief that we drive the market for a certain type of "perfect" person may be true. The media is going to give us what sells, and beautiful people do sell. The fact that our society drives the market with everything is no secret, so if the "bad boy" image sells merchandise, then I believe that the focus will be on the "bad boy" image. I am interested in Mario's opinion that society drives the product, not necessarily the media - it certainly makes sense. I also believe that some, if not most of the personas promoted in our society are well planned and developed. Both Jenna and Mario make good points about other variables to take into consideration when we look at the endorsement of a person to be used as spectacle.

4.1.5   Advertisement: GNC

"As soon as I see a bodybuilder I think that he is juicing; ninety-five

85

percent of all bodybuilders do that stuff" Alex, November 2008.

I believe that when it comes to body image, the focal point is usually placed on females. We have seen evidence in Miss America pageants, advertisements for alcohol and cars, swimsuit editions of Sports Illustrated, and countless other visuals of the female body used as a sex object to sell or promote merchandise. The females used in these ads are usually the women that are, by cultural standards, idealized. This perfection usually means that they are thin, fit, have perfect skin and hair, and may or may not have some type of augmentation to their physique. However, since the early 1980's, there has been more of a focus on male body image. Growing up in the 1980's as a teenager, I personally observed an escalation in the marketing of the male physique. The popularity of bodybuilding started to increase with the release of the movie *Pumping Iron,* featuring Arnold Schwarzenegger and Lou Ferrigno. The *Incredible Hulk* and *Aquaman* both hit the television screens along with movies like *Conan the Barbarian* with Arnold Schwarzenegger and the *Rocky* series with Sylvester Stallone. Today, we have magazines devoted to the fitness of men who are not bodybuilders, male movie and soap opera stars that have extremely toned physiques, and a new generation of nutritional supplements that are promoted along with commercials that comprise of these well-defined male bodies by training only three days a week for twenty minutes.

I had respondents view a GNC advertisement that uses Eddie Robinson, a bodybuilder, to sell supplements. The data (Table 4.2) tells a story of how both male and female respondents viewed this advertisement to be both humorous and exploitive of the male physique to sell merchandise. The data also reveals to me that each gender is not critically aware of how advertisers exploit the image of the opposite sex.

The first impressions that the respondents had of the GNC advertisements were diverse. Responses toward this question ranged from steroids to outdated, as well as stereotyping, humorous, and using the male physique to sell merchandise. I first looked at how the genders may view this advertisement differently. The female respondents were skeptical of the bodybuilder's immense physique, alluding to the possible use of performance enhancing drugs; therefore, the females in this study seem to think that just because a male is extremely muscular that this can only happen with steroids. Nancy's comments supports this interpretation when she states, "It was funny, he (the bodybuilder) made it seem like it was just a place for supplements; it's really just a bunch of steroids. I know a lot of guys in my grade that go there for their supplements." Somehow Nancy believes that GNC is now a place that sells steroids; I am sure that is not the perception that GNC wants consumers to have about their company. Something that Nancy said also made me think that she was a little unsure of her beliefs toward GNC. First, Nancy stated that steroids are sold there but then she stated that she knew guys that get their supplements at that store. Nancy may think that steroids and supplements mean the same thing. Tracey is more direct in her response; she believes that this commercial didn't appeal to her and that, "Too muscular, steroids give the wrong image to GNC." The only male, Alex, who believes that steroids is the first impression given, is more than a little skeptical of male bodybuilders regardless of whether it's a commercial or not, "As soon as I see the bodybuilder I think that he is juicing. Ninety-five percent of all bodybuilders do that stuff (steroids) and only five percent are clean." Obviously Alex has his own beliefs regardless of the commercial that he just viewed. His use of statistics seems a little distorted, but this may be his worldview and that may be a creation of this society and the constant discussion of the prevalence of steroids in our sports.

An equal number of males and females found the advertisement humorous. Mike made the most poignant statement toward making this point, "I thought it as funny. I mean if anyone has any sense they know that it doesn't take pills to make you big and strong, especially to look like that." Mike's response spoke in some sense to all of the data collected for this question through its disbelief that supplements can make someone look that big. While these respondents thought it was funny, it is a billion dollar business that I believe is successful do in large part because of these advertisements.

Table 4.2 Respondents' First Impression of the GNC Advertisement

	Gender = Female	Gender = Male
Steroids	4	1
Humorous	3	3
Stereotyping	0	3
Liked ad	0	1
Using Male Physique	5	4
Outdated	1	0

The other response that stood out according to the data was the stereotyping of the male body. Only males viewed this advertisement as promoting the male physique as something that all males should want to look like; or that this advertisement makes him look cool; and that GNC wants males buying this product to look like that. Not one female viewed this advertisement as stereotyping males. This may not be any different for males when looking at the stereotyping of woman in advertisements. The lack of being able to take another gender 's viewpoint is something that needs to be considered when thinking of how critical media pedagogy could help both genders take the other's perspective when viewing media images.

Nine respondents believed that the use of a male physique in this advertisement was to sell merchandise. Rick believes that, "GNC is trying to sell something and you will look like Eddie Robinson if you buy this product." Gia's response is similar to Rick's, "guy is really buff, and the guys that are not as buff watch it; using his body to sell the product."

When I looked at the data by class, I noticed that all four-class levels viewed the commercial as exploiting the male physique, while those that found the advertisement humorous were primarily senior classmen. I surmise that there is understanding across all age groups that males regularly use their physiques in advertisements to sell products. However, respondents from the senior class take these advertisements with a sense of humor. This may be due to their maturity, media literacy skills, or that they have been exposed of a longer period of time to these types of advertisements.

4.1.6   Affect on Boys' Emotionally

"If they do't look like that guy, they're nothing" Fred, November 2008.

The affect of constantly viewing, by society standards, perfect male body types may certainly have an emotional component to consider. I believe that our society often views the male gender as not being affected by these feelings and that it is mainly a female issue. I wanted to find out how both females and males perceived this style of advertisement and whether or not it has a negative affect on the male psyche.

I found (Table 4.3) that popularity, insecurity, and importance, were the themes most attributed to the emotional well-being of boys related to viewing this commercial. Most of the responses focused on insecurity and reflected the importance of being "large" among other

89

males. Consequently, the data from these two categories are similar. The connection between them is that insecurities are brought on from the importance of having huge muscles, while the need to have huge muscles imparts a sense of insecurity. The theme that was consistent throughout the data was that insecurities were caused through advertisements like the one shown to the respondents. When males see a body, which is the image of perfection, then insecurities are likely to take place, and since teenagers are more vulnerable due to their natural insecurities that they experience through adolescence, then one may be able to surmise that marketers know what they are doing. Astonishingly, only two respondents, one male and one being female, believed that being physically bigger would increase popularity and would result in one quickly climbing the social ladder. I always believed the opposite was more reflective of our time, but this may be generational since I was a teen during the fruition of bodybuilding in the 1980's and it seemed to me in those days that bigger made you more popular.

I was also intrigued by what females and males would have to say and how open they would be in their responses. Jake's response was typical of the male responses when he said, "I need to join a gym and start lifting weights; a little insecurity but a bit more drive." Evan's response was broad and focused on the psychological factors that may be taking place as well, "It wouldn't make them feel insecure unless they were already, but it could make them want it more. It could make them feel that they don't have something." While Evan was able to elucidate about the psychological factors involve in viewing these advertisements, there is always believed, in my belief, to be psychological factors in someone who is insecure. Fred was probably the most to the point about his belief, when he asserted, "If they don't look like that guy, their nothing." That may be a bit extreme, but marketers obviously are promoting the belief that if one wants to look healthy and big, then you need to take these supplements.

Table 4.3 GNC Advertisement's Effect on Boys Emotionally

	Gender = Female	Gender = Male
Huge muscles are important	6	5
Popularity	1	1
Insecure	6	8

The female respondent data was similar to the data from the male respondents. There was a theme in the data that suggests that males would need to be that big to feel good about themselves - that their self-confidence would be affected negatively by viewing these ads. Jenna has had the opportunity to observe the affect of these advertisements first hand, "My brother sees commercials like this and now he wants to be huge; it works on him." This response is important because it is not a self-reflection but is a witness account of someone who is very close to a person who has been affected by these advertisements. The advertisements obviously worked because Jenna makes the case that she has been a witness to this change…and who would be closer? Now while there may be other reasons for this change that not even Jenna is privy to, but we at least can speculate that advertisements that are similar to the this one have increased the insecurities in male teenagers.

4.1.7 What the Ad is Trying to Accomplish

"If you take these supplements you will be buff; you

will also need to work out and stuff as well." Maddy, November 2008.

I wanted to know what the respondents thought that this ad was trying to accomplish (Table 4.5). There were two responses by females that were coded under Self-Esteem, the rest were coded under: Buy Product and Body Image. The responses demonstrate a consistency regarding the purpose of why this advertisement was designed, which according to the respondents was to sell products by influencing our youth by building insecurities through a "perfect" male physique.

I first looked at what respondents' believed this ad was designed to do. Overall, all of the male respondents believed that the advertisement was created to elicit a feeling of wanting to look like the bodybuilder in the advertisement. Mario simply put it as, "Buying this product in hopes that they will look like the big guy." Rick added some points from the advertisement that stood out for him, "Trying to show young boys, weaker and smaller idolizing this big guy, you are bad for not looking like this guy and you should take these supplements." This ad campaign used two young males who were illustrating their own insecurities when watching the bodybuilder workout. This advertisement is about building insecurities in order to build a need or a want for something that most male teens do not possess. Since most male teens are not developed physically to that extreme level, then these ads provide an ideal level of fitness that is unusual for someone to obtain at such a young age. It is creating a need for a product as a result of a feeling insecure.

Table 4.4 What is this Advertisement Trying to Accomplish?

	Gender = Female	Gender = Male
Buy product	6	7
Body Image	8	8

Self Esteem	2	0

When I reviewed the female responses, the theme was similar to the males in that the purpose of the advertisement was to build insecurities. For instance, Tracey saw the ad as a way to "associate using the products from GNC to be muscular and you can look like that." Mary's statement was similar; "If you buy supplements from GNC you will look ripped." The data was not only consistent between male and female respondents but also between the advertisement's mission to sell their product and the manufacturing of insecurities to sell merchandise.

4.1.8   Why a Bodybuilder?

"Extreme of what we think is healthy and fit; what we need to be healthy and fit" Casey, November 2008.

An intriguing question that I asked was: "Why the use of a bodybuilder to sell health products?" The respondents, especially female respondents, believed that either GNC sold steroids or that the bodybuilder in the advertisement used steroids. If this is the general belief, then it will be intriguing to find out how the respondents would reply to my question, "Why do you think that GNC uses a bodybuilder to sell their products when so much of what they sell is for general health and wellness?" I found the female respondents to be more cynical toward the advertisement than the males. Females viewed the man in this ad as being part of the steroid culture that now permeates our society. However, they also found this ad to probably sell more of the product then if the man were just healthy. Males were less likely to make the claim that

the bodybuilder, citing that the man is athletic and big due to proteins, was using illegal drugs. Males also felt that if an ordinary, healthy person was used in this advertisement that it would not be a selling point for GNC. Rick puts it best, "In the end you are not going to buy supplements to be an average person… you are buying supplements to get a leg up on everyone else." This quote is very indicative of the male point of view; it's not about the health but it is about one's appearance.

There were four responses to this question: *sells, bodybuilders look healthy, looks better than general health, and it was attractive*. Female respondents were within an 11% range in all of these four response categories, with *bodybuilders look healthy* as their number one response at 31%. This is interesting since a number of females believe that steroids in some way assisted with this transformation in the human physique. What helped put it into perspective for me was a response by Nancy, "because it is something that is more attractive to people. Instead of being healthy on the inside, they want to be big and healthy on the outside." Nancy is pretty perceptive, she acknowledges the possibility of steroids but insists it is the outside that we ultimately have more concern about - at the expense of our health. Samantha alludes to the same conclusion as Nancy, "People see him as the healthiest because he is the biggest but he is not at all…he is probably using illegal substances." Both of these female responses tell us something about our society that may be inferred, that we are very superficial first of all, but that there are some teens that cannot critically comprehend that what they see is not necessarily the truth. Nancy and Samantha are pretty realistic because of their connection to the steroid controversies that encompass our society at this moment in our culture. While I do not know for certain that the bodybuilder is on steroids, I hypothesize from my experience with weight training that a man one does not get to that physical size on just GNC supplements alone.

Male respondents had a much more wide range of responses than the female responses. There was a range of almost 61% between three responses with *bodybuilders look healthy* as the top response at 64%. The data from the male respondents looked dissimilar than the female respondents in terms of their perspective of what this advertisement portrays. A review of the data led me to surmise that while females were more straightforward in their assertions that the bodybuilder is on steroids, their male counterparts were not willing to make that claim. Mario believes that, "If they see someone in shape that the products in the store can make you look that way." Mike seems to concur, "…Because they sell a lot of protein and a lot of lifting things. Seeing a guy like that will show this is what you can be." Both of these male respondents seem to think that it may be hard work and protein. Ian, the only respondent who did allude to some reservations about the bodybuilder's sole use of GNC products believes, "Everyone assumes that he is the most healthy person, that he is full of muscles, and like he is in perfect physical condition." Ian certainly seems to cast some doubt as to the authenticity of this commercial. He, like the female respondents, believed something else is at play here besides over the counter proteins.

What is interesting about the data is that while using a bodybuilder to promote GNC products seems to be the antithesis of good nutritional values, some respondents believe that using a healthy person may not sell the product. Nick sees the focus of health as, "the healthy guy is not exciting; that athletic looking guy (bodybuilder) could possibly be you if you use this product." Evan sees the use of a regular person as being boring "Because they want to put it in a better light, that bodybuilding seems cool or better to some people than general health." Both Nick and Evan see the advantages of using a bodybuilder, even if the product will not be enough to create

a massive physique like the man in the ad. Female respondents seemed to concur with Nick and Evan when Jessica stated that the advertisers wanted to have a "bigger effect on people."

I believe that this advertisement carries with it a lot of contradictions; it will be very interesting to review the data of how the female version of an athletic advertisement will be interpreted by the respondents.

4.1.9   Advertisement: Nike

"I had no clue what it was about until the very end" Mario, November 2008.

How we view athletic woman in the present day and time is certainly different than we did a half-century ago. There are now woman boxers, racecar drivers, amateur baseball and hockey players – even wrestlers. Females represent virtually every sport known to man. I had each of my respondents view a Nike advertisement that included a very athletic female that has the ability to break- dance, something only a male was thought to be capable of performing well – that is, until recently. I was interested in finding out how female and male teens would interpret this advertisement of female physical strength and athleticism.

4.1.10 First Impression

"The whole time I was thinking that this was a Nike ad and I had

seen these clothes in a magazine" Nancy, November 2008.

I wanted to first look at what each gender's interpretation was of this advertisement (Table 4.5). Seven of the respondents had no idea what this advertisement was for; this may have been because the Nike symbol was not included in the visuals until near the end of the advertisement. While Jenna though it was cool, she "couldn't tell what it was for." Nancy also thought that the advertisement was "selling shoes or sports gear in general." Male respondents seemed just as confused, as Mario had "no clue what it was about until the very end." Alex didn't "think it was for the shoes, I thought it was for the clothes; it looks like they were trying too hard."

Table 4.5 First Impression of Nike Advertisement

	Gender = Female	Gender = Male
Didn't know what ad depicting	3	4
Good Dancer-Athletic	5	3
Strange-Didn't like	1	1
Like Ad	6	4

Overall the respondents found the advertisement to be cool in some way even though they had no idea what product was being sold. Seniors had a more difficult time than the other grade levels in understanding what the advertisement was trying to sell. I believe that this may be because they have been more exposed to visual advertisements that they have been overexposed, so to speak, or it may be that they were looking for something else in the advertisement that wasn't there.

Many of the respondents also commented on the dancing. Both males and females thought that the dancer in the advertisement was extraordinary and had pretty "cool tricks" according to Tracey. Overwhelmingly, the respondents enjoyed the ad even though they seemed

to be confused as to what exactly the ad was trying to sell. For instance, Gia thought that it was a "cool looking advertisement. It doesn't look like it is selling clothing; the advertisement doesn't seem to do anything with Nike sports." Jake felt that "it had to do with Adidas or Nike because of the way that she was dressed and the atmosphere was really cool." Trent and Mike both liked the crowds cheering for the dancer, but did not know what to make of the advertisement.

The data related to the first impression that people had of the advertisement leads me to believe that males and females alike were impressed with the female dancer even though they could not really tell, for the most part, what the advertisement was trying to sell. The seniors were more confused than their younger classmates – and that could lead to many possible theories on why they could not make sense of the ad.

4.1.11 Empowerment of Women

"Not really. Shows that she can dance did not change my opinion

of women in general" Ian, November 2008.

With all of the emphasis in our culture on athleticism, as well as body image, I initially speculated that the responses would be consistent across genders. However, The data (Table 4.6) tells me that while 90% of female respondents view this advertisement as empowering, only 50% of male respondents thought that it was empowering. Nancy's response is very consistent with most of the female respondents who discussed if they thought that the advertisement empowered women, "yes, if you wear Nike apparel you can be the same way, strong."   Tracey response was, "I think so, they can do what guys can do." While both respondents, like other female

98

respondents, believe that this advertisement is empowering, none of the respondents could elucidate on exactly the universal context of the empowerment of women. The respondents superficially focused on the athleticism and the appearance, but did not expound on our culture and what exactly creates a strong woman. Jamie was the only female respondent who did not believe that this advertisement empowered woman, "Not really, the girl had skill, but she was trained for something." I believe that while Jamie thinks that the female in the advertisement is athletic, that there is no indication that she believes that it empowers women, basically looking at the advertisement as artificial, which it is in advertisements.

Table 4.6 Nike Advertisement is Empowering to Women

	Gender = Female	Gender = Male
Yes	9	5
No	1	5

As I began to analyze the data collected from male respondents, I was surprised to find that only 50% of males viewed this advertisement as being empowering to women. Reviewing the data should be very telling as to why the males view this advertisement as equally not empowering to women. Jake viewed this advertisement as, "Yes, because when you think of dancing like that type of dancing you think of guys and that is a girl; makes them stand out." Evan's response was similar in theme, "Yes, encouraging women to be active and athletic." These responses, while positive toward the empowerment of women, are superficial. In Jake's case, I surmise that because the female in the advertisement is doing something a male usually does, that it is empowering. On the other hand, Evan's response that it encourages women to be active and athletic is not exactly an endorsement of female empowerment.

Males that did not find the advertisement empowering were uniform in their responses. Fred stated, "Not really, there are a lot of women who can do that." I don't think people would buy those shoes." While Alex believes that the advertisement "makes them look like they are out there for sex appeal." Mario felt that "it's a women dancing" and believed that no empowerment could be construed from this Nike advertisement. Based on these responses, one could speculate that this advertisement is not empowering to women, and in Alex's case, there is an underlying reference on how women are used for their sex appeal like in many other advertisements that we view daily.

One could certainly surmise from the data in this section, that while 75% of the respondents regarded this advertisement as empowering to women, that there was little understanding of what empowerment actually means. For instance, in both the male and female responses that viewed this advertisement as empowering, none of them eluded to the empowerment of women culturally by referencing another female, or digging deeper in their thinking on a cultural level. Males who viewed this advertisement as not empowering women, also did not provide deeper thinking into the empowerment of women, however; Alex did make reference to the female in this advertisement in a more broad sense when he brought up sex appeal. There is an obvious lack of understanding in what empowerment is at any level, which is easy to infer when reviewing the data.

4.1.12 Effectiveness of Advertisement

This advertisement was well liked, according to the data collected and overall it was felt to be empowering to women. Would the respondents also believe that it was effective? Ninety-percent of female respondents believe that this advertisement is effective, while 50% of males

felt the same way. Jessica viewed this advertisement as effective because they "focused on the shoe and the Nike swoosh which is popular; I think that they did a good job in promoting their product." Similarly, Gia sees that the advertisement is effective to "younger age groups that don't realize that they are not able to do this" and for Jenna who sees the advertisement as "probably good at selling the product; it is cool and really fast moving, that is what people are attracted to." While Jessica, Gia, and Jenna all have positive beliefs toward the effectiveness of this advertisement, Jamie did not. Jamie viewed this advertisement as "not very good." She went on to state, "I don't really get caught up that I have to have them. I would really have to have training to do what she does; I can't just buy those shoes and be able to do that." Whereas Jessica, Gia, and Jenna enjoyed and believed the advertisement was cool, Jamie was very skeptical and pragmatic about the advertisement, elucidating that just buying the shoes would not allow her to dance like the female dancer in the advertisement. Jamie was the only female respondent who did not seem to have that visceral response to the advertisement, meaning, that she took the time to reflect on her own limitations and what the product does or does not mean to her specifically. In my view, this is the approach of someone who may have more broad knowledge of how the media creates images that will create an initial response.

Positive male responses to the advertisement contained similar themes to the female responses, citing: appeal, effective, easy to sell, and catchy, as some of the terms used to describe this advertisement. Other male respondents were not as impressed with this ad. Mike "couldn't tell you what they were selling, shoes are what?" Mario, like Jamie, wouldn't buy these shoes because "I can dance in other shoes; I don't need those shoes to dance." Mario has figured out that these shoes are not going to create a better dancer than what he already is today. Fred,

Trent, and Evan did not view this advertisement as effective because they believed that it was not above the other commercials out there today.

The effectiveness of this advertisement is in its appeal to the teen market. The responses tell me that the slick contemporary dancing in conjunction with the black and white background with a pink highlight on the Nike wear is what draws these teens to the ad. With women also being viewed as equals on the athletic field to men in our society, female teens can relate because this is what they would like to aspire to be in many cases. Those that were not captured by this advertisement were inclined to not be reactive and to not know entirely what this advertisement was selling.

4.1.13   Cultural Prejudice of People who are Overweight

"Yes, because being overweight is looked down upon in the media so it is

looked down upon in society" Evan, November 2008.

How we look at people of differing sizes may be directly linked to how they are portrayed in the media. Currently, our society is being deluged with media images that make a mockery of overweight individuals in magazines, television, Internet, etc., with no thought about how these images may affect others.   The respondents were asked (Table 4.7) whether they believed that the media was responsible for the prejudice that overweight people may incur. Female respondents were unilateral in their belief that the media influences prejudice of overweight people, while 75% of males believed this to also be true. When I reviewed class levels, a majority of respondents believed that the media with the exception of one junior and senior classman who viewed this advertisement dissimilarly, created prejudice against overweight individuals.

Since there is a clear majority of respondents who believed that the media influences our society to have feelings of prejudice toward overweight people, I wanted to take a closer look at the data to determine if there is any variables that may provide me with additional insight into this belief.

Table 4.7 Belief that Our Culture is Prejudice against those that are Overweight

	Gender = Female	Gender = Male
Yes- Prejudice-Overweight	**10**	**6**
No-Prejudice-Overweight	**0**	**2**

Female respondents overwhelmingly focused on the portrayal of overweight people in the media. Gia stated that, "They always have people out there who are 500 pounds; videotaping them, showing home videos, and then pretending it's a concern but it's not really a concern…it's just entertainment." Samantha believes, "You never see someone who is heavier on the cover of a magazine or something, and if they are, it's, "Look at how much weight they've gained." Lastly, Jessica stated that, "You don't normally see on the Hills a two-hundred pound person…you just don't." The theme among these statements and the other female respondents is that the media does influence perceptions toward overweight people, and that the media will only display these individuals in a setting that will create revenue (e.g., The Biggest Loser, Enquirer, TMZ, The Insider).

Could the media portray images that prejudice our society?   According to Mary you may not see individuals who are deemed as overweight working at your neighborhood upper-scaled fashion store because, "They won't tell you (overweight individual) that you cannot work there because your overweight, but they discriminate on how you look." Jessica agrees with Mary, when she stated, "Abercrombie, for example, they walk up to people who are skinny, pretty looking, and that's who they want to work in their stores. They don't want overweight people working for them." From the data, female respondents are unified in their belief that prejudice begins with our media and does extend to real world situations.

Male respondents were more indelicate in their responses but were similar in their beliefs to the female respondents. Trent believes that there is a stereotype to overweight people "in the

media they are fat slobs who drool all over and barely get out of their seats, but they are not all like that." The fact that Trent utters, "they are not all like that" is a statement of prejudice within itself. In Mike's opinion, he stated that, "it can be controlled and that's just people not going out, exercising, being lazy, and I make sure that I go out and do those things." Jake takes a look at the media portrayal of overweight people on "The Biggest Loser…and shows like Jerry Springer who may have 800 pound people on them. Look at Austin Powers' Fat Bastard…that kind of thing." The statements made by the male respondents, while supporting the idea that the media portrays overweight people in a way that influences our youth negatively, were in there own way demonstrating that same prejudice in their responses. In my analysis, it seems as though these male respondents themselves are great examples of how the media influences our belief systems.

Mario and Fred were the two respondents that believe that the media does not discriminate against overweight people. Mario thinks that, "Media might help, but people look at other people first." Fred takes a different stance, "I don't think so. I mean, they have commercials about losing weight but they're not saying we need to." In both responses the question is not directly answered. In Mario's case if people are looking at people with certain beliefs, most likely this was "learned somewhere." With Fred, the commercials alone are a sign that people should not be happy with who we are but we need to get skinny to look like someone who hasn't ever been overweight in most cases.

One could theorize from the data that media does have an influence on the way that we think and the way that we may interact with others in our environment. It would also be possible to surmise that our public schools are not educating our students in exactly what it means to be prejudice, or to be influenced in, not even know that you are because you do not have the knowledge to be self reflective of one's own self. The male respondents seemed to be less

aware of their own belief systems in comparison to female respondents, and while it was overwhelmingly consistent between these two groups, there was a lack of knowledge on what it means to be overweight in our culture, especially if you are female.

4.1.14 Influence of Visual Images that Contain Individuals that are Thinner than the Average Person.

"I think that it affected teenagers because some of the teenagers will go home and they will try and throw up and you know, become skinny" Alex, November 2008.

Whether it's billboards, magazine ads, or on many of the reality shows that we see today on television, many of the images that we observe in our culture are of men and women who are either very, very thin, or are slim and muscular. I wanted to know if the models that we see in magazines that are much thinner than the average person has any affect on our teenagers. I found that all of the respondents believe that the images of thin models do have an affect on teenagers, and in some cases, have affected some on a personal level.

Beth has a friend personally, who has been affected by these images.

> "The media made her think everything about her body was messed up and like how everything she wore made her look a certain way. The media has obviously made her think that way because she was normal size. She wasn't at all over weight, but the media had made her think that she was big and she needed to be smaller."

Mary sees herself as someone who has been affected personally by these images.

> "I know that I will try to diet too because of what I see on television. A lot of it comes from cheerleading and just like being able to do what I want to do on the squad I feel like

I need to stay skinnier. I'll read a magazine and I will see like a different way to lose weight and I'll try it even though it's not the healthiest thing to do."

The responses by Beth and Mary demonstrate that the media images of thin models certainly have an affect on teenagers. In Beth's response though, she alluded to her friend as being "normal size." As I look back, I would have liked to have known how Beth defines normal size, because it may have helped me interpret her response a little bit better in context of her friend's physical self. Her friend may not have been "normal size" and that certainly could have led her to be more susceptible to images that she viewed in magazines. Mary seems to be very reflective of her own vulnerability to the images that she views. Mary's admittance that the media influences her is very telling, because even though she is aware that her beliefs are being influenced she does not state that she needs to change.

Tracey, Rick, Mario, Jake, Gia, and Alex each spoke about the harmful effects of these images on our youth. The theme of their responses was on how images of this model influence physical and emotional harm (e.g., anorexia, bulimia, unusual diets, obsessive behaviors, etc.) on teenagers. For example, a typical response was Alex's, "I think that it affected teenagers because some of the teenagers will go home and they'll try and throw up and you know, become skinny…and that's bad for them." There is a feeling, real or not, that these images do harm to teens in many ways and that the media does influence this belief.

The data is substantially clear as it pertains to the power that images have on our culture and our youth specifically when it comes to images of thin models. Simple images carry a powerful message that can be interpreted in many ways, and unfortunately, it can carry with it the power to do emotional and physical harm that occurs when these images are pervasive

throughout our society. While some of the respondents were not affected by these images, it does tell me that it touches all of us through family and friends, and even on a personal level.

4.1.15 Media Images and Effects on their Physical Self

"I definitely think that it wants me to believe that a tall strong body

is a good thing, but for most of America it's not a realistic view" Evan, November 2008.

       I thought that it was important to determine how the respondents viewed how their own physical self has been influenced by media images that focus on body image. I sorted the data into three categories: None, Some, and A Lot. The data surprised me at first glance because it revealed that males were influenced A Lot compared to female respondents. However, when I looked at those respondents that have been influenced physically at all (Some, A Lot), females were influenced slightly more than males. Five respondents stated that they have not been influenced at any time by the media. The data reveals that the media influences both males and female in terms of their physical self. While males were more greatly influenced, both males and females were influenced to some extent. While some of the respondents were knowledgeable about the media's influence over them, a number of respondents were not. When I reviewed the data to determine if class year was indicative of more or less influence by the media, both freshman and sophomore respondents were less influenced than their junior and senior counterparts. In fact, 80% of seniors were influenced at least to some extent, which is interesting since one would believe that more education may lead to a person to be less susceptible.

      As I began to examine the data (Table 4.8), I found that females and males that were not influenced physically by media images had more self-esteem and were very self-aware of the fact that the media did not have agency over them. An insightful example of this type of

thinking comes from Nancy, who doesn't care "what other people think and that's what the media pushes on people, like throwing public figures in the magazines and brutally ripping them apart with how they look and I just don't think it's worth it." Trent also is a good example, "I don't really pay attention to it. I just see me as me. Basically, I look at myself as I am better than that." The data certainly points out that there is distrust of the media and what it tries to accomplish through visual images. Both Nancy and Trent see themselves as aware of the media and that they will not be influenced by it.

The Some category had significantly more females than males. I speculate that these respondents had an awareness of the effect that the media has on their physical self, but they still leaned toward what would be a popular choice to fit in based on the images that they view. Madeline's response typifies the female response to this query,

"Probably some, because, you know, today's view of beauty is put in the media all the time so if you want to look like that, that's what you go for. I guess sometimes, it's like, oh, I wish I had this kind of hair, but most of the time, it's kind of like, this is what you have and you just have to deal with it. I know you have stuff in magazines, Seventeen will do this thing where it's like different clothes for your body type, kind of, and I really like that because it's like, making me bring out beauty that you already have or whatever."

Maddy seems well aware of the media's ability to hype a certain look, but she is also aware that you cannot be what isn't possible. Maddy also discussed Seventeen Magazine, which is also one of the magazines that has a heavy influence on teenage girls. Seventeen will send mix messages between what you should look like and what you realistically can model yourself after, either way the media's influence is apparent.

109

Table 4.8 Media's Images Affect on One's Physical Self

	Gender = Female	Gender = Male
None	3	2
Some	6	2
A lot	1	4

Male respondents were influenced much more by the media than females as it pertained to their physical self. When I first asked this question I believed that female respondents would outnumber males by a large margin…that they were not certainly was surprising to me, but as I began to look closer at the data, it became clear that my own perceptions are somewhat distorted. The most telling response was by Ian,

> "I'll look at myself in the mirror and I'll see somebody on TV and I will just like look like why can't I look like that and stuff like that? And like, I'll work really work hard to train and stuff like that. Like with my two sports like I train constantly. And it's just frustrating for me to watch like someone on TV that looks like that nice and I can't be like that."

Ian is certainly someone who is affected greatly by the media, he seems to be emotionally frustrated and he also seems to think that the people he views in these advertisements are as they seem. These individuals that frustrate Ian so much are models who work out all of the time and are hired to sell a product. Ian believes what he sees and therefore the marketing idea for the product or celebrity has worked. Evan was just as candid in his response, "Yes, how I view myself physically is probably defined by the media. I definitely think that it wants me to believe that a tall, strong body is a good thing, but for most of America it's not a realistic view." These responses certainly indicate that the media is powerful and that teens are susceptible to their

messages, but it also points out that teenage males are certainly just as impressible as teenage females. I also believe that males are certainly more conscious of their appearance than they have been in the past, with that, corporate America is focusing their resources on areas that are profitable, such as, weightlifting and exercise equipment, sports nutrition, and male fashion. The data suggests that the male teens in this research study are much more vulnerable than the female teens.

4.1.16 Conclusion

How we perceive ourselves is important to our self-esteem, as well as our emotional and physical well-being. In this section, I believe that I have found a connection between media images and the way that we view others and ourselves.

The data collected from the respondents establish that our media creates a culture of deceit. Teens are aware of these influences and that corporations create this agency to market their merchandise. If teens were to see their favorite actor or sports star wearing a certain product, then they might want to purchase it as well. This is the ambition of corporate America and that it is why it is so important for advertisers to create this adoration and persona, which I surmised from the data that I collected and analyzed.

I had the respondents view an advertisement for two well-known corporations that contained either a male or female athlete. The advertisement containing the female athlete was well received even though respondents overwhelmingly expressed that they would not go out and buy the product. The advertisement with the male athlete was not well received and did not seem to make a positive impression on either gender, nor would it sell more merchandise if it were to be based solely on this advertisement. I theorize that the main reason for the negative

response to the advertisement with the male bodybuilder is that the look is not fashionable in today's society as compared to the female dancer who is lean, muscular, athletic, and trendier by today's standards. Many of the respondents were not impressed by the bodybuilder but did indicate that they do take supplements to gain mass…just not that much mass.

Lastly, the data seemed to support that the media has an effect on teenagers in terms of how they perceive what is considered overweight and what is not. How a teen makes sense of their world is through their experiences, and if our society is pointing out people for their weight, even though they appear normal, then it may have an adverse affect on a person of either gender. As unhealthy as someone overweight may appear in order to sell a product, the data certainly supports that many of the respondents believe that being too thin, while popular, is also unhealthy. In any case, the media heavily influences the constant inundation of images that are used to create an illusion of beauty or unattractiveness. The data supports that teens, while aware or unaware, are self-conscious about their physical appearance and are drawn to images of what they believe is the ideal.

I surmise, based upon the data, that the media is an important part of a teen's lifestyle and the way that they view themselves. The media defines being overweight, what is the ideal body image, and who is popular and who is considered yesterday's news. Teens seem to be aware of the media and the power that it possesses, but they do not seem as knowledgeable of the agency and their role as the consumer. In many of the responses, it was clear that there was, at some level, an understanding of consumerism, but what is lacking is a the degree of critical knowledge of the media and more in depth understandings of agency.

5.0   CHAPTER FIVE

**5.1   COMMODIFICATION OF TEEENAGERS USING SEXUALITY AND
CREATED PERSONAS --- BELIEFS, PREFERENCES, INFLUENCES BOTH IN AND
OUT OF THE SCHOOL SETTING.**

Giroux (2000) asserts that we have, in this commercial culture, removed childhood and turned it into a commodity. Giroux maintains that the cultural face of our corporate society is a perverse climate that feeds on the innocence of children. In our society, the sexualization of our youth has been used to juxtapose sexual desires and basic human visceral emotions, to sell commodities for profit to our teenagers. In this section I will analyze, explore, and present the data that I collected through my interviews with twenty teenagers in a suburban high school. During these interviews, respondents expressed how they believed sexuality is used in advertisements and what causes them to believe the way that they do. Respondents also describe how sexuality in advertisements focuses on teenage consumers and how this concentration on teenagers will affect the next generation of consumers. I then had the subjects review two advertisements that exploit sexuality to market products to young adults. These advertisements were chosen because they represent typical approaches to sell products using sexual images and because the celebrities employed in these ads embody our contemporary culture.

In 2001, Kunkel, Cope-Farrar, Biely, Farionola, and Donnerstein, found that there was a significant increase in sexually based advertisements from 12% on television to 80% across visual media that possess less restrictions (magazines, movies, etc.) or restrictions based only on a teenager's own individual accountability. Now in 2009, my respondents are inundated with sexually laded advertisements like never before presented to any other generation. They view these advertisements as part of their daily lives; yet, there is very little discussion about the media in our contemporary schools. With little or no critical media education, the respondents ranged from very intuitive to having no critical insight into the use of visual media as a means for capitalism and consumption, let alone a segue into individualized democracy.

The analysis of the data in this chapter focused on the respondent's ability to take a step back and view their world as a spectator and not a participant. I also looked at how females and males view sexually based advertisements to find a relationship between these attributes, as much as to find the diversity between them. I think that it is also important to recognize the manner in which females are sexualized in our culture and how this differs greatly from how males are sexualized by the media. From teen magazines to beauty pageants, females are sexualized to a greater extent in our society compared to males. Through the data, I am hoping to piece together an interpretive framework for how teens view sexual media advertisements and also how the data intertwines with consumerism, democracy, power, and the shaping of our youth through intensive market identities.

5.1.1 Sex to Sell

"Yeah, I mean you look twice, you know. But, I don't really look at it, but that's the culture; that's just how the culture is" Mike, November 2008.

As I critically look at the visual world around me I see a plethora of advertisements that use sex to sell products. This is evident in billboard displays; magazine covers, even the pictures labeling cologne. As Buddenberg and McGee (2004) illustrate, "What's different today is how graphic sexuality is being used to market products and entertainment to teenage-and-younger boys and girls" (p. 144).

Every single one of the respondents believed that sexuality is being used to sell products to the teen market in some form. Alex described the use of sexuality to sell a product in this way, "They'd always have like a, like their product, and then like a hot girl or guy holding the product. Like yeah, this is the greatest product ever, I use it every day." Evan described it as more adjective, "The subconscious attraction to that product because of the sexual advertisement." Both Alex and Evan have diverging theories of why ads that contain sexual content work, but they did not personalize it in a way that described their interactions with sexuality in advertisements. What metacognitively, was their own thinking as they interacted with advertisements? It's not only enough to view the superficiality of advertisements, but it is another to critically understand how these advertisements interact with the world. Jessica described her view:

> "Yeah, I think that's the majority of what they use is sexuality. Once again, the younger people don't exactly know what they should be. They don't, maybe, they're still maybe trying to figure out who they actually are, who they want to be, and if you do, if somebody sees, if they see, oh that girl is gorgeous or that guy looks so good, I need to, I want to be that way, I want to be like that. That's maybe their decision making from seeing media put that out there."

Jessica has taken a more broad view of the use of sexuality in advertisements by realizing the psychological need of teenagers to belong, to find themselves, and to have the decision making capabilities to choose what they want to be instead of being swayed into something that they are not. Another respondent, who sees the use of media in a more conceptual manner, was Mike. Mike took his viewpoint past an individual or an age group, when he stated, " Yeah, I mean, you look twice, you know. But, I really don't look at it. But that's, that's the culture. That's just how the culture is." Mike is seemingly aware of the use of media and the use of sexuality at a cultural level, which is something that not even one of the other respondents was able to do. Other than Jessica or Mike, I viewed the other respondent's awareness of the impact of sexuality reflecting our culture as superficial. They just couldn't seem to derive to a conceptual point how sexuality is used besides the earning of a profit. The respondents mainly focused on the superficiality of the commercials themselves by discussing products, which included Axe Body Spray, Neutrogena, Victoria's Secret, and Abercrombie & Fitch, as well as responding that both scantily clad males and females are used in ads to sell merchandise.

In my view, the purpose of any advertisement is to evoke a visceral emotional response of some kind. It is the goal of those on an advertisement committee to allow for consumers to recall sexually based images, or to a greater extent, the juxtaposition of an image and emotion to a product. If the campaign is successful, the product sells. Many of the respondents in my study knew details about the products they described, but, for whatever reason, the teens in my research could not conceptualize their thoughts. To me, this clearly signifies the inability for teens to make the connections between agency, democracy, and capitalism.

Many of the respondents' could see the long-range effects that these advertisements could have on the children of tomorrow, mostly in a negative manner. For instance, Trent described

the influence of sexual advertisements on the children of tomorrow by describing it as, "I don't know, it gives them a different kind of mindset because they're used to all of that sexuality they start putting it into their normal life. It makes them; I don't know, kind of a different kid." Rick also thought that the influence long-term could be detrimental, when he stated,

"In comparison as like our grandparents what they were watching and what they were doing, and you know, you think of them as almost being prude, as compared to what we were today and just it kind of amazes and almost scares me of what it, if the trend keeps going, what will our children be like, or you know…grandchildren?"

In both cases these respondents had the opinion that the long-term effects of these types of advertisements could prove to be detrimental to our next generation. In Rick's response, he may be looking at the breakdown of our culture over time and what the future might hold if this trend continues. Trent on the other hand, describes the psychological affects that these advertisements could have long-term. In both cases, we could be looking at the combination of both an increase in sexually based advertisements along with the psychological affect that this would have as well simultaneously. I also looked at this data as an increase in the marketing and exploitation of our youth in the future, as well as how the data will help to shape our youth. The data provides more than just a simple explanation to a considerably growing problem.

The respondents also described the emotional impact of these types of advertisements. Nancy described the long-term effects as,

"Oh, I think that kids are growing up way too fast. Like once you're put in the high school, like everyone, around you are just doing so much like sexuality like things like that. They just don't understand what they are doing. They just don't understand like

what exactly they're getting themselves into and how things are affecting them emotionally like they don't realize things like that until it hits them."

In comparison, Mike sees the long-term affects of these advertisements as pessimistic, by stating, "That's the society that we live in. For some think it's unfortunate, or you know, this or that, but that's just how we live now." I infer from this data that there is a growing concern regarding the influence of the media unless there is a decline in the use of media to sell goods, which won't ever happen; the government steps in and sets regulations to protect our children, which won't happen; or unless we have critical media pedagogy in our schools that will allow our children to be able to have the educational background needed to make choices based on need rather than want, via agency.

When I reflect on portions of Mike's response again, "That's the society that we live in…but that's just how we live now," I sense hopelessness. Why should a teenager who is growing up in our culture believe that we have no control over what we see and believe? Sure, he is growing up in a world in which ballparks are being named after corporations; reality television incessantly promotes people with wealth that are usually a part of a much larger commercial enterprise (e.g. The Apprentice, Hell's Kitchen, America's Next Top Model, etc.); rights to school districts are up for sale for the right price to compensate for lack of funding; but to believe that our outlook is this grim and that, according to Nancy, "our children are not prepared for this emotionally," sets the premise for a future that treats our children as a commodity.

5.1.2 How Teens View the Use of Sexuality to Sell Products

"Marketing firms and advertising companies make tons of money wouldn't start making advertisements on something that wouldn't…It works, it's right!" Rick, November 2008.

Teenagers today are under a constant barrage of advertisements depicting some form of sexual content. Kunkel, Cope-Farrar, Biely, Farinola, and Donnerstein (2001) found that there has been as much as an 80% increase in sexually explicit material found in magazines, movies, and sitcoms. With an increase of this magnitude I wanted to find out how the respondents' perceive the use of sexuality within advertisements in our society. I was able to categorize the responses into five areas: pervasive use of sex in the media; sexuality in ads work; no problem with sex in ads; negative response to sex in ads; and the use of sexuality in ads objectifies women (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 How Respondents' View The Medias Use of Sexuality to Sell Products

	Gender = Female	Gender = Male
Sexual Media Images	1	0
Pervasive use of sex in the media	5	1
Sexuality in ads works	3	3
No problem with sex in ads	1	2
Negative Response to sex in ads	4	3
Objectifying Women	2	0

Respondents from each gender had similar viewpoints of how effective sexuality in advertisements is; they were also comparable in their "negative" attitude toward the use of

sexually based advertisements to sell products. As I began to look at the respondents' data on why they believed sexuality in ads work, I first examined Jessica's response,

> "I think by making your cigarette box with a hot girl smoking it, I think that it is definitely a draw for some people, I mean, I don't know. I guess they might put a guy with a bunch of girls around him smoking and be like, wow, if I smoke I can definitely get girls."

Mary's response focused on Abercrombie & Fitch ads and the fact that "they do not have people wearing their clothes, so sometimes it's like, stupid I guess because it's not making a point, it's just selling clothes…so I guess it's helping sell something." In both cases, Mary and Jessica point out a product and discuss what advertisers might, or are already doing to sell a product. Both respondents obviously see how these advertisements are using sex to sell, but are also understanding that there is a draw to the product by using sexuality. Rick was more direct in his assessment of why sex sells,

> "I believe that everyone has a sexual drive and wanting to be like that and it's definitely a something that—sexual advertisement is there because it works. Marketing firms and the advertising companies make tons of money and wouldn't start making advertisements on something that wouldn't. It works, it's right."

Rick is able to recognize the monetary rationale behind the ads while also taking into account the humanistic drives that we all possess. The overall consensus of the respondents was that, while sex is overused in advertisements, it does sell and it does work because of the positive visceral response that it occurs with in our culture.

An example of a response that was negative to this type of advertisement was Trent, who expresses his thoughts by saying, "I don't know, I can see what they're going for, but you know,

there's other ways to advertise a product…I never remember the product so for me it doesn't work." Trent's response was very similar to other respondents that were coded in this node in his description of how ads like this didn't work for them either. The only other consistency among the respondents who were negative to these ads was the awareness of how these ads were very disingenuous. Samantha pointed out how, "the girls in them and everything, they're not real," while Jamie stated, "every girl in the Neutrogena face wash has perfect complexions, so you're just like, -Ok, great!" In all of the responses to this question, there was a general feeling of deceit on the part of advertisers and also a feeling over these types of advertisements being overused.

A specific area in which the data was very one sided were the responses related to the pervasive use of sexually based ads by the media. While the respondents may have like or disliked these advertisements, a much larger majority of female respondents (83% to 17%) found these ads to be pervasive. I believe that it is very important to not only analyze the data holistically, but also in terms of gender. By completing an extended analysis of the gender dynamics of responses, I can better determine how both females and males view visual media messages from their worldview.

The commonality amongst these respondents was their frustration with these ads across our culture. For Jake, "It's everywhere…I would agree that it needs to be toned down." Beth's beliefs are similar to Jake, as she states, "I think that there's too much of it but it obviously sells." The most intriguing area related to this data is the discrepancy between the females and males who felt that this type of ad is pervasive. Why the lone male teenager? I posit that this discrepancy is caused due to the mass appeal these ads have to males more than females. I also surmise that there is a greater quantity of sexually based advertisements that comprise mainly of

females more than males, thus, leading more females who see these ads to view this as exploitation. This may also account for the female-only responses on body image in relation to sexuality in advertisements. There may be many more theories that make a case for this discrepancy, I theorize that it lies in the overabundance of ads portraying females as sexual commodities compared to males, if these ads were similar in quantity or turned completely around in favor of males, then the data collected from the respondents may be altered.

5.1.3   Advertisement: Carls Jr. with Paris Hilton

"Kind of, 'Oh my gosh!' what is she doing?" Casey, November 2008.

The first advertisement that used sexuality to sell a product that I showed my respondents, was an advertisement developed for Carls Jr. This advertisement has a female, Paris Hilton, washing a car seductively in a swimsuit. I believe that these images are used in hope that people viewing this ad will inevitably purchase more burgers. At one point in the commercial, Paris begins to eat the burger while washing the car in a very erotic manner. The first instinctual feelings that the respondents had, when asked, varied greatly between disbelief, funny, sexy, stupid, liked it, and…what are they selling?

As I began to review the data, I noticed that only five females responded when asked about their first impression of this commercial, while male responses numbered twelve total. According to the data, females viewed this ad as either stupid (3) or were ambiguous as to what this advertisement was trying to sell (2). Males' first impressions of this advertisement were wide-ranging, starting with an equal number or responses (3) that were reflective of disbelief, sexy, and ambiguous to what this advertisement was trying to sell, but there were also reactions

in which respondents felt this ad was stupid and funny, while only one respondent overall, male in this case, liked the ad. Mike, the lone respondent who liked the ad, liked it because he thought that Paris is "pretty hot!" In the area of ambiguity, where the data had more responses than any other, there was genuine confusion as to the product being sold. Nancy's described her first impression as, "Uh, wow! At first I thought it might be for perfume or something, but then it turned into a burger commercial." Fred was totally confused as well, when he stated, "I was confused, I had no idea if they were selling the car or the burger." Other respondents felt the same way as they asserted that the commercial was "confusing" and "pointless."

As I began to delve further into the data there was a consistent theme that was emerging, and that theme was sex appeal. This commercial, as the data tells it, uses sex appeal that is so intense that the respondents overall indicated that the juxtaposition of the burger along with the sexiness of Paris Hilton was over the top with sexual connotations to the point that many of the respondents did not know the purpose for this ad. Would buying this burger get you closer to Paris Hilton? Evan thought that at least, "They want the image of someone sexy eating the burger." This response by Evan may indicate that teenagers do not comprehend the irony of this advertisement as easily as I first thought. Irony is one of the more difficult concepts to understand. Teenagers must pick up on the subtle clues that the advertiser is trying to make within the context of its time and place. Paris Hilton is relevant now, but one must also understand Paris' humor, reputation, and her place in our pop culture within this time period to fully grasp its meaning. While this advertisement is over the top in so many ways, it is not just about someone, anyone, sexy eating a burger, it's about Paris Hilton eating the burger, which hopefully for the corporation that owns Carls Jr., will consequently increase sales. The relationship between the burger and Paris Hilton is supposed to become a synonymous, such as

the Toucan for Fruit Loops cereal. The identifier, who in this advertisement is Paris Hilton, is suppose to be linked interchangeably with Carls Jr. burgers, thusly, increasing profit margins. The ability to find an identifier that works is difficult, so it doesn't always work like in this case according to the respondents.

I looked into what the respondents had to say about whether or not they thought this ad would sell more burgers, and I was taken aback by the data. Overwhelmingly, 14 out of 19 respondents (Table 5.2) did say that this advertisement would sell more burgers, could this be the same respondents who led me to believe that this commercial did not seem to place the product first, but the sex appeal? So why then would this advertisement sell more burgers?

Table 5.2 How Respondents' View the Success of the Carls Jr. Advertisement

	Gender = Female	Gender = Male
Yes, it helps sell burgers	7	7
It's our society	0	2
Because of Paris Hilton	7	5
No, it does not sell burgers	2	3
Bad Commercial	1	1
Not sure	0	0

According to the data that I analyzed, Paris Hilton was overwhelmingly the reason that female respondents believed that more burgers would sell, while a slighter number of male respondents believed that Paris Hilton was the sole reason by citing that it's also our society that is a cause of this advertisement selling more burgers. Alex declared that "It probably will be because of the society we have; I don't like Paris Hilton…I think that she gets too much

124

attention." Does Alex believe that we are that superficial as a culture? According to Jamie, she believes that we are as she describes in this statement, "Yes, I think so, it is one of their tactics. They wouldn't use sex or spend money on Paris Hilton if it wasn't going to work. Guys will look at that and say, wow, then give them some business." In almost all responses from the female subjects in this study, they believe that males could be influenced into purchasing burgers by viewing a sexy advertisement like this one. Male respondents overall viewed this advertisement as working and for the same reason, Paris Hilton.

The responses by both males and females are not surprising because all of the respondents stated that sex sells in our culture. As examples, Nancy declares, "absolutely, in every aspect in everything that is sold." Samantha responded with, "Yes, I think that it is the top selling point right now." Males were of a similar viewpoint as Evan pointed out with his contention that, "they are probably just seeing results from using ads like this to sell their products."

Reviewing the data very closely, I theorize that sexually based advertisements in our society are pervasive and will sell merchandise even if these teenagers believe that these advertisements are shallow, and in numerous responses, also ridiculous. Since many of the teenagers in this research study understand the use of sex to sell, what would the effect be on tomorrow's children that are growing up in a world of commercialism and increasing deregulation of the media?

Female respondents mainly view the affect of these types of ads on our young as an agent that will persuade them greatly. Mary's statement is reflective of this sentiment when she states, "Little girls think that it is okay; Paris Hilton is someone that little girls look up to." Consequently, males see these types of ads as having less than a profound affect on our children.

The data vaguely suggests that male respondents see these ads as having "no effect" or that our children will be "desensitized" by the time they reach their teenage years. When analyzing the data more closely, the respondents are of similar conviction that these advertisements, being so ubiquitous in our culture that children will be used to it or will just not care.

5.1.4   Advertisement: Calvin Klein's Obsession

"Don't worry about love, more about how much money they make, what they look like, and how they smell" Jake, November 2008.

This advertisement was remarkably different from the Carls Jr. advertisement that the subjects previously viewed. The Calvin Klein advertisement was more classical and romantic than outright provocative as the Carls Jr. advertisement that was viewed and analyzed by the subjects. The focus of the questions were also a little bit different as well; mainly focusing on how this ad portrays women and the stereotypes that are perpetrated, as well as the respondents' initial reaction and the effect of this advertisement on tomorrow's children.

I first queried the respondents as to what their initial reaction was to this advertisement. Most respondents', both male and female, were not sure about what their reaction was to this ad. Most, like Fred, described the ad in this manner, "I was confused because I didn't know what they were trying to sell," while others felt that the advertisement was either a movie trailer for a "chick flick," or an advertisement for a men's or women's product, but were unclear as to what this product may be. There was certainly a theme that pervaded the data collected and that theme was a combination of either dramatic or fantasy. Males believed that the commercial was more dramatic, while the data was similar between both males and females who thought that this

advertisement had a fantasy feel to it. Gia described her feelings as, "Dramatic, like a movie, a carnation that was in black and white."   Nick felt that the commercial was, "Romantic, that creates an old or classical feeling that is done for a purpose." Both Gia and Nick's responses were typical of the data collected; there just seemed to be ambiguity about what the advertisement was suppose to be trying to sell. And while there were positive comments by both females and males about the commercial in terms of it's artistic ability, like in Mike' response, "More like a love story," there did not seem to be the connection to the product that an corporation may want.

The data collected on how the respondents' view this advertisement in relation to how it portrays women was expansive. While males saw, overwhelmingly, the portrayal of women as equally superficial/influenced, females viewed this advertisement as favorable toward women. Ian saw this advertisement as an indictment of how a female could be easily influenced when he stated, " It makes them (females) seem like all you have to do is wear this product and women will be flocking toward you, and that they are not necessarily dumb, but easy to influence." Evan also sees this commercial as an indictment of female superficiality, as he describes this commercial as, "attracted to anything that uses this cologne…they will be attracted to you if you use this cologne." Evan seems to think that women are just as superficial in their quest of the opposite sex as males. A women may not care about whether a man is smart or attractive, but what cologne that they wear.

Female respondents did not see this advertisement in the same way. Females felt that this advertisement was favorable, Samantha expressed her thoughts as, "Same as it (the commercial) portrays the guy…it shows two people in love; they did not focus on the woman." Why is it that both males and females view this ad so differently? I theorize that males see ads like this as a

127

manipulation of women due to their superficiality. In my opinion, in many of the advertisements, magazine articles, and reality shows of our contemporary culture, women are seemingly willing to go to any length to get what they want. Males pick up on this portrayal of women and may generalize it across their other interactions with the media, which may have taken place in their review of this advertisement. It also may have been because these respondents' viewed the Carls Jr. advertisement prior to viewing the Calvin Klein advertisement. This ad could certainly be viewed as romantic in terms of the music, author, and the use of black and white as a throwback to the romantic movies of the past; female respondents perhaps comprehended this just as that, and not something more sexualized that was not there as it was in the Carls Jr. Commercial.

Stereotypes can also be found in many of today's contemporary advertisements. The media has the power to encourage these stereotypes, or they can change stereotypes based on their goals and objectives. I asked the respondents if they could identify any stereotypes in this advertisement? In the data that I collected (Table 5.3) and analyzed from the respondents, I found both the data collected from the males and females in the study to have very similar responses. Both male and female respondents closely viewed (Males = 70% - Females = 68%) this advertisement as selling relationships and sex by the use of this product. For instance, Alex was of the opinion, "That if you wear this cologne a nice looking girl will kiss you." Nick also believed that by wearing the cologne, "…things will work out in a relationship; smelling good will make everything work out." By analyzing these two responses along with the data from the male subjects in my study, a common theme began to emerge, which was that this product promised, or emphasized, that being able to attract the opposite sex and/or have a loving relationship is dependent on this product. Eighteen percent of the male respondents viewed this

128

advertisement as promoting two good-looking people having an attraction that was linked by this cologne. The data was dissimilar to some extent between males and females, even though they found the advertisement to have the same two common themes of relationship/sex and good looks. While 31% of females found this advertisement to be focused on good looks compared to 19% of males, the data was notably different. Males pointed out the good looks but also pointed out the cologne, females on the other hand did not mention the cologne but focused on the attractiveness of the female and the male, as in this excerpt from Jenna, "It has a good looking guy with a good looking girl." I theorize that females focus more on looks than males; that females are more romantic; or that males tend to focus on the product and its connection to the visuals. There is no definitive way of knowing based on this small sample of data. However, females like males, believed that this advertisement was more focused on the relationship-sex stereotype than any other. The data also showed a distinct connection between the responses of males and females, as both genders focused on the relationship between the product and the instant attraction that one would feel for another. I speculate that the advertisement was extremely overt in its visual imagery of the product and its connection to relationships-sex, or that in the culture that we now live in, the belief is that one thing will lead to another.

Table 5.3 Why Respondents Believe the Calvin Klein Advertisement is Successful

	Gender = Female	**Gender = Male**
Product sells relationships-Intimacy	68%	70%
Good looks	32%	19%
Sex sells	0%	5%
None	0%	6%

5.1.5   Sexual Media Literacy & Grade Levels

As I began to look more deeply into the data, I was looking for areas where there was a significant discrepancy between junior/seniors and freshman/sophomores. One of the areas where the data was very clear was the belief that sex in our culture sells.   All of the respondents believe that our culture is one where we are sexualized, but even so, there was a prominent difference in the way that upper classmen (juniors/seniors) viewed the Carls Jr. advertisement compared to the underclassmen (freshman/sophomores). Proportionally, upperclassmen believed overwhelmingly, that the Carls Jr. ad would sell more burgers, while the data supporting underclassmen was skewed toward believing that this ad would not sell more burgers. The data also established that upperclassmen believed that Paris Hilton has an influence on burgers being sold while underclassmen did not view Paris Hilton as a catalyst for selling more burgers. The data supports the theory that underclassmen believe that we are more influenced by advertisements containing sexual connotations, while upperclassmen were split in this area among five categories.

The inconsistencies in the data may be due to many reasons, anywhere from environmental factors, to the teachers or disciplines that they took in high school, developmental levels, or because the subjects have critical thinking skills, which enable them to be more conceptual in their thinking. In any manner, the areas of divergence that I described in this section suggest that the respondents' opinion when it comes to an advertisement as explicit as Paris Hilton, would lead to different perceptions based on grade level. The other data did not have the incongruity as the data reflective as the Carls Jr. advertisement featuring Paris Hilton.

5.1.6 Conclusion

In this section, I coded and analyzed the respondents' data that reflected their insights into the use of sexuality in the media in regards to how it is used to sell and advertise products, and then provide their thoughts on two advertisements that comprise of the use of sexual images to sell commodities. And since, as Laumann, Paik, & Rosen (1999) have pointed out, that research has revealed that repeated exposure to sexualized advertising could lead to sexual dysfunction as an adult, the ramifications of this study are critical.

The respondents believed that using sex to sell merchandise is both confusing and scary at the same time. While Rick sees this change in the use of sexual imagery over time as a detriment to our present and future, Nancy was willing to be more specific in that these types of advertisements are creating a culture where our young have to grow up too fast. Mike and Jessica could see the psychological affects and the cultural ramifications of the use of sex to sell to teenagers, most of the responses that I analyzed lacked depth and awareness of this issue and were focused only on the advertisement, not looking at the big picture of the negative consequences that may occur. For example, Mary believes "if it is helping to sell something, I don't know, then I am okay with it, but if it's not selling anything and you're using it, it's pointless." Evan is less expansive in his response, "It works, so I don't have a problem with it morally or ethically. Based on both of these responses, I surmise that the media has certainly desensitized these two teenagers because they seem to view sex only in terms its selling power and whether or not it touches our moral code. These responses demonstrate to me a lack of understanding of the conceptual and cultural critical thinking skills necessary as one interacts with their culture and a lack of instruction in this district that promotes a conceptual worldview approach to problem solving and cognitive processing.

There was also a true disbelief in what teens viewed as being true in the advertisements. Respondents saw sexually based ads as negative and pervasive, but these same respondents felt that these ads work in our society. Females saw sexual images used in ads as pervasive, while males overall did not see these types of ads as pervasive. Many of the respondents viewed advertisements as being untruthful and humorous…however, they still believe that these ads sold the product that they were marketing. The data could not speak as to why these products were still selling if the belief is that they were untruthful.

The respondents' viewed two commercials that contained sexual images, and even though they were dissimilar, the responses were very analogous. Respondents' viewed the advertisements as being commercially viable for the company, but also saw these commercials as being ambiguous as to what exactly was being sold. Many of respondents were confused for a large portion of the advertisement, yet found these advertisements as something that would profit the company. Overall, these advertisements are seen as being very successful even though the respondents due view the use of sexual images as a dilemma in our society.

6.0 **CHAPTER SIX**

6.1 **THE EXPLOITATION OF VIOLENT VISUAL IMAGARY TO MARKET**

COMMODITIES --- TRANSFORMATION OF OUR TEENAGE CULTURE

The analysis of the data in this chapter focuses on how young adults make sense of the current status of violent images in our society and how they define this interaction individually. The data allows me to speculate how the marketing of violent images, as a selling tool for a product, may possibly lead to the desensitization of our youth in a media driven economy such as the United States. The test of this theory develops, as the respondents must draw meaning from an advertisement that is unequivocally the standard for our society, unfortunately, at this point in time. How these images impact our culture in the future is something that respondents were also asked to expound on as our society becomes more lenient in its restrictions on the use of violent images as a marketing tool through the increasing use of technology that is largely unregulated at this time.

Movies, television shows, commercials, cartoons and video games all display images of violence that our youth must be able to interpret and comprehend. For example, if a child were to watch the nightly news, he or she would be inundated with at least 10-15 minutes of news that describe, murder, robbery, war, accidents or school violence. This same child may then play, for instance, Halo (video game rated highly popular), in which he or she must blow up and kill

intruders in order to win and advance to the next level of the game. I wonder if our young adults are being influenced by the violent images (both real and fictitious), that they encounter on a daily basis? Anderson (2001) asserts that playing video games for as little as twenty minutes could result in anything from an increase in aggressive affect (anger) to an increase in physical behaviors. Anderson claims that violence is presently encouraged through the media as a method for solving problems in a way that is glamorized in our culture. Anderson also believes it is important for teens interpret these images and decide on their own what is appropriate behavior and what is not.

It would be erroneous for me to surmise that isolated violent video images alone could cause outburst of violent behaviors in our youth. For this reason, it is of the utmost importance to explore a teenager's social environment and the lack of an effective media education curriculum. These considerations may have as much impact as the images themselves in a teenager's decision to commit violent acts. Researchers such as Brown and Pennell (2000), Dorr and Kovanic, (1981), and Hopf (2001) believe that the social and environmental context in which teens reside lends itself to an increase in violent behavior due to what is viewed on television.

When the media places violent images in an environment that is predisposed to aggression, along with the problem solving skills that result from playing video games with violent content, a volatile situation may ensue. As Grossman and DeGaetano (1999) point out, violent games are realistic video killing simulators that provide operant conditioning so that any person can react to a stimulus situation in a more skillful manner.

6.1.1   The Current Status of Violent Images on Television

"I'm saying that I don't think there's a problem with violence on TV. I think there's a problem that parents just don't care what their kids are watching" Evan, November 2008.

Giroux (2000) has pointed out the need for teens to interact with the media in order for teens to better comprehend the power of technology as a social learning tool as it relates to violent images and our youth. From my experience in education, there seems to be an almost acceptance of violence on television by teens in conjunction with their indifference toward doing anything about it.   This interaction that Giroux speaks of is a cultural pedagogy that will "provide students with the knowledge and skills to read the media critically" (1998, p. 33). The common theme that seemed to pervade the data is the lack of the respondents' ability to admit that they need to self-monitor their own viewing habits. Whether it is the parents' responsibility, or society's responsibility, there seems to have been very few respondents who stated that they are in control of what they choose to view. As a result, I speculate that there seems to be an acceptance of violence on television, while at the same moment apathy toward it.   By not providing cultural pedagogy, we are allowing the continuation of these beliefs to permeate our culture. In this section, I am going to discuss how teens view the: current status of violent images on television; desensitization of our youth to violent images; Call of Duty advertisement; and the future of violent images in our society. The respondents refer to their view of the current status of violent images in our society within three categories:

- A great deal of violent images on television.

- The current status of violence is not too bad.

- Not against violence on television.

As I began to review the data as it pertains to these three categories, I looked at how gender may influence a person's worldview and the way that gender and someone's worldview interact with the media. I theorize that males would probably respond that there was not a lot of violence on television and that they were not against it. As for females, I speculate that their responses would most likely be categorized as feeling as though there is a great deal of violence on television. To my surprise, the data did not result in the way that I believed it would result. The majority of males did believe that there was a great deal of violence on television, but almost as many were not against the amount of violent images that were displayed on television. There was only one male respondent who believed that violent images on television were not excessive compared to the majority of females who responded that it was excessive. While female respondents seem to believe that there was a lot of violence on television, only one female respondent did not.

The data tells me that both males and females believe that there is too much violence on television today. It also tells me that while females think that there are too many violent images on television, a majority of the males do not. Based on this data, **I** believe that the data would be synonymous with each other, but just because one does not feel that violent images on television are bad for our society, it is a far cry from someone who is clearly not against it. For instance, Nancy stated that, "I don't think that it's too bad. You see those commercials for Comcast or whatever for parental controls, so I guess if the parent wants to place parental controls to help shelter their kids, it's up to them really." While Evan declares,

> "Violence on television, I'm not against it. I don't think that there is a ridiculous amount;
> I do think that parents should stop kids from watching violent television if they are not
> old enough. They almost never do that unfortunately."

In both cases, the respondents believe that parents should be in charge of monitoring their kids and protecting them from viewing too many violent images. However, I surmise that very few parents may have the means to monitor their child as they visit a friend's house, or observe what their child is watching on television at all times. Some respondents, like Mike, are more matter-of-fact about the current state of violence on television, when he maintains that, "I don't mind it, that doesn't affect me.' Mike goes on to say, "There's…societies changing so much that more stuff is considered acceptable rather than unacceptable…so there is a lot more than there used to be." Mike seems to assume that violent images are something that has no effect on him and that society as a whole seems unable, or unwilling, to stop the increasing acceptability of violent images in our society.

There was also a large discrepancy between high school seniors and the rest of the secondary level participants from the high school. All of the respondents from the freshman, sophomore and junior classes felt that the use of violence on television was not problematic, however nearly half of respondents from the senior class believed that violent images on television is totally acceptable. For example, Mario is "pretty much fine with it, but if people don't like it they can change the channel." Evan is much like Mario in his point of view, "Violence on television, I'm not against it, I don't think that there is a ridiculous amount." Even goes on to say that parents need to be more involved in what their children are watching. Both respondents clearly believe that the violence on television is acceptable and that they need to monitor themselves or be monitored. In my view, very few teens are going to monitor themselves and in some cases watch violent programming with their parents. I theorize that seniors have this point of view because they have more freedom than their younger peers and view more violent images, which has desensitized them; or that seniors believe that these images

are a function of our culture and therefore, they accept violence in what they view. **I** also posit that respondents in the freshman to junior group been educated in more critical media literacy coursework, thus, allowing them to understand that violent images are not an issue globally but more or less a reflection of our society. Beth, a sophomore, sees the use of violence on a global scale, "I think there's a ton of it compared to other countries; foreign countries don't have as much and I think that they see it as more outrageous than we do." Tracey a junior was also reflective of Beth that we have "more violence on TV than there is in Europe." Since both respondents seem aware of violence in the media on a global level, I would surmise that there has been pedagogy related to this topic in their studies.

6.1.2 Desensitization of our Youth to Violent Images

"I know a lot of guys in my grade are like 'Oh, war must be cool.' I'm like, you have no idea what you are talking about…" Maddy, November 2008.

The data analyzed from the respondents clearly demonstrates that there is a belief among teens that violence is part of our society. With the intense amount of violent images saturating our society via the media, I am very concerned that our teenagers are being conditioned to unite violent imagery to excitement and joy, thus, becoming desensitized to the violence that is viewed because of the association that has been created between these elements. By combining these violent images along with the thrill of, a violent video game, a teenager is more likely to be influenced into purchasing a product. I asked the respondents whether or not they believed that the constant bombardment of violent images have desensitized our youth? According to Grossman and DeGaetano (1990), "As our kids desire increased levels of violence and become

138

more and more desensitized, they are constantly learning that harming is fun, 'natural,' and the right thing to do" (p.62).   Would the data collected substantiate this claim?

As I analyzed the data (Table 2.1) I concluded that both females and males believed that our youth are being desensitized by these images; 92% of females and 73% of males agreed with this claim. I find it extremely important to use numbers when the data is powerful and makes an incontrovertible assertion. Since this research study is based on the impact of visual media, it is only logical that I use visuals for the same affect. The overwhelming belief that our youth is being desensitized is best displayed using numbers. The number of respondents surveyed in this study does not provide me with enough of a sample to generalize the results, but it does provide a foundation for which future studies may be predicated.

Table 6.1 Respondents Who Believe that We Are Being

	Gender = Female	Gender = Male
Yes	92%	73%
No	8%	27%
Unsure	0%	0%

Ian was one of two male respondents who didn't view the media use of violent images as desensitizing our youth, when he stated,

"I don't think, I really don't think it has, because we, we view those like, you know, like fictional stuff. We don't believe that that's really real, like really happening. And whenever it happens, whenever something violent happens to us, like we

139

automatically realize like, Wow, this is crazy and like we are emotionally attached when it comes to that kind of stuff."

Mario's sentiments encapsulate most of the respondents' viewpoints when he states,

"Yes, I've seen little kids play Grand Theft Auto that they're shooting people and running people over with cars, and then they're going, walking people and running people over with cars, and then they're going, walking around on the street and see road kill and they're poking it with a stick. They're not looking at it like; oh my God, somebody hit this animal, it's like, let's poke it. It's not a big deal. It's everywhere."

While Mario's response reflects a perception that there is certainly something to be said for video games that have a realistic theme like Grand Theft Auto, which has gunfights, death, prostitution, and other vices. The scenario provided by Mario supports the claim by Grossman and DeGaetano (1999) that there may be carryover from the virtual world to the real world. I wanted to understand more about how teens interpret violent images now that I have collected and analyzed data related to their views and their experiences with these images. Call of Duty is an extremely popular game with teens and with adults. I am interested in finding out how teens interpret an advertisement that has violent images that have been created to sell this product.

6.1.3 "All the Cool Things of Killing" Rick, November 2008: Inferring the meaning of the Call of Duty Advertisement

As I began to show the advertisement for Call of Duty and reflected on the data, I was in disbelief that none of the respondents were outraged by this violent advertisement. This advertisement was truly one of the most violent that I have ever viewed. Based on the lack of

emotion resulting from viewing this advertisement, I could surmise that this teen culture is very acclimated to the violence that they interact with through our daily media.

Call of Duty is one of the most popular series of games in the video game industry. Personally, I have played Call of Duty myself because I am very interested in World War II (WWII), and the first two games of the Call of Duty series are focused on the battles of WWII. Even though I never played the game long enough to complete it, I have to admit, the graphics and realism were an enormous draw for me even as an adult. I asked the respondents what their first impression of the game was; I was not surprised by the answers that I received. Just about all of the respondents used the same adjectives to describe the game; for instance, they responded how fun, fast-paced, incredibly violent, realistic, and how intense the graphics were in the game. Tracey however, stated that the video game "appeals to the teenage audience, it's guns racing, things that are cool." Nick called the game, "very fast paced and exciting…with malice." One of the most telling statements was from Jake when he described his first impression as being, a "war game that was mature…aimed toward 13, 14, and 15 year olds."

The data reminds me of someone who has come back from war desensitized from violence; there was no sense of urgency or a sense that the violence was repulsive, the feelings toward this game was just a matter of fact. As I stated previously, I played this game, and I was awe struck yet disturbed by the violence and realism, but that did not come across in my interviews. Tracey believes that this game is appealing to teenage audiences, and she is probably right. Nick called this game, "exciting," and he is right. It's rarely a good idea to admit being appalled by your respondents, but when Nick states that this game is for mature audiences, and then quantifies the age group as between 13 and 15, he is telling us that from his standpoint, almost no one is too immature for this game.

Half of the respondents never played games that are this violent; yet, they didn't have any problem with the violent advertisement they viewed for this study. Seven of ten respondents commented that they liked the game for either the enjoyment, because they had nothing better to do, or because they get to play the game with their friends. Two of the respondents, Tracey and Rick, play the game because it gives them the thrill of being in the position of experiencing the violence and killing without actually hurting someone. Rick expressed his experiences with the game as, "It puts you in the position of creating the violence without any of the harm; all the cool things of killing, weapons, life endangering situations, without any of the real things." Tracey responded that she loved "experiencing it without actually harming anyone." I posit that in both cases, the thrill of the hunt, so to speak, is what drives them to play this game.

I also speculate that our youth are very accustomed to playing violent video games without hesitation. As I continued to question my subjects, I began to ask if they believed that these types of violent video games desensitize our children to real violence. All but one of the respondents believed that violent video games desensitize our children to real violence. Jamie's response is typical of respondents who believe that these types of video games desensitize our youth, when she explained, "sometimes it is so relevant and everywhere. When you blow someone's head off this is actually stuff that is happening. I am part of that too, everyone is desensitized…my guy died and tomorrow, they will be back." One respondent, Mike, actually did not think that children are desensitized but feels that it may be a good thing if they were desensitized, when he acknowledged,

> "I think it may be a good thing that children are desensitized because there is so much violence going on in the world. There is so much stuff that you cannot take it personally every time someone gets murdered, someone gets killed, or you will be a wreck."

This statement from Mike is very eye opening. For a child, or even an adult, to feel nothing for someone who has been murdered is a sterilization of our emotions based on the violence being viewed in our culture. It is almost as if there is now a symmetry between the violence in our society and the simulated violence in our video games. This symmetry is based on Mike's belief that the world of video violence will make it easier for children to be emotionally dispassionate about a person who has actually been murdered. Grossman and DeGaetano (1999) view the desensitization of our children as a result of "when children start off in an alarm state with noradrenaline levels and impulsive behavior, they often revert to low noradrenaline levels and calculating behaviors. Brains in a constant hyped state get worn out and sociopathic behaviors are the result" (p. 61).

Would this perceived desensitization of violence be perceived as carrying over to an increase of violence in our schools? There is some ambivalence when it comes to this issue among the respondents. Some respondents do see a correlation while other respondents see either no connection or see outside influences as a catalyst for this type of behavior taking place in our schools. Respondents who believe that there is a correlation between violent images and violence in schools see this as life imitating art, and that teens are influenced by what they see through their mimicking of the behavior. Not that some teens do not see some of these behaviors as wrong, but they see this as something that is cool to try, for example, what they see on World Wide Entertainment (WWE) wrestling. Samantha supports my theory related to the transference of violence to our schools: "they think that it is cool and fun playing the game and they probably think that it would be fun in real life, too." Nancy thinks that "video games are a major, major, influence on kids. She believes this because from her point of view kids aren't seeing this violence unless they are catching pieces of what their parents are watching.

143

Those respondents that believe that there is not a correlation see the problem similar to Gia, who sees the violent behavior "not in school but out of school; they play paintball and use bb guns." Mary has the same view as Gia…her friends will sometimes say while they are driving along, "Get 10 points for hitting the old guy!" In regards to both of these responses, I surmise that Gia and Mary's friends have been influenced by the media but are aware of the trouble that they would cause themselves by verbalizing or acting out in the same way that they do outside of school in school.

There were number of respondents that included outside factors or the disposition of a person as a major contributing factor to whether or not someone would commit a violent act at school through the viewing of violent images. For instance, Mario views the connection from video games to our schools dependent on the environment that a child is raised in, when he points out that, "I think it is the parents need to teach the child that it is just a game and not to do it outside."

Would the same circumstances affect a person's violent predilections in our society? Jamie and Gia have alluded to this possibility already in their responses earlier. The data is more unambiguous (Table 6.2) in what the respondents believe in terms of this question.

Table 6.2 Respondents Who Believe that Viewing Violent Images

	Gender = Female	Gender = Male
Yes	6	3
No	2	5
Somewhat	1	0

Males did not make the connection between violent game playing and violence in our society, while females were overwhelmingly of the opinion that a connection could be made between these two variables. Only one respondent, compared to six respondents who thought that there might be a connection between violent games and school violence, made that same connection to our society. I posit that the amount of violence portrayed by the media of our society compared to the coverage of violence of our schools, could be the reason for more decisive opinions.

Those respondents that see a positive correlation between violence in our society and viewing violent images, like Samantha, believe that "anything that is physical violence is what becomes part of your life." Jake sees the connection as, "a bigger impact on our society than in our schools." While the respondents didn't elaborate as much as to why they thought this connection was enhanced in our society, they were definitely more definitive in their responses as to what they believed rather than ambiguous.

Looking at the responses where the connection was not made between images and violence in our society, males believed more than 2-1 that a connection did not exist. Mike stated that, "I don't think it does, you know when you are playing a video game and you know you can't go out and do that stuff. Any normal minded person would know that." I think that "normal minded" is an important belief of Mike as it relates to the transference of violent behavior from images to society. Mike is assuming that continual exposure does not set in motion children to commit violent acts, or that someone with a sane mind cannot commit such violent acts, but they can. Not every child who commits violent acts is insane or has not been affected by constant exposure. Violent acts don't always result in fatalities like what happened at Columbine. Violent acts may be a push, punch, or a quick kick to the shins that may not result

in any type of significant pain. I posit that if the definition of violence included these relatively smaller issues, the respondents may respond differently.

6.1.4   VI.A.4 Impact of Violent Images on Our Future

"I think that it will probably impact our future in a negative way, but I don't think by a very large margin" Gia, November 2008.

I feel that I can make the assertion, based on the data that I have analyzed, that there may certainly be a cause for concern about how violent images and advertisements will impact violent behavior in our future.   It is also important to take into account that corporations that profit off of the exploitation of violent images, whether it be through our daily news or video games, for example, and these industries, I am sure, are not about to cut into those profits for the benefit of our youth.

Table 6.3 How Violent Images will Affect the Future of Our Children – Grade Level

	School Year = Freshman	School Year = Sophmore	School Year = Junior	School Year = Senior
Desensitize	0	2	1	5
Influence	2	3	1	5
None	1	0	0	1
Emotionally	1	0	0	2
Violence	0	0	2	2

Through my analysis I found that only two respondents believe that there will not be any negative effects in the future related to violent images in the media. Otherwise, the respondents were genuinely concerned as it relates to our children's future and how they interact with the

media. When I began to analyze the data according to grade level (Table 6.3), I found that among high school students, there is a genuine belief that violent images will influence the next generation in a negative manner. Mario, a senior, stated that, "They're pretty young, so they're gonna be impressionable, and everything they are seeing makes a huge impact, so depending on what the parents teach the kids, it could get really bad." Gia, a freshman, responded that, "I think that it will probably impact our future in a negative way, but I don't think by a very large margin." While Mario sees the impact that violent images have more expansively, Gia sees negativity, but limited, compared to Mario. Overall, the data has similar trends that acknowledge the impact of these images on our future teenagers, but the extent of it is as ambiguous as a junior classman by the name of Fred, when he states, "Kind of the same way it has impacted me, except worse." The data is consistent across grade levels in its negativity toward the future of our teenagers in relation to the influence that violent images will have, but there is no way delineating exactly what is meant by a "huge impact" in comparison to a "large margin" or the way that violent images have impacted someone personally.

The data leads me to think that the respondents could be classified into three areas: those that see the media as currently too violent; those that see the media as too violent but do not participate in violent games but are yet, blasé about violence; and the small number of respondents, mainly boys, who seem fine with the current state of violence in our culture. The number of respondents observing a high rate of violence in our society is considerable, which leads me to believe that unless we become more socially responsible the future of our children looks dour. I believe that as we continue to push the limits of what is acceptable in terms of violent images in our society, the more our children will become nonchalant about what they see and how they act.

147

When I reviewed the data further, I noticed that the responses were similar to the comments made when I queried the respondents on the desensitization of our society earlier. As an example, Evan claimed, "I don't think it will impact them that much. We won't become so much more violent, we will become desensitized to violence…but I don't think that will change our actual tendency toward violence." Two respondents noted that there would be no effect of these images on our society on the future. Mike believes, "That's the society that we live in; for some think it's unfortunate, or you know, this or that, but that's just how we live now." Trent sees this as generational, as he make the assertion that "different people, generations view it different ways. It 'could' mess up society." In both cases, there is a sense that our society adjust to the media violence and that there should not be a problem; only Trent leaves the door open in case he is wrong.

Differences in responses between males and females are a little bit more revealing (Table 6.4). The data demonstrates again that both male and female respondents believe violent images will desensitize and influence our children in the future. However, the responses by the female subjects covered multiple categories while males were more certain of their beliefs, or at least, less cognizant of the multiple affects that violent images can have on our youth. Also, some of the male respondents (two) view violent images as not being a problem, while none of the female respondents see this as a viable position.

Table 6.4 How Violent Images will Affect The Future of Our Children – Gender

	Gender = Female	Gender = Male
Desensitize	5	3
Influence	7	4
None	0	2
Emotionally	2	1
Violence	3	1

Interpreting this data under the attribute of gender allowed me to have a different perspective of the data. When analyzing grade levels, the data was not allowing me to distinguish a clear contrast, but when I interpreted the data through gender, I was able to make assertions that females seem to view violence as more extensively pervasive than males. Additionally, females envision a future in which violent images will be a systemic problem as compared to a small number of males who do not see a quandary forthcoming.

6.1.5 Conclusion

The data in this section composes a story of how young people make meaning from the violent images that are marketed and available in our society virtually at any moment. Based on the data, I imagine that our society is in peril unless we assist teens in making purposeful meaning of these images. Like anything else in life, if someone is exposed to something enough over a period of time; we become used to it, and it does not have the same effect as it used to have on us.

I also see the respondents becoming desensitized as they view more of these images. Even the advertisement that I had the respondents' view did not disturb one of them, even those who had never viewed the advertisement or played the game before.

The future seems to be bleak in terms of how it looked for our children as it relates to violent media images. It wouldn't be too far-fetched to theorize that we as a society are becoming increasingly accepting of violent images and this comes from the continual exposure that we are under every day. I can only imagine how this exposure affects our children who have not had the pedagogy and are not developmentally able to interpret these messages in a logical manner. The data establishes a belief that even for our teenagers today, many of them are appalled by what very young children are viewing on television and in video games. Many of the respondents seem genuinely concerned about the future; Maddy 's response is embedded in my mind, "When I was little, I probably played like…I don't know, a kid." Maddy is probably talking about herself only 10 or 12 years ago and that is what is so disconcerting for me. I know that technology and the media has grown significantly over the last 20 years, but it doesn't mean that our children are developmentally ready for these innovations and acceptance of these images. I posit a future where the media is creating a society of desensitization, in which childhood will be taken away. It is important that schools provide critical media literacy skills integrated within a variety of disciplines that would be seen as a natural fit for discourse and exploration into media literacy. This integration will help students make connections between the media and other disciplines and help them to process such a difficult concept.

7.0   CHAPTER SEVEN

7.1   MEDIA LITERACY, AND SCHOOL-BASED RESISITANCE OF TEENAGERS

IN OUR CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY---DEFINING, EDUCATION, INFLUENCE,

MEDIA CREATION, AND INTEGRITY

Corporate agency is pervasive in our society. Agency is created through advertising as a way of

educating our youth, Giroux views ad campaigns as a representation of "cultural pedagogy that

attempts to educate young people about what to think, believe, desire, and feel and how to

behave" Giroux, 1997, p.23. In order for agency to be less effective in molding our youth,

Giroux believes that teenagers need to have a foundation of knowledge pertaining to the media to

be able to have the critical media literacy awareness to support their struggle toward democracy.

This type of intensive discourse and instruction can only take place in one setting, our

educational institutions. According to Vinson and Ross (2003) the "potentially disciplinary ends

of this image-power/surveillance-spectacle/technology-SBER-globalization regime can—indeed

should, even must—be countered in schools and classrooms, and advance to that viewpoint

critical media literacy" (p. 15). This educational reform would need to integrated across

curricular disciplines and include:

1. Theory construction

2. Critique and creation

3. System modeling (Vinson & Ross, 2003, p. 146)

Currently, schools are not mandated to instruct media literacy as a discipline; this demonstrates a lack of understanding of our culture by the Department of Education in relation to other literacy's besides functional literacy (reading and writing). While functional literacy should always be at the forefront of any educational program, it is also just as important that education is current in its approach to the modern needs of the present culture.

In this section I will review how the respondents define media literacy and how they have been exposed to any type of formal media literacy instruction in class. If a respondent was exposed to media literacy instruction, I wanted to know when this instruction took place and in conjunction with what discipline. It is also important to know if the respondents believed that this instruction, if they were exposed to it, prepared them for society as a critical consumer. I then wanted to determine how the respondents viewed themselves in relation to the marketplace in which they are defined and if they thought that they were a creation of our media; with that, did they think that the media is trustworthy and encompassed integrity.

The data collected from the respondents in this section will help to determine if media literacy needs to be instructed in our public schools as early as elementary school and the intensity of the instruction that needs to be in place in order for our young citizens to possess the skills related to democracy.

7.1.1   Defining Media Literacy

"Something that has to do with newspapers and magazines…reading about stuff" Fred, November 2008.

To make a determination as to what students know about media literacy we must first understand how they define it. Through this query I am hoping to deduce if there was any type of discourse in our schools that is directly related to media literacy. Astonishingly, the data revealed that more than 70% of both males and female respondents could not define the term media literacy (Table 7.1). My expectation was that at least 50% would have a basic knowledge of what media literacy means and its ramifications to our society. I may have erroneously believed that by living in this culture (as a teenager) that is inundated with visual images, that he or she would have more awareness of what is going on around him or her. When I analyzed the data according to grade level, I was surprised that only three of the seniors could define media literacy. This percentage is very indicative of the increasing need for clear standards and objectives on the subject of media literacy.

Table 7.1 Are Teenagers able to Define Media Literacy?

	A : Gender = Female	B : Gender = Male
Comprehend Media Literacy	26%	25%
Cannot define Media Literacy	74%	75%

I believe that the data collected from this interview question will help to lay the foundation for the rest of the interview questions that will take place in this section because it is about defining the term media literacy at its most basic level. When I asked this question, I was

looking for responses that defined media literacy as a way that a person interacts with the media and the power that the media has in influencing their beliefs. A good example of defining media literacy came from Beth,

"I would say media literacy is the way that we as individuals perceive the advertisements and things that we see around us. Everything around us is portrayed in a way that makes us think, in some ways it's kind of bias, to get us to think or do something."

What I like about Beth's interpretation is that she defines media literacy as a way that we perceive our world and that it can influence us with bias and behaviors that we may not have otherwise. Maddy took the approach of how we comprehend the media and discern its truths, "It's like how you view and sort of look through the media and pick out what's really true and not true and like ignore the stuff that doesn't matter. It's sort of how you understand it." In both responses the understanding is there, it's about the influence, behaviors, and the critical understanding needed to be reflective about how the media affects them personally and our society as a whole. Males did not elaborate, as did the female respondents but Mike shares the same viewpoint as Maddy, "Media literacy…how well you're able to handle the media. And how well, when you see media and see different types, how it effects you. How you see it." The data allows me to infer that there is some consciousness of the visual world and how agency does affect them at some level of consciousness.

A significant number of respondents seemed to have a superficial familiarity with media literacy. For instance, Nancy is typical in her expertise pertaining to the media, "Just knowing and being aware of all media around you whether it be commercials, TV, anything on TV, magazines, newspapers, books…just being aware." While awareness is certainly important, Nancy doesn't seem to understand the agency that these images possess and how she is

personally affected. Jenna on the other hand shows even less awareness of media literacy, "Being able to understand the media and like what it is---I don't know, like what it is, really. I don't have no idea what this is." Jenna is not the only student that was uncertain in her response, both Gia and Samantha were just as unsure in their responses.

As I have already indicated, Nancy's understanding is typical of the responses collected and analyzed, so much so, that Rick's response was almost exactly the same, "Media literacy is, I believe staying up to date with current things that are happening in television, newspapers, magazines, radio." Based on Rick and Nancy's responses, and including other trends that I analyzed in the data, I was able to speculate that students are unable to clearly make the connection between agency in the media and the influence that it has on them personally. I also made the assumption, based on the data, that a majority of respondents could only define media literacy as being aware of what is occurring in society presently and how these occurrences are shared (magazines, TV, etc.).

7.1.2   School-Based Media Literacy Programs in Our Schools

"I don't think that necessarily everybody realizes the great impact that it has on us so I think it is very important" Beth, November 2008.

Realizing that the data is telling me that there is a lack of fundamental knowledge of what media literacy is, would students believe that media literacy is a necessary course of study? If so, would there need to be an additional course of study or could the instruction be conducted across disciplines? The data collected would allow a school district to build the foundation of a program or units that could be integrated across disciplines unless it would become a course.

155

According to the data only two respondents, one male and female, believe that a media education course is not needed in our schools. Since Jessica could not define media literacy in her response, I wasn't surprised that she believed that media literacy education should not be required in our schools,

> "Important field to examine in our schools…I guess it's, not, I guess kind of important more in news wise, not so much the, like TV shows I guess. But I think every kid in school should really be aware of what's happening in our United States. I mean what is going on. I think it's kind of surprising if someone doesn't know it's important, like, even like hurricanes, devastating hurricanes. Some people don't even know that some thing hit, I guess that's really the importance, I mean."

Jessica's response, while superficial even at best in terms of the media, clearly demonstrates why a course or at least instruction intertwined with or without other disciplines is needed in our schools. There is unmistakably no understanding of agency, power, democracy, or critical analysis on Jessica's part and that is why there needs critical media literacy skills instruction. Nor is there a self-awareness of how the media influences her life and behavior. On the other hand, Evan seems to be aware of the influence that the media has on him but seems to be apathetic as to any type of pedagogy related to media literacy, "I don't think schools really have to do much at all, because it's part of society itself an as long as kids are in society and as long as school's not trying to stop those influences then those influences are going to happen." I infer by Evan's statement, "as long as school's not trying to stop those influences then those influences are going to happen," that Evan is aware that these influences are present in our society but may feel school would be interfering with what should happen naturally by educating students as to the power and influence of the media. Consequently, I believe, unlike Evan, that

schools have an ethical and moral obligation to educate our youth if it is researched that members of our society are affected negatively in any way.

When I analyzed the data of respondents who believed that media literacy education should be studied in our schools I again found that those that could not define it initially provided reasons that supported their incorrect assertions. I then analyzed Maddy's, Nancy's, and Mike's response because of their understanding of media literacy that was portrayed earlier in this section.

Maddy thought it was important because, "it's like all around you and influences you and stuff." She goes on to state, "In English we have to do this stuff for a career portfolio and you sort of do a little tiny section on that so maybe it could be a little section in like English or history or some class." While Maddy did allude to the fact that media literacy affects you as she had done earlier in this section, she clearly minimizes the importance of it as a discipline to be instructed in our schools. Maddy did not believe that students would want to learn about visual media in school, "I don't know, I think that a lot of kids would not like having to take that; it may get treated like a health class." Maddy may be right, and that would be the reason that it may have to be introduced within other disciplines so that important connections can be made in order to help see the big understandings.

Mike's response carried a similar theme to Maddy's, "Not as much in our schools, but I think schools have really gone in a wrong direction. Like they more try to, they try to shelter everything so much that it really has a negative effect." When I asked Mike to take a more cultural perspective, he changed his answer, "Yeah, and really you're gonna be out there and you have no idea what it's like because you're so sheltered in here (school)." Mike was more indecisive in his answer by saying that media literacy education should not be taught in our

schools and then stating that schools have gone in the wrong direction. When inquiring further in terms of cultural effects, Mike intimated that he is sheltered in school and will have no idea what it is like out there. Again, there is knowledge of the importance but not how it is to fit into the school day. Mike's comment about being sheltered I school could provide a basis for an increase in emphasis on the social sciences.

Nancy was very positive about the thought of media literacy instruction at school,

"I definitely think so. I think that it interesting, I think it's really, really, interesting how some people view it and how it effects some people and how it matters so much to some people. Some people live their lives off of what they see in a fashion magazine."

In Nancy's response, she seems to understand the influence that media literacy has on others and to a greater degree in some cases. Nancy does not provide to what degree she sees this type of instruction taking place in our schools, but her interest would tell me that it might be to a greater degree than Maddy or Mike.

Jamie, Samantha, Rick, and Tracey see media literacy fitting in fine with psychology, sociology, English, and world history classes. Rick views a study of the influence of the media a natural fit in the historical context, "How did media effect the decisions of the Bay of Pigs or in WWII." I assume that Rick understands the influence of the media in relation to historical events and their influence in the outcomes and that he understands the big picture of the media.

Overall, the data allowed me to infer that students see media literacy instruction as essential in our schools. In cases where the respondents were not in favor of this type of instruction in our schools, there was a clear misunderstanding of what media literacy actually is. There is also some divisiveness as to whether or not this type of instruction is best immersed with other disciplines or independently. Sixty-six percent of the respondents see media literacy

instruction as being instructed across disciplines as compared to independently. This may be because students see little room for additional courses being added to the schedule or it may be because of the connections that can be made to most subject areas that would help tie these disciplines together, which rarely happens in schools today.

7.1.3   Media Influencing the Judgments that We Make of Others

"Oh yeah, I am quick to judge; I think that a lot f people are. If someone walks by me and they don't look presentable...I think that I will be quick to judge or second guess" Jake, November 2008.

As discussed throughout this chapter, the media has a great deal of influence on how we think, believe, and how we perceive the world. In this section, the goal is to determine if the media influences how teenagers judge others they deem out of style by media standards.

I was not surprised when I reviewed the percentages of those that made judgments based on style; with the proliferation of visual advertisements in our society it is no wonder that teens are quick to chastise. One hundred percent of female respondents viewed themselves as judgmental while only 69% of males believed the same. When I analyzed male respondents who did not judge others, I found Mario to believe, "I do judge but then like I can look at them; it catches my eye is what it does and then it doesn't mean a thing. I see it, and then I say okay, where's that coming from, then move on." Jake judges the same way, "You might look at the person and think, what are they thinking, but then you're like, whatever, if they want to look that way, they can look that way." Jake and Mario admitted that they would look twice at someone who was, by media standards, out of style, but both were quick to point out that's their choice.

Both Jake and Mario demonstrate that they believe there is a lot more to someone than just their appearance or the first reaction that you have of them.

As I began to analyze the data regarding those who did make judgments based on media standards, I looked at males first since there was not 100% uniformity. For instance, Mike responded that he would not be judgmental but then went on, "I mean unless, unless you dress out of control, like the Emo kids, like that." Mike went on to elucidate, "Yeah, Emo, Goth, you know. They have all the earrings and all the black clothes. That's just ridiculous." What is interesting about Mike, is that he sees himself as someone who is non-judgmental, but then turns around and is totally judging someone based not on who he or she is, but how they dress. Ian takes the viewpoint that the person dresses the way they do because, "maybe they, like they don't care about what they look like…they don't want to interact with anybody, like they are just hiding in the corner." Ian seems that he is not being judgmental, but I don't agree, I theorize that Ian is judging based on the fact that he thinks the person dresses that way to be alone. Maybe the person is alone due to the bias that is being felt by others like Ian.

When analyzing the data by female respondents, I wanted to see if the reasons for making judgments were indistinguishable from the male respondents. Overall, female respondents made similar responses to their male counterparts, pointing out that they would basically make a mental note but wouldn't say something directly. Mary was very candid in her answer, "I'm not going to lie, I do snicker with my friends you know, and it's rude, but it happens, it's what people do." I like the Mary's honesty, while all other respondents indirectly shared the same thoughts it is Mary who, in my view, was open. Beth takes a more intrapersonal view as Ian did,

"At first glance, you think that they are weird in every way, not just in the way that they dress, but they like different things that everybody else does and they're weird and they don't fit in every way, not just the way that they dress."

Ian and Beth both make the case that it is the person who wants to be an outcast so to speak. Maybe yes, maybe no, but both Ian an Beth seem to be making judgments and seem to look at these people as being different due to their own perceptions, not because those people want to be thought of in that way.

I theorize that the respondents are being judgmental based on the media standards, even going so far as to rationalize their beliefs based on what they see as the person's fault. A couple of respondents who did see themselves as being influenced, were able to cognitively work through their biases and realize that people can demonstrate their individuality any way they see appropriate.

7.1.4   Media Influencing Purchasing Preferences and Beliefs

"I'm into what I wear; I like to look good. My mom takes me down to Sax often, that's her store, so I guess that is where I get dragged to, but I like stores like that" Jake, November 2008.

Corporations use the media as a tool to create agency that in turn will sell commodities for an increase in profits. By succumbing to agency, teens are defining their own beliefs and preferences based on the beliefs and preferences of others. The data (Table 7.2) supports this theory based on the fact that 73% of female respondents and 55% of male respondents both choose merchandise based on whether or not the merchandise is trendy. Maddy's response I found to be typical of a teen that purchases merchandise because it is trendy,

161

"Everyone has an IPod. If you don't have an IPod it is considered to be not as cool…that would be sort of the media. Then everybody wants designer bags or whatever because it is advertised as being cooler if you have nice designer bags or clothes."

Maddy appears aware that the media guides what is chic and what is not in our society, however, it doesn't stop her from wanting to be cool by having products that will make her appear that way. Tracey is similar in her beliefs but acted as though she did not like being the messenger, "I like their (American Eagle) tee shirt designs, but I am not a big fan of when they cover everything with their name; I like just having the little eagle."

Table 7.2 How the Media Influences Beliefs and Preferences

	Gender = Female	Gender = Male
Merchandise Trendy	73%	55%
Fits me	15%	6%
Don't Care	4%	13%
Don't like style	1%	10%
Goth Style	4%	9%
Quality	3%	7%

Tracey's response makes her come across as if she does not want to be a bulletin board advertisement for this store, or that she is above being trendy or cool, but in reality, I posit that the little eagle says a lot about her awareness of being trendy and what it might mean to her status with other teens, which is strikingly similar to Maddy's intent. Both girls certainly know what it means to have products that make them cool, and in both cases, have succumbed to the agency created by the corporations. Males were not different in their desire to be in style, when

discussing Aeropostle, Ian for instance declares that he wears these clothes because, "I feel like, you know, kind of like, to fit in I have to wear certain types of jeans and stuff like that." Jake's response is similar to Ian's, "I'm into what I wear, I like to look good. My mom takes me to Sax often." Being cool and trendy matters to Ian and Jake and to most teens. They want to fit in, to be part of the whole, and the media creates these trends implicitly and explicitly so that there is a visceral need to belong.

The beliefs and preferences of females and males then become increasingly dissimilar, as one looks closer at the data, 15% of females responded that they would purchase merchandise because it fits them, referring to clothes, while only 6% of males believed the same. Females then listed other preferences, but these preferences did not exceed 4% of the responses. Males were more spread out in their purchasing beliefs, for instance, 7% of males believed quality was the main reason for their purchases, while 13% did not care about style, 10% don't consider style, and 9% would never shop at a Goth store compared with 4% of females.

The data reveals a lot to me about the teen market of our time. The fact that such a high percentage of respondents (females-73%; males-55%) chose trendy as their primary reason for choosing an item is telling me that the media influences them to a great extent. A crucial element in any trendy product is the media's promotion of the product. I believe that the media is very capable of controlling what is in style and what is not by advertising and promotion. Someone who may have critical media literacy skills may see these advertisements for what they are and buy their merchandise based on quality, and since only a total of 10% of male and female respondents chose a product based on quality there is still much to learn.

Interestingly, I also found by analyzing the data that males overwhelmingly (23% to 5%) could care less about whether their purchases are trendy or in style. I view this disparity in

163

preferences as females being more aware of fashion; that males really don't care; or that males don't want to admit that they follow trends. In any case, there is no way of knowing exactly why but in my experience with teen males, they seem to be less inclined to admit that they follow trends in fear of being labeled a "pretty boy"!

I reason that trends are extremely important to teens in both genders, and while males are more eclectic as to their beliefs and preferences, the data clearly shows that corporate agency has had an impact on their purchases and their belief of self.

7.1.5   Integrity in Advertising

"No, I don't think they're truthful at all. They just want to sell as many as they can" Alex, November 2008.

As I review the data collected (Table 7.3) from my research study, it may not be completely out of line to suggest that advertisements could be thought of as honorable. Teens are spending billions of dollars on products that are sold by companies spending even more billions in advertising. If this amount of money is being made from the wallets and purses of our teenagers then there must be trust in relation to their purchases. I reviewed the data, and I found that it was quite the opposite, in fact; it was not even close. One hundred percent of males and 85% of females believe that media advertising has anything but integrity, and while there is certainly a great deal of skepticism when it comes to how teens perceive visual media, it certainly hasn't hurt corporate profit margins over the past two decades.

Table 7.3 The Integrity in Advertising

	Gender = Female	Gender = Male
No	85%	100%
Yes	15%	0%

So why is it then that teens believe that the media has little integrity, yet, continue to purchase commodities on the bases of false ideologies? The data doesn't tell me why the respondents continue to buy products under false claims, only how they feel about advertising in general, which is very cynical according to the data. For instance, Jenna believes that advertising "may be kind of truthful but they'll take the truth and exaggerate it so much that it becomes fake, like a lie." Jenna's response is representative of the data that I collected from all of the respondents; terms such as: made up, lies, not entirely truthful, and exaggerate, are stated or implied throughout the data. Even so, I surmise that Jenna believes this type of deception may be okay if you look specifically into her statement, "because they're trying to sell it so they may be kind of truthful." Jenna is optimistic about the product being advertised even though she is aware of the exaggerations taking place. Why is this behavior accepted by our teens? It may not be, but as Mike stated, "who is really going to call them out on it, you know?" You get the feeling that Mike believes that he is in a place of little control or influence when it comes to advertising, which is similar to Evan who is, "completely numb to them (advertisers) claiming all these things." So is advertising true? According to Tracey and Trent… no. Both have had the opportunity to observe advertisers in action. Tracey explained,

"I was at an advertising place one time showing how they made their commercial and they were saying that half of their food was made from wax and that they sprayed water

on it to make it look more mouthwatering. Instead of putting ice cream in a cup, they put

sour cream because it wouldn't melt as fast. It's not even the same product anymore."

Trent corroborates Tracey's experience with one of his own, "I've been inside what goes

on in ads. I know there's almost nothing truthful about them. You know, a lot of the times

they'll even show things that aren't in a product; introduce extra features that don't work." Both

Tracey and Trent had the opportunity to observe these embellishments first hand, I would have

liked to ask whether these experiences would change how they purchased goods in the future?

Or is the agency so strong that it will not matter. In reference to a Mighty Putty advertisement,

Mario believes that, "I really don't think that it is going to work, but I will probably buy it

anyway." Why would Mario still buy it then? I can only theorize that it is because the visceral

response to the advertisement is so strong that Mario can't help himself.

Based on the data collected and analyzed, I believe that teens are aware of the

exaggerations and embellishments that occur in the media, but judging from their behavior, they

are unable to really look more conceptually at what is all involved in a purchase that they make.

I surmise that teens see themselves as consumers of "things" that will make them cool or

contemporary with their peers. What they do not see is the agency, consumerism, corporitizing,

democracy, and the trickle down effect of what it means to purchase an item that is driven by

profit and manipulation. Through media literacy, the hope I that we can teach our teens to take a

more conceptual look at our media.

7.1.6 Conclusion

The data establishes a need for critical media literacy in our schools. Schools have always had

tendencies to be meet the functional needs of its students but generally lack instructional goals

and objectives that allow in depth exploration of the contemporary ideologies of that era. According to the data, my theory is supported by the inability of high school students from freshman to seniors being able to define media literacy to any degree besides at the superficial level. Not being able to even define media literacy is very telling in terms of what instruction has or has not occurred. It also demonstrates the need for instruction and exploration of media literacy across disciplines. Students prefer, due to lack of time in their schedule and an overwhelming class load, to have media literacy instruction across disciplines. I concur with the data because the media is something that is broad and can be included in the instruction of almost any discipline. Instruction across disciplines also allows students to make connections and see the media and its influences holistically instead of in isolation. The students are also able to conceptualize the media more easily that if it was taught as a separate discipline.

The data collected pertaining to the judgments and influences that are constructed through the media shows a strong correlation. Both males and females are influenced to a large degree by the media and this influence creates a person who is then judgmental. In other words, the data supports the fact that teens consume products that are popular and will help them to be in style, and then in turn they become judgmental of those that do not follow the trends. The respondents were very clear about how they judge people at first glance and make these judgments based on appearance, not something more substantial. There judgments are based on what media tells them is acceptable and what is not (e.g. Hot Topic clothes-Emos). And even though the influence of the media is immense in relation to how teens view themselves and others, almost all of the respondents see the media as being untruthful.

Teens are at an age where they are impressionable and where peer acceptance is very important. To follow the trends and the media is more important than to be one of the other

teens that are judged unfavorably. The dynamics that one can extract from the data is that, there

is a superficial knowledge and an importance of media literacy education being discussed, but

the media has created a culture where not being a consumer makes you an outcast.

8.0   CHAPTER EIGHT

8.1   CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

My desire, when I initiated this study, was to determine how teens interact with the visual world around them and how these interactions shape their beliefs, perceptions, and ideologies. I wanted to determine how teens, both male and female, freshman to seniors, viewed our society, their friends, and even other teens with whom they do not have a relationship. I also wanted to observe the way each of these teens made sense of visual commercials that carry messages related to sexuality, violence, symbolism, and gender bias. The results from the data will help me to determine if there is a need for critical media literacy instruction that may assist in the resistance of bias and beliefs that guide teens' actions and assumptions unknowingly. My hope is that I can bring attention to any detrimental effects related to the way corporations influence our youth - as corporate America creates a society that is shaped greatly through visual advertising that influences the creation of the belief systems that teens form. I also wanted to communicate in the best way possible, using data from the respondents, to inductively construct a narrative through an interpretive framework that will bring attention to our culture the consumption and resistance of teen merchandising through visual advertisements. I believe that it is also important to demonstrate for the reader the negative impact of advertising on our teens.

This study should help bring to light the power of the media and how critical media literacy pedagogy in our schools will provide a sound foundational knowledge base for teens so that they can make informed decisions in regards to their choices and beliefs. Because of the negative influences that permeate our society through corporate agency for profit, this study deserves consideration.

8.1.1   Getting Where We Need to Go

The responses provided by the teens through both of my interview sessions were very insightful and seemed to validate my theory that the media's influence on the teen market is expansive. During the two months that I completed the interviews and collected data, I was able to observe through words, appearance, and reactions, how the media affects the every day lives of the respondents. I was amazed with how intense the focus is on the commodifying of our teens and how much they realize and do not realize the way in which the media is impacts them on a daily basis. As Molnar (2005) states,

> "As virtually every public space has become branded with the symbols of corporations that seek to sell products, services, and ideas to the public at large, children have become both a key market segment themselves and an avenue through which sellers reach adults" (pg.5).

Molnar is correct in his assertion of public space being used to brand as well as a place where teenagers have to make sense of their world. For this reason, I also found it intriguing how males and females perceived the media's role in the sexualization, violence, gender, and biases that occur among genders. For instance, many more of the females believe that there is pervasive sexual use in the media. This distinct difference between the males and females

indicates to me that male respondents do not seem to have problems with the amount of sexual content in the media, and I surmise that may not be problematic due to the fact that it is mostly females that are being sexualized. There was also the data that indicated to me that females are more prejudice against overweight people than males. I theorize that there is more emphasis on females and weight as compared to males through the media in our society, and therefore, females are much more critical of overweight individuals. These examples demonstrate that gender clearly plays a role in the interpretation, behavior, and perceptions that are propagated through visual images.

Overall, respondents were noticeably diverse across the data in regards to gender. I theorize that this could be because of the roles that our society establishes for each gender through encouragement and guidance. These roles form a gender identity that help to influence and support the beliefs of their gender. Potter (2005) sees the interaction between the media and teens as one where both males and females can identify with the roles that they observe their own gender portraying in advertisements and on television, and where it can be noted that "all media messages have moral implications" (p. 48) that affect their choices. My theory that mirrors Potter's assertions is supported by my examination of the responses to the Nike advertisement that I had the respondents review. I was trying to determine if they believed the Nike advertisement I showed them was empowering to women. The woman in the advertisement was very athletic, skilled in dancing techniques, and seemed self-assured. Ninety percent of females held the same view as I, but only 50% of males agreed. The data is irrefutable, males did not find this ad empowering, in fact they found, superficially, that this ad was only about dancing and not much more. This reveals to me a lack of understanding of where women have come from in our society and how far we still need to go in educating our students

171

in the history and foundation of our culture and what this means to race, gender and sexual identification. Since this generation is the most brand-oriented and materialistic generations in our history, we need to account for the ramifications that occur from such a consuming and powerful media onslaught (Schor, 1998). While this is a very minute sampling, it does offer an intriguing theory into how the media shapes gender perception and influence.

8.1.2   What Are We Teaching In Our Schools?

The data that I collected through my interviews and analysis indicate an apparent need for critical media literacy instruction. As Molnar (2005) states, "Commercialism is a reflection of larger economic, social, cultural, and political forces" (p.9). That is why this type of instruction is such a natural fit with almost any discipline. However, are schools ready to be settings for social change? As Giroux (2006) sees it,

> Educators must assume the responsibility of connecting their work to larger social issues, while raising questions about what it means to provide students with the skills they need to write policy papers, be resilient against defeat, analyze social problems, and learn the tools of democracy, and learning how to make a difference in one's life as a social agent. (pp.184-185).

Currently, Giroux sees little of this type of discourse going on in our schools. Giroux argues that the main functions of our schools are the "reproduction of the dominant ideology" (p. 3), which he refers to as capitalism. The data illustrates that the discourse that is supposed to provide the tools for social agency are not apparent in the data and that there is not a case to be made for the support of capitalist ideologies in schools either. The data points to outside factors that promote social agency and influence our teens.   The respondents never mentioned

influences that occurred in school with the exception of when they were discussing what other teens possessed. Teens care very much about their status and their appearance, which is why outside commercialism affects what they bring to school in terms of their ideologies and how they perceive others. This is supported by the data that I analyzed pertaining to trendy products, prejudices toward others, style, certain groups of students, and how they perceive themselves.

The respondents overwhelmingly view media literacy instruction as integrated into the regular curriculum, which according to Shaw (2003) is taking place in Pennsylvania schools especially in the area of reading. As a former educator in the visual arts I find it intertwined within the arts and humanities discipline as well as within the English curriculum. However Shaw (2003) goes on to state that in spite of school budgets, time, and professional development, it is certainly something that is worth "pursuing for our children, for our society and for our future" (para. 31). I agree with Shaw wholeheartedly, but I also believe if you are going to implement media literacy within the core curriculum of our schools that you need to start by educating school districts of its importance to our teenagers at the most fundamental level. By sharing the facts of this study along with the most up to date research in media literacy, it will show that this very important, but often overlooked discipline, is relevant, important, and ties into much of what we already teach in our schools through state standards. I also believe that once the importance of media literacy begins to circulate among school districts as well as at the state level, a continued impetus will result making sure that the standards related to media literacy are followed through with fidelity.

Throughout this research study I have mentioned critical media literacy. Through media literacy education schools are able to provide an essential structure of the principles that underlie what teenagers view and observe every day. These principles assist teenagers in being able to

173

think critically about what they observe and make the connections to agency, democracy, consumerism, and then how these factors transcend to their own beliefs, behaviors, and preferences. Without a foundation of media literacy instruction, I would be cautious to think that any teenager can make these conceptual connections. Education is the key to critical media literacy, and sharing the results of this research study and other research pertaining to media literacy is the key to making it more pertinent in our schools.

8.1.3   Data Analysis

Before I began the task of making meaning through qualitative analysis of 35 hours of audiotape interviews relating to visual culture and adolescents, I had to delineate my theoretical framework and the constructs of the literature review. It was important that I thoroughly understood the concepts of power, democracy, capitalism, commodification, exploitation, influence, and the need for a visual culture pedagogy as articulated by scholars and researchers like Giroux, Foucault, and Vinson and Ross. While Giroux makes a legitimate proposal for media literacy curriculum, he, as well as other authors, do not substantiate their beliefs with data. The charge of this dissertation is to adequately analyze and present data that support and elaborate upon the existing theoretical framework, and then to build upon that framework and analysis to assert the need for critical media pedagogy. My hope is my research study offers meaningful and useful contributions to educational theory and practice. I believe that this research will present meaningful contributions to visual culture theory and useful contributions for the practice of critical media pedagogy in our educational institutions. My study and analysis of the data and corresponding recommendations regarding the necessity for critical media pedagogy in public education possesses the ability to generalize the information, being "applicable and translatable"

to other K-12 public education situations within similar contexts and timeframes. However, since the sample results from subjects of the same race, from the same school district, the adaptability does not assert contextual assumptions regarding the similitude of all schools, everywhere. Adolescents' visual culture analysis and interpretation process and critical media pedagogy is the foundation for this study, "the same, not matter where it occurs, in which variations in conditions create variations in results" (Becker, 1990, p.240).

Within the data I was able to determine situations where the in depth-analysis revealed both contradictions and complements. For example, there were multiple instances of contradiction in the way that individual subjects responded. A subject might maintain that he or she is not influenced by their peers, and are most influenced by a family member. The same respondent might also explain that he or she chose to play violent video games because a friend liked this style of videogames. I also found the data to be complementary when viewed as a whole; all adolescent respondents were savvy in terms of contemporary media culture. Another contradiction was revealed as we determined that though many of these students share the same view in terms of their collective media exposure, they do not share the same viewpoint when explaining their beliefs.

Interpreting teens' beliefs and responses and then translating the responses in order to make warranted assertions within the context of the theoretical framework was a challenge. The students' responses did not contain language such as "commodification" or "pervasive." However, these were nodes within our tree that were directly tied to the theoretical framework. As I coded the data, I read over certain phrases and engaged in analysis to determine the gist and intent of the response. With this challenge in the data analysis, I had to be cognizant of my role as a researcher, somewhat removed from the pop culture that is most popular with the teens I

interviewed. Conversely, I, as the researcher, was more familiar with the theoretical foundation I established. I was aware of the involvement of self-reflexive validity in this instance; I had to situate my own understanding of the classifications, discourses, and practices that I was analyzing (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

My data analysis process has been adaptable and fluid; I engaged in iterative data analysis methods as I continued to look inductively at the data to guide my process and inquiry. I continually added nodes, made adjustments and added instruments. Though I did not initially plan on looking at relationships, I later saw the value in this instrument as means of further analyzing, viewing, and sorting the same data.

Another iterative analysis technique was implemented when I considered merging several nodes. Within one area of the node tree, children nodes existed for responses that contained data coded as "influenced" and "superficial". In combining these nodes I faced the possibility that this might skew the appearance of the data. If both of these nodes contain coded interview data referenced by three respondents, they would appear equal. If the nodes were combined create one "supernode" that contained six coded references, the responses housed in that particular node would appear relatively large. In order to make the ultimate decision in this case, I returned to the raw data from the original interviews and also looked closely at the interview questions. I decided to place all six references in the "influencedd" node; the context and content of the data indicated this was the appropriate classification.

In repeatedly and more deeply analyzing that data through continuous coding, refining, and questioning, I was be able to reveal a richer research, narrative, and conclusion. Now as I have completed the writing process, I believe that I possess a greater knowledge of critical media literacy, agency, democracy, consumption, and capitalism, pertaining to teenagers through in

depth analysis and including both personal narrative and reflection on the exchange between researcher and subjects (Fontana & Frey, 2008). I plan to support continued, deeper analysis by presenting my findings within the context of the narrative; weaving poignant and relevant quotes offered by the respondents in order to descriptively represent research findings.

8.1.4   Contemplations

As I reflect on my study, I have a great deal to contemplate. For instance, I wish that I could have had an equal number of respondents that were across all grade levels and socioeconomic levels of diversity. By having equal distribution between these two attributes, I feel that the data would have been richer in some respect. Notwithstanding, this research study has piqued my interest for future studies that I would like to conduct. I feel that there is a lack of research data supporting grade level and socioeconomic diversity comparisons in the area of media literacy. I speculate that the rationales for minimal participation of low SES students in this study are generalizable across many school districts. I believe that students who are low SES tend to be less vested in their schools both academically and socially. They view school as a place of failure; a place where they have met only repression; and a place where they feel that they cannot be successful. With that in mind, it is unlikely that they would want to share these experiences with someone who they feel may judge them in a way that is negative. A change in venue may help to shape my next study, there are certainly limitations that a researcher may have in an affluent school district that is located in a suburban setting. A study conducted in an urban school district may elicit data that would demonstrate more or less media influence in that setting.

177

Another area that I would think would have improved this study would have been to survey district and school administrators to obtain their input into how they view media education. Their viewpoints, both as building administrators that are able to observe teenagers every day and from a central administration point of view that must look at this discipline in terms of budget constraints and the time that it might take from the curriculum and state testing preparation. In addition, the respondents in my study were all of one ethnicity, White/Caucasian; I would have liked to have more ethnic diversity in my study to be able to establish if ethnicity plays a role on how someone perceives the media. This data would have added additional depth to my study and would have given me a broader perspective of the media literacy in schools.

The results of my research study were not of a surprise to me. From the research literature that I read prior to the development of my study, I found that there was a need for media instruction and that many teens are influenced greatly by the media. There is little understanding of the bigger concepts of democracy, consumerism, and capitalism past the superficial level. This lack of understanding did not surprise me but supported my theory. I was ecstatic that the respondents were as open as they were during the interview; they seem to be honest and forthright, from my stance. However, I was very surprised at the difficulties that a lot of my respondents had when answering questions that required a definition or that asked them to be deeply reflective. I surmise this may have been because they may be embarrassed to state their experiences in some cases, or because of the lack of instruction in the content.

8.1.5 Final Thoughts

As a former graphic designer and art educator, I know the power of visual media in all of our lives. As I reflect on my own experiences with the visual media, I now understand how my

178

beliefs were shaped and influenced in my life and this was at a time when the media was more limited than it is today. I am astonished in the way that I dressed and the hairstyles that I modeled after my favorite rock stars. Visual media now and in the future have enormous implications on how much it influences the belief systems of our youth. Corporations are aware more than ever how profitable the image now is and any chance of decreasing the amount of visual images used in advertisements will not occur. Critical media education will need to occur if we as an American society expect our youth to critically and systematically interpret visual media messages and be able to formulate decisions based on their own accord. Only then will adolescents be able to achieve democracy.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. If I asked your friends, how would they describe you? Why would they describe you that way?
   1 (b). How would your parents describe you? Why would they describe you that way?

2. What are some qualities that you possess that you feel make you who you are?

3. What would you like to be in the future? Why?

4. Who do you believe influences you?

5. What are your favorite:

   - Television shows?
   - Movies?
   - Print media?
   - Websites?
   - Video games?
   - Music?

6. What are some of your favorite stores to shop? Why?

7. What are some stores you would never shop? Why?

8. Describe your thoughts on MTV to me? 8 (a). Explain what your thoughts are concerning reality shows?

9. Tell me what you think about video games? Explain your thoughts?

10. What are your thoughts as to the current status of violence on television? Why do you think

so?

11. How do you view the use of sexuality in advertisements? What makes you think that way?

12. Tell me about someone whom you believe is a creation of our media and how you think that this was accomplished?

13. Please tell me how you would define the term "media literacy?" 13 (b). Do you think that the media is an important field to examine in our schools? Why, why not?

14. What effect do you think media images have had on how you view yourself physically? 14 (b). What have you observed personally that reflects how media images had changed a person's belief of their physical self?

15. Does the media have an effect on why our culture demonstrates prejudice against people who are overweight? 15 (a). In many magazines, models are often very thin, thinner than the average person; in what ways do you believe that these images have affected teenagers?

16. How do you think media images have had an effect on you emotionally? 16 (b). What have you done personally that reflects how these images have affected you emotionally?

17. What emotional affects have you observed in regards to your friends that you would connect to the media?

18. When you observe someone who may be, by media standards, out of style, what kind of judgments do you make?

19. When you examine an image of a male/female model or actor/actress, does it make you feel like our culture holds people that look like a certain way (i.e. Brittany Spears, Lindsay Lohan, Paris Hilton, Tom Cruise, Brad Pitt, etc.) with prominent adoration? 19 (b). Do you think that the media creates these personas? How?

20. In what ways do you believe advertisements that contain alcohol or tobacco deceive young adults?
20 (b). Why do you think advertisers specifically target teenagers?

21. Do you believe that advertisements today, whether viewed on television, magazines, or the Internet, use sexuality to sell products to young adults? 21 (b). What do you think are the long-range effects of these advertisements on tomorrow's children?

22. Violent media images have become part of our culture whether in movies, video games or through our news media; do you believe that viewing these images has desensitized our youth?
22 (b). Explain how you view violent images impacting our culture in the future?

23. Explain how an advertisement excited you about product only to find that the product did not deliver on what the image promised? 23 (b). Do you believe that advertisers are truthful in how they portray their products?

24. What do you believe schools could do better in preparing young adults for the image driven world that we live in?

APPENDIX B

VOLUNTARY CONSENT/ PARENTAL CERTIFICATION

(For participants under age 18)

The above information has been explained to me and all of my current questions have been answered. I understand that I am encouraged to ask questions about any aspect of this research study during the course of this study, and that such future questions will be answered by a qualified individual or by the investigator(s) listed on the first page of this consent document at the telephone number(s) given. I understand that I may always request that my questions, concerns or complaints be addressed by a listed investigator.

I understand that I may contact the Human Subjects Protection Advocate of the IRB Office, University of Pittsburgh (1-866-212-2668) to discuss problems, concerns, and questions; obtain information; offer input; or discuss situations in the event that the research team is unavailable.

By signing this form, I agree for my child to participate in this research study. A copy of this consent form will be given to me/my child.

_____
Printed Name of Child-Subject

I understand that, as a minor (age less than 18 years), the above-named child is not permitted to participate in this research study without my consent. Therefore, by signing this form, I give my consent for his/her participation in this research study.

_____   _____
Legal Guardian's Name (Print)   Relationship to Participant (Child)

_____   _____
Legal Guardian Signature   Date

_____
Phone Number

1.   CHILD ASSENT (to be used with children who are developmentally able to sign)

        This research has been explained to me, and I agree to participate.

        _____   _____
        Signature of Child-Subject   Date

        _____
        Printed Name of Child-Subject

CERTIFICATION of INFORMED CONSENT

I certify that I have explained the nature and purpose of this research study to the above-named individual(s), and I have discussed the potential benefits and possible risks of study participation. Any questions the individual(s) have about this study have been answered, and we will always be available to address future questions as they arise. I further certify that no research component of this protocol was begun until after this consent form was signed.

        _____   _____
        Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent   Role in Research Study

        _____   _____
        Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   Date

APPENDIX C

VOLUNTARY CONSENT

(For participants over the age of 18)

The above information has been explained to me and all of my current questions have been answered. I understand that I am encouraged to ask questions about any aspect of this research study during the course of this study, and that such future questions will be answered by a qualified individual or by the investigator(s) listed on the first page of this consent document at the telephone number(s) given. I understand that I may always request that my questions, concerns or complaints be addressed by a listed investigator.

I understand that I may contact the Human Subjects Protection Advocate of the IRB Office, University of Pittsburgh (1-866-212-2668) to discuss problems, concerns, and questions; obtain information; offer input; or discuss situations in the event that the research team is unavailable.

_____

Participant's Name (Print)

_____

Participant's Signature

_____

Participant's Phone Number

_____

Signature of Witness

For an individual who agrees to participate in the research study but is unable to sign his or her name, the individual should make his/her "mark" on the Participant Signature line. The signature of a witness to this "signature/mark" of the study participant should be included on the respective informed consent document.

I certify that I have explained the nature and purpose of this research study to the above-named individual(s), and I have discussed the potential benefits and possible risks of study participation. Any questions the individual(s) have about this study have been answered, and we will always be available to address future questions, concerns or complaints as they arise. I further certify that no research component of this protocol was begun until after this consent form was signed

_____   _____
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent   **Role in Research**

_____   _____
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   **Date**

APPENDIX D

ADVERTISEMENT

(Under the age of 18)
<u>Parent Notification</u>

"The Influence and Power of Visual Media on Adolescents and the need for School-Based Media Literacy Instruction"

Study Timeline: Summer & Fall of 2008

Would your child be interested in sharing what he or she knows about media literacy (visual advertisements)? If so, students under the age of 18 will **require a parent signature** on the consent form to be permitted to participate in this study. The purpose of this study is to explore and analyze the influence of the visual media on teenagers in terms of behavior, beliefs and preferences. Critical media pedagogy as a required discipline may assist our youth to more effectively analyze and comprehend the visual world that they currently reside in. The results of this study will assist in determining the need for a curricular change in our public schools that would encompass media literacy.

Who may participate?
Any student at Fox Chapel High School between the ages of 15 and 18 can participate. Your child must be of age beginning in June 2008; only 20 students will be randomly chosen for this research study

Where? The interviews will be conducted at Fox Chapel Area High School at your child's convenience.

When? Any time beginning with the month of June 2008, through November 2008. The interviews will take place at your child's convenience. There is a total of two interview sessions needed for each research candidate to attend.

   • **Session 1-** Interview (Question-Answer Session); 1 hour or less

   • **Session 2-** Review six visual advertisements and answer questions related to each advertisement; 1 hour or less.

Who am I? This research project is an Ed.D dissertation study titled, "The Influence and Power of Visual Media on Adolescents and the need for School-Based Media Literacy Instruction" My name is Paul S. Noro, an Ed.D Candidate in the School of Administration and Policy Studies at the University of Pittsburgh. I am currently the

principal of **Error! Contact not defined.** School located in the Fox Chapel Area School District. **If you have any questions: please contact Paul S. Noro, at (412) 967-2490, or send an email paul_noro@fcasd.edu**

IRB # PRO 07120291

School of Education, Administration and Policy Studies
University of Pittsburgh
Wesley W. Posvar Hall
Pittsburgh, PA 15260 USA

Email: paul_noro@fcasd.edu
School Office 412 967-2490

ADVERTISEMENT

(18 years of age or older)
Student Notification

"The Influence and Power of Visual Media on Adolescents and the need for School-Based Media Literacy Instruction"

Study Timeline: Summer & Fall of 2008

Would you be interested in sharing what you know about media literacy (visual advertisements)? If so, you will need to complete the consent form in this packet to be permitted to participate in this study. The purpose of this study is to explore and analyze the influence of the visual media on teenagers in terms of behavior, beliefs and preferences. Critical media pedagogy as a required discipline may assist our youth to more effectively analyze and comprehend the visual world that they currently reside in. The results of this study will assist in determining the need for a curricular change in our public schools that would encompass media literacy.

Who may participate?
Any student at Fox Chapel High School between the ages of 15 and 18 can participate. Only 20 students will be randomly chosen for this research study. **The results of these interviews will not be shared with parents or legal guardians.**

Where? The interviews will be conducted at Fox Chapel Area High School at your convenience.

When? Any time beginning with the month of June 2008, through November 2008. The interviews will take place at your convenience. There is a total of two interview sessions needed for each research candidate to attend.

- **Session 1-** Interview (Question-Answer Session); 1 hour or less

- **Session 2-** Review six visual advertisements and answer questions related to each advertisement; 1 hour or less.

Who am I? This research project is an Ed.D dissertation study titled, "The Influence and Power of Visual Media on Adolescents and the need for School-Based Media Literacy Instruction" My name is Paul S. Noro, an Ed.D Candidate in the School of Administration and Policy Studies at the University of Pittsburgh. I am currently the principal of **Error! Contact not defined.** School located in the Fox Chapel Area School District. **If you have any questions: please contact Paul S. Noro, at (412) 967-2490, or send an email paul_noro@fcasd.edu**

School of Education, Administration and Policy Studies
University of Pittsburgh
Wesley W. Posvar Hall
Pittsburgh, PA 15260 USA

Email: paul_noro@fcasd.edu
School Office 412 967-2490

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR VISUAL ADVERTISEMENTS

Image 1   Nike Advertisement for Woman-Fitness: Retrieved 12/4/2007

http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x172f5_nike-women_ads

Questions:

1. **What is your first impression of the advertisement?**
2. **Do you think that this advertisement is empowering to women? In what way?**
3. **What is the message that this advertisement is trying to convey? Do you think that it is effective in doing so?**
4. **How effective do you think this advertisement is in selling the product?**
5. **What stereotypes, if any, are perpetrated in this ad?**

Image 2   BMW Commercial: Retrieved 12/4/2007

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sxD-U0O1mZ4&feature=related

Questions:

1. **What is your first impression of the advertisement?**
2. **Did you know what type of car this advertisement was for? How?**
3. **What marketing tactics were used to sell this car (music, woman, speed)? Do you think that the use of these strategies were effective?**
4. **What does the BMW logo mean to you?**
5. **What stereotypes, if any, are perpetrated in this ad?**

Image 3   Call of Duty 4 Trailer: Retrieved 12/6/2007

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2JC3UMJ2It4

Questions:

1. What is your first impression of the advertisement?
2. Do you play games that are this violent? If so, describe why you play these types of games?
3. Do you think that playing these types of violent games desensitize children to real violence?
4. Do you think that there is any relationship between these types of violent games and acts of violence in our schools? In society? Explain?

Image 4   **CARL JR Commercial: Retrieved 12/5/2007**

http://youtube.com/watch?v=P82hABWq1To&feature=related

Questions:

1. What is you initial reaction to an advertisement like this?
2. Do you think that an advertisement like this could sell more Carl Jr. burgers? Why? Why Not?
3. How does an advertisement like this portray women?
4. What are we saying about our society if we need advertisements like this to sell burgers?
5. Do you believe that sexuality is being used more and more to sell products?
6. What type of effects do ads like this have on today's youth?

Image 5   **GNC Commercial: Retrieved 12/5/2007**

http://youtube.com/watch?v=DtlNrAjo0Z0

Questions:

1. What is your very first impression of this advertisement? What makes you think that way?
2. What effect could this commercial have on young boys emotionally?
3. What is this advertisement trying to accomplish in relation to the visual images?
4. Why do you think that GNC uses a bodybuilder to sell their products when so much of what they sell is for general health and wellness?

Image 6   **Calvin Klein "Obsession" Commercial: Retrieved 12/5/2007**

http://youtube.com/watch?v=NdBk3cnhtP4

Questions:

1. When you view this advertisement, what is your initial reaction?

192

2. **Describe the stereotypes that are placed together with this commercial? How does this advertisement portray women?**
3. **Describe the message that we are presenting our youth with this commercial?**
4. **Do you feel that these types of advertisements are now commonplace in our society?**

APPENDIX G

NVIVO

I then began creating "tree nodes"; this tree would eventually include over 400 nodes (QSR, 2009). My first two "tree nodes" corresponded with the files I had uploaded into the raw data hopper: Interviews Sessions One and Two. Next I created parent "tree nodes" that were both defined and named to represent our theoretical framework. Under those three parent nodes (Giroux, Foucault, and Vinson & Ross) I created children nodes that were named to represent various aspects of each theorist's assertions. Nodes were also created to correspond with and represent each topic of inquiry explored in the data collection process (Gill, 2000). I familiarized myself with the data, engaging in multiple readings and working inductively to determine the placement, nomenclature, and corresponding definitions for the nodes I would soon create.

The interview data contained information about each subject's beliefs and influences. I created tree nodes that contained this information. Based on the subjects' responses I continued to create nodes that were named to summarize the sentiment conveyed in responses. For example, interview responses that contained data relating to the exploitation of women were read, scrutinized, and then coded and included in tree nodes that captured and condensed the

reactions, attitudes and opinions of the respondents. I worked inductively to name nodes, looking into the data to determine what themes would need to be represented.

In order to assure "inter-coder" reliability, I agreed upon definitions for the nodes and their corresponding content. I continuously referenced the terminology and definitions throughout my analysis. I also engaged in continuous discourse throughout the coding process as discrepancies and questions of semantics arose from the data. I found that establishing reliability within the coding inevitably required for simultaneous effort (Leach, 2000).

Because the node development and coding took many hours, I simultaneously attended to other aspects and facets of the NVivo data organization and management in order to avoid monotony and evenly develop the overall composition of the research through data analysis. I created "sets" to capture specific branches of the larger tree in smaller, more manageable snapshots that allowed me to isolate various interview data by theme and content (QSR, 2009, p. 24). The sets helped me to avoid the nuisance of scrolling through the entire tree, though I could return to the tree as necessary to see how parent and children nodes were situated within the larger context of the tree. Sets also proved to be quite useful when I eventually constructed "queries" (QSR, 2009, 40). Within each of the "cases" created, I was able to input corresponding "attributes" (QSR, 2009, p. 31). Initially, my only attribute was gender; with this attribute I was able to compare the views of male and female respondents. In running reports of initial "matrix coding queries," the results were fascinating and made more facile by the use of sets; I could isolate specific node sets and take a more detailed, accurate look at the data (QSR, 2009, p. 40). Respondents' beliefs surrounding the exploitation of women in advertising varied greatly by gender, with far more females than males responding that they believe women are exploited in

the media. With Nvivo's graphic representation capabilities I was able to illustrate this gender

discrepancy within various nuances of the sets, through the creation of models and charts.

In providing feedback and suggestions to improve the validity, complexity, and utility of

my study, one peer suggested that I might add additional attributes. In response to her

suggestions, I added an additional attribute that indicated the school year (freshman, sophomore,

junior, and senior) of the subjects. Within the data, I was able to determine situations where the

in depth-analysis revealed both contradictions and complements. For example, there were

multiple instances of contradiction in the way that individual subjects responded. A subject

might maintain that they are not influenced by their peers, and are most influenced by a family

member. The same respondents might also explain that they chose to play violent video games

because their friends liked these videogames. I also found the data to be complementary when

viewed as a whole; for example, all adolescent respondents were savvy in terms of contemporary

media culture. Being raised within the same decade and being of similar age, they have all been

exposed to similar elements of pop culture. Another contradiction was revealed as we determined

that though many of these students share the same view in terms of their collective media

exposure, they do not share the same viewpoint when explaining their beliefs.

Interpreting teens' beliefs and responses and then translating the responses in order to

make warranted assertions within the context of the theoretical framework was a challenge. The

students' responses did not contain language such as "commodification" or "pervasive."

However, these were nodes within the tree that were directly tied to the theoretical framework.

As I coded the data, I read over certain phrases and engaged in analysis to determine the gist and

intent of the response. With this challenge in the data analysis, I had to be cognizant of my role

as a researcher, somewhat removed from the pop culture that the subjects know well.

Conversely, I, as the researcher, was more familiar with the theoretical foundation I established. I was aware of the involvement of self-reflexive validity in this instance; I had to situate my own understanding of the classifications, discourses, and practices that I was analyzing (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

My data analysis process has been adaptable and fluid; I engaged in iterative data analysis methods as I continued to look inductively at the data to guide my process and inquiry. I continually added nodes, made adjustments and added instruments. Although I did not initially plan on looking at relationships, I later saw the value in this instrument as means of further analyzing, viewing, and sorting the same data.

APPENDIX H

ALCOHOL AND CIGARETTES

An area of interest that I researched through my study was the affect that alcohol and

cigarette advertisements have on the preferences, beliefs, and influences of teenagers. While

there are many debates among researchers as to the contributory relationship between advertising

and alcohol and cigarette consumption, studies by Ricco (2000), and Difranza, Richards,

Paulman, Wolf-Gillespie, Fletcher, Jaffe, & Murray (2002), did find contributory affects. Ricco

(2000) found that "56 percent of students in grades 5-12 say that alcohol advertising encourages

them to drink" and that in 2000, advertisers spent a grand total of "$770 million dollars on TV

ads" (p. 14). Comparatively, Difranza, Richards, Paulman, Wolf-Gillespie, Fletcher, Jaffe, &

Murray found the Joe Camel advertisement campaign, before it's demise due to new government

regulations, helped increase cigarette consumption from "0.5% to 32% among adolescents, and

increased sales among this same population from 6 million to 476 million" (p. 3282). Based on

these two studies, I surmise that these corporations would not invest this much time and money

in advertising if it did not result in an in increase in sales among teens. Consequently, there are

those that may say that these studies are a result of other factors (i.e. societal changes, increased

accessibility to money, reality television, etc.) and that advertising has had some, but little to do

with this much of an increase in consumption. Through this study, I explored whether or not

teenagers believe that alcohol and tobacco advertisements deceive young adults; and if they

believe that advertisers specifically target young teenagers?   My hope is that the data collected

through my interviews will allow me to better understand if visual advertisements increase

alcohol and cigarette consumption and support the studies that I have cited.

H.1   DECEPTION

As I began to review the data related to whether or not there was a belief, among

teenagers, as to whether or not deception is a part of cigarette and alcohol advertisements,

something became abundantly clear, there was an overwhelming belief that deception is

pervasive. Only one respondent, Mary, believes that deception is not a part of alcohol and

cigarette advertisements. But Mary's perceptions are interesting, because she only believes that

there is not any deception because the alcohol is appropriately linked to the correct gender. For

instance, Mary associates beer ads with men, vodka ads with women, and then goes on to say

that she just viewed a vodka ad that transitions to men because it juxtaposes the Bond character

with Smirnoff. Mary's view of deception in my analysis is focused on gender only. Mary did

not go on to elaborate that there may be deception within these ads based on gender, but that as

long as the alcohol was gender acceptable then it was okay.

I analyzed the other responses and found that teenagers viewed the deception of

advertisements as being shaped within three main categories: cool, influenced, sexualizing. The

respondents' believed overwhelmingly that advertisers created advertisements that would present

a cool image. Jenna and Maddy stated a couple of good examples of this belief. According to

199

Jenna, "They always show—like people in advertisements are always having fun and always look healthy and are always, like happy, and that's not always necessarily true." Maddy believes that,

> "Well, they always make it look like it's cool and okay and they always have a little thing at the end that says, 'Do not drink and drive,' or that drinking may cause whatever, but it is so short and they read it really fast so you don't notice that. They always make it look cool to make or really cool to smoke or really cool to go to a party where they are drinking or whatever, but they don't really tell you the truth about it or anything."

I theorize from these two respondents and the other data within this category, that the alcohol and tobacco companies create fictional settings that is not a true representation of what it's product is all about. Do people have fun smoking and drinking? Sure, but is it always good looking people that are only consuming these goods and are able to meet other attractive people that seem to idolize them? No. Teenagers are more susceptible because they want to belong and that is extremely important to this particular age group. Evan supports my theory, "Probably because it is socially neat. Socially cool. Idolize—that's what hooks teenagers most of the time." Corporations are targeting teenagers and exploit their social insecurities and lack of critical media education.

The theme from the data that I collected clearly supports my hypothesis that teenagers can be influenced by advertisements. What is fascinating is that some teenagers are aware of these insecurities as well. According to Beth, "They (tobacco and alcohol corporations) know that we are not strong minded yet and we are influenced by a lot, so they try and direct their commercials and things toward us so that we're easily influenced by them." Tracey views the influence as coming from the fact that you are unaware of what is going on in the personal life of

other teens, so you all you have to compare it to is what is on your favorite shows and seeing

"…that they do it underage, then you are going to want to do it underage because you think that's apparently what everyone else is doing." Based on the data, I surmise that there is certainly awareness among some teens, that they are easily influences. Only a small number of respondents provided me with data that referenced influence as a rationale for purchasing alcohol and cigarettes. I was expecting more respondents would see themselves as being easily influenced, but that takes that ability to take a critical view of themselves and also, in most cases, being guided toward this realization through critical education.

Sexualization of products has been discussed throughout this study. For instance, Jenna responded that, "They always put like, good-looking women or good-looking men in the advertisement." Alcohol and tobacco advertisements sexualize their product by portraying attractive men and women on the beach, at parties, and in various positions having fun, and in some cases, getting physically close in an expression of desire. I conclude that corporations want their product (alcohol or tobacco) to become synonymous with attraction and desire in hopes that sales will increase. Both Jessica and Rick seem to agree with this conclusion. Jessica revealed that, "by making your cigarette box look better with the hot girl smoking it, I think that's it's definitely a draw for some people." Rick agrees with Jessica's ascertain as he discloses, "you should do this to be a better of a person, so you see these good looking people at a bar, you know, I wanna be like them."

The data tells me that teenagers are aware of the deception in advertisements but are unclear as to what the deception is exactly. Teenagers view deception as being cool and fitting in, or being influenced or sexualized, but none of teens discussed this above the superficial level

of understanding or even went so far as to combine these elements instead of viewing them in isolation.

H.2   TARGETING TEENS

Any corporation is going to want to influence their customers to buy their product and teenagers are no different. More than half of the respondents view corporations as specifically trying to influence them to purchase their product. The most comprehensive response on to this response came from Maddy, "Because we're influenced easily and because we want to fit in at the time and that's sort of our culture, to fit in or be shunned…plus, if they get you when you're a teenager, they can keep you as a customer for the rest of your life." This response by Maddy best exemplifies the data collected on this specific query. Maddy not only elucidates to the influence of advertisements at a young age, but she also refers to being a life-long customer of the product. It's interesting, because most corporations want life-long customers to ensure their continued existence and growth and Maddy not only views herself in the present, but as a future customer. Maddy's response shows me that she is not only reflective of herself but also our society in terms of consumerism and being a consumer. None of the other respondents made the connection that Maddy did between influence and life-long consumerism.

Most of the data gathered refers not so much to being a life-long consumer (3 response), but to being influenced and molded into a consumer. Respondents focused mostly on how easily teens are persuaded, similar to Jamie, "I'd say we are the most venerable," and Nancy, "because they are vulnerable and naive." The data reflecting the influence of corporations on teens, and

the awareness of the influence that corporations have on teens and their understanding that they are influenced, sometimes easily, but most assuredly easier than adults in most cases.

Some of the data surprised me a little as well. Some respondents discussed that the focus is on teens because of their spending power and that they are, according to Rick, "the highest purchasers of like consumer goods." Rick was discussing the demographic related to age, 13-30, being the focus of corporate America. Samantha sees money as the main reason for the focus on teen consumers, and backs this statement up by responding, "Their rich, and like head of this company, yet, they're selling the stuff so they're probably just in it for the money, like if they don't smoke themselves they're not in it because they like it."

When analyzing all of the data holistically, I observe a culture of teenagers that view themselves as consumers who are the focus of corporate America because they can be both influence and groomed for as present and future consumers. The data also tells me that teens know that this focus is strictly monetary and little else. Yet, teenagers are consumers that have purchasing power, and until they become more knowledgeable on the affects of visual media, little else will change.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Academic Standards for the Arts and Humanities P. D. o. Education. (2003). *Pennsylvania Department of Education*, 1-15.

Aidman, A. (1995). Advertising in the schools. Retrieved August 1, 2007, Eric Digest, http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content4/ads.in.schools.html

Alasuutari, P. (1995). Researching culture: Qualitative method and cultural studies. London: Sage.

Anderson, C. (2001). The Impact of entertainment media violence on children and families. Iowa State University. (Presentation).

Anderson, C. A. & Dill, K. E. (2000). Video games and aggressive thoughts, feelings, and behavior in the laboratory and in life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 78,* 772-790.

Atkin, C., & Block, M. (1981). Content and Effects of Alcohol Advertising. Washington, DC: Bureau of Tobacco, Alcohol, and FirearmsBanard, F. (1921). Quote. Retrieved November 23, 2007, Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_picture_is_worth_a_thousand_words

Bandura, A. (1986). *Social Foundations of Thought and Action; A Social Cognitive Theory.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Becker, H. S., (1990), 'Generalizing from Case Studies', in Eisner, E. & Peshkin, A. (Eds.), *Qualitative Inquiry in Education: the Continuing Debate*, pp. 233-242, Teachers College Press, New York

Bjornebekk, R. T., & Evjen, T. A. (2000). *Violent pornography on the Internet*. Goteborg, Sweden, UNESCO.

BMA (2000). *Children, Adolescent, & the Media.* V. C. Strasburger and B. J. Wilson. Thousand Oaks, CA, and New Delhi: Sage.

Brand, P., Rothblum, F., & Solomon, L. (1992). A comparison of lesbians, gay men, and heterosexuals on weight and restrained eating. *International Journal of Eating Disorders,*

11, 253-259.

Brown, J. A. (1998). Media literacy perspectives. *Journal of Communication, 48*(1), 44-57.

Brown, J. A. (2001). *Handbook of children and the media*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Brown, J. A. (2001). *Media literacy and crital television viewing education.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Brown, J. D., & Newcomer, S. F. (1991). Television viewing and adolescent sexuality. *Journal of Homosexuality, 21*, 77-91.

Brown, J., Steele, J., & Walsh-Childers, K. *Sexual teens, sexual media.* Hillside, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum (in press)**.**

Brown, K. D., & Pennel,l A. E. (2000). *The influence of film and video on young people and violence. Violent children and adolescents: asking the questions why*. London and Philadelphia: Whurr**.**

Brown, J. D., & Witherspoon, E. M. (1998). The mass media and American adolescents' health. Annapolis, MD, U.S. Departmenht of Health and Human Services.

Buddenberg, L. J., & McGee, K. M. (2004). *Who's raising your child: Battling the marketers for your child's heart and soul.* Boy's Town, NE: Boy's Town Press.

Buijzen, M., & Valkenburg, P. (2000). The impact of television advertising on children's Christmas wishes. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, 44*, 456-470.

Byrd-Bredbrefner, C., & Grasso, D. (2000b). Trends in US prime-time television food advertising across three decades. *Nutrition & Food Sciences, 30*, 59-66.

Callow, J. (2005). Literacy and the visual: Broadening our vision. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique. 4*(1), 6-19.

Calvert, S. (1999). *Children's journeys through the information age*. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.

Churchill, G. A., Jr., & Hill, G. P. (1979). Television and Interpersonal Influences and Adolescent Consumer Learning. *Journal of Consumer Research, 6*(1), **23-35**.

Coffey, A., & Atkinson, P. (1996). *Making sense of qualitative data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Collins, W. A. (1983). *Children's understanding of television: Research on attention and comprehension.* New York, NY: Academic Press.

Comstock, G. A. (1989). *The Evolution of American Television*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Comstock, G. A., & Strasburger, V. C. (1993). Media Violence: Q&A. Adolescent Medicine. *State of the Art Reviews, 4*, 495-510.

Cowley, G., & Underwood, A. (2001). Soda pop that packs a punch: Are the new alcoholic lemonades aimed at kids? *Newsweek,* 45.

Cox, D., Cox, A. D., & Moschis, G.P. (1990). When Consumer Behavior Goes Bad: An Investigation of Adolescent Shoplifting. *Journal of Consumer Research, 17*(2), 149-160.

Dailymotion (2007). Nike woman. Retrieved December 4, 2007, from http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x172f5_nike-women_ads

Day, C. (1996). *Fashion*. Berlin, Scalo.

DiFranza, J. R., & Richards, J. W., Jr., Paulman, P.M., Fletcher, C., & Jaffe, R.D. (1992). Tobacco: Promotion and smoking [letter]. *Journal of American Medical Association, 267*, 3282-3284.

Donnerstein, E. (1984). *Photography of sexual aggression. Pornography: Its effect on violence against women.* N. M. Malamuth and E. Donnerstein. Orlando, FL: Academic Press.

Dorr, A. (1980). *Television and social behavior: Beyond Violence and children.* Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Dorr, A., & Kovanic, P. (1981). *The influence of film and video on young people and violence. Some of the people, some of the time-but which people?* New York, Academic Press**:** 183-189.

Dubow, J. S. (1995). Advertising recognition and recall by age--including teens. *Journal of Advertising Research, 35*(5), 55-60.

Eisner, E. W. (2002). *The Arts and the Creation of the Mind*. New Haven and London, Yale University Press.

Field, A. E., Camargo, Jr., C. A., Taylor, C.B., Berkey, C.B., & Colditz, G.A. (1999). Relation of peers and media influences to the development of purging behaviors among preadolescent and adolescent girls. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, 153*, 1184-1189.

Fontana A. & Frey, J.H. (2008). The interview: from neutral stance to political involvement. In N. K Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.) *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials* (pp. 115-159). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Fox, R. F. (1996). *Harvesting minds: How TV commercials control kids*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Funk, J. B., & Buchman, D. D. (1996a). Children perceptions of gender differences in social approval for playing electronic games. *Sex Roles: 35*, 219-231.

Funk, J. B., Donnerstein, E., & McCannon, B. (2002). Children, Adolescents, & the Media (contributing authors).

Giddens, A. (1979). Central problems in social theory. Berkley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.

Giddens, A. Retrieved September 18th, 2007 from the Worldwide Web. www.stanford.edu/~jchong/articles/msande381/Giddens.doc

Gill, R. (2000). Discourse analysis. In M.W. Bauer & G. Gaskell (Eds.) *Qualitative researching with text image and sound.* (pp.172-190). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Giroux, H. A. (1994). Doing cultural studies: Youth and the challenge of pedagogy. *Harvard Educational Review, 64*(3), 278-308.

Giroux, H. A. (1994a). *Disturbing pleasures: Learning popular culture.* New York and London: Routledge.

Giroux, H. A. (1997). *Channel surfing: Racism, the media, and the destruction of today's youth.* New York: St. Martin's Griffin.

Giroux, H. A. (1999). Vocationalizing higher education: schooling and the politics of corporate culture. *College Literature, 26*(3), 147-167.

Giroux, H. A. (2000). *Stealing Innocence*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Giroux, H. A. (2006). *The Giroux Reader*. Boulder and London: Paradigm Publishers.

Giroux, H. A. (2008). Henry Giroux Interview. Retrieved October 12, 2009, The Freire Project, http://www.freireproject.org/content/henry-giroux-interview

Glasgow, J. N. (1994). Teaching visual literacy for the 21st century. *Journal of Reading, 37*(6), 494-500.

Glesne, C. & Peshkin, A. (1992). Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction. New York: Longman.

Gortmaker S.L., Must A., Sobol, A. M., Peterson, K., Colditz, G. A., & Dietz, W. H. (1996). Television viewing as a cause of increasing obesity among children in the United States 1986-1990. *Archives of Pediatric Adolescent Medicine, 150*(4), 356-362.

Grossman, D. & DeGaetano, G. (1999). Stop teaching our kids to kill: A call to action against tv,

movie & video game violence. New York: Crown Publishers.

Grube, J. W., & Wallack, L. (1994). Television Beer Advertising and Drinking Knowledge, Beliefs, and Intentions among Schoolchildren. *American Journal of Public Health, 84*(2), 254- 259.

Hepburn, M. A. (1999). Media literacy: A must for middle school social studies. *The Clearing House, 72*(6), 352-326.

Higgonnet, A. Stealing Innocence: *Youth, Corporate Power, and the Politics of Culture H. A. Giroux.* New York: St. Martin's Press.

Hobbs, R. (1998). The seven great debates in the media literacy movement. *Journal of Communication, 48*(1), 16-32.

Hoffman, M. L. (2000). *Empathy and moral development: Implications for caring and justice.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Hopf, C. (2001). Violence, biography and the media. A qualitative study on the biographical reasonability of violent film actions. *Zeitschrift fur Soziologie der Erziehung und Socialization, 21*, 150-169.

Huesman, L. R., Eron, L. D., Lefkowitz, M.M., & Walder, L.O. (1984). Stability of aggression over time and generations. *Developmental Psychology, 20*, 1120-1134.

Huston, A. C., Wartella, E., & Donnerstein, E. (1998). *Measuring the effects of sexual content in the media: A report to the Kaiser Family Foundation.* Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation.

Ives, N. (2004). *A report the possibility that ads contribute to obesity in children; the industry begs to differ.* Retrieved June 6, 2007 from The New York Times. New York. http://www.commercialalert.org/issues/health/childhood-obesity/a-report-the-possibility-that-ads-contribute-to-obesity-in-children-the-industry-begs-to-differ

Jamieson, K. H., & Campbell, K. K. (1988). *The interplay of influence* (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Jenkins, H. (1999). Introduction: *Childhood Innocence and Other Myths*.

Jones, E. F., Forrest, J. D., Goldman, N., Henshaw, S.K., Lincoln, R., Rosoff, J.L., Westoff, C. F., & Wulf, D. (1985). Teenage pregnancy in developed countries: Determinants and policy implications. *Family Planning Perspectives, 17*, 53-63.

Jones, J. P. (2004). *Fables, fashions, and facts about advertising: A study of 28 enduring myths.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kellner, D. (1995). *Rethinking media literacy: A critical pedagogy of representations*. New York: Peter Lang.

Kelly, K. J., & Edwards, R. W. (1998). Image advertisements for alcohol products: Is their appeal associated with adolescents' intention to consume alcohol. *Adolescence, 33*(129), 47-59.

Kist, W. (2000). Beginning to create the new literacy classroom: What does the new literacy look like? *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 43*(8), 710-718.

Klein, N. (2002). *No Logo.* New York: Picador.

Kowalski, K. M. (2002). How tobacco ads target teens. *Current Health, 28*(8), 6.

Koziol, R. (1989). *English language arts teachers' views on mass media consumption education in Maryland high schools.* Paper presented at the annual conference of the Association of Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Washington, DC.

Krayeske, K. (1999). Branded! Americans are losing their identities to marketing mania." Retrieved April 17, 2007, from *www.hartfordadvocate.com/articles/branded.html.*

Kress, G. (2002). English for an era of instability: Aesthetics, ethics, creativity and "design." *English in Australia, 134,* 15-23.

Krowchuk, D. P., Kreiter, S. R., Woods, C.R., Sinal, S.H., & DuRant, R.H. (1998). Problem dieting behaviors among young adolescents. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, 152*, 884-888.

Kubey, R. (1998). Obstacles to the development of media education in the United States. *Journal of Communication, 48*(1), 58-69.

Kuczynski, A. (2001). *Tobacco companies accused of still aiming ads at youths*. New York Times: New York.

Kunkel, D., Cope-Farrar, K. M., Biely, E., Farinola, W.J.M., & Donnerstein, E. (2001). *Sex on TV:* A bienntial report to the Kaiser Family Foundation. Santa Barbara: University of California, Santa Barbara.

Kvale, S. (1996). Interviewing: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Laumann, E. O., Paik, A., & Rosen, R. C. (1999). Sexual dysfunction in the United States. *Journal of American Medical Association, 281,* 537-544.

Lauro, P. W. (1999). *Coaxing the smile that sells; Baby wranglers in demand in marketing for children*. New York Times**:** C1.

Leach, J. (2000). Rhetorical analysis. In M.W. Bauer & G. Gaskell (Eds.) *Qualitative researching with text image and sound.* (pp.207-226). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Lee, E. B., & Browne, L. D. (1995). Effects of television advertising on African American teenagers. *Journal of Black Studies, (25),* 523-536.

Leidner, R. (1993). *Fast food, fast talk: Service work and the routinization of everyday life.* University of California Press.

Levine, M. P., & Smolak, L. (1996). *Media as a context for the development of disordered eating.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Linz, D., & Malamuth, N. M. (1993). *Pornography*. Newbury Park, CA, Sage.

Lyman, P., & Varien, H. R. (1993). How much Information? W. J. Potter. Retrieved March 13, 2007, from *http://www.sims.berkeley.edu/research/projects/how-much-info-2003*.

Lynch, R. A. (1995). Is power all there is? Michael Foucault and the "omnipresence" of power relations. *Philosophy Today,* 65-71.

MacCoun, R., & Peters, R. (1992). Are the wages of sin $30 and Hour? Economic Aspects of Street-Level Drug Dealing. *Crime and Delinquency, 38*(4), 477-491.

Maddox, K. (1999). IAB: Internet advertising will reach new $2 bil for 1998. *Advertising Age, 70*(7), 34.

Madden, P. A., & Grube, J. W. (1994). The frequency and nature of alcohol and tobacco advertising in televised sports, 1990 through 1992. *American Journal of Public Health, 84,* 297-299.

Marzeoff, G. I. (1998). *Imaging education: The media and schools in America*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative researching*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

McIntyre, J. J., & Teevan, Jr., J. J. (1972). *Television violence and deviant behavior*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office.

McNeal, J. U. (1999). *The kids' market: Myths and realities*. Ithaca, NY: Paramount Market.

Megee, M. (1997). Media literacy: The new basic--will the real curriculum please stand up? *Emergency Librarian, 25*(2), 23-26.

Milner, M. J. (2004). *Freeks, geeks, and cool kids: American Teenagers, Schools, and the culture of consumption.* New York and London: Routledge.

Mirzoeff, N. (1999). *An introduction to visual culture*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Molnar, A. (2005). *School commercialism: From democratic ideal to market commodity.* Abington Oxford, GB: Taylor & Francis.

Newman, F., & Wehlage G. (1993). Authentic learning. *Educational Leadership, 50*(7), 8-12.

Nichter, M., & Nichter, M. (1991). Hype and weight. *Medical Anthropology, 13*, 249-284.

Peterson, J. L., Moore, K. A., & Furstenberg, F.F. (1991). Television viewing and early initiation of sexual intercourse: is there a link? *Homosexual, 21*, 93-118.

Peterson, R. A., & Kahn, J. R. (1984). Media preferences of sexually active teens. *American Psychological Association.* Toronto, Canada.

Pipher, M. (1996). People Magazine.

Policy Statement: Media Education. (1999). American Academy of Pediatrics.

Pope, H. (1999). Toy muscles to harmful image of male body. Harvard Medical Alumni Bulletin.

Potter, W. J. (2005). *Media literacy*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pungente, J. (1996). Getting started on media literacy. *Emergency Librarian, 24*(2), 9-11.

QSRInternational. (2009). Nvivo 8: Getting started.

Quart, A. (2003). Branded: *The buying and selling of teenagers*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Raeburn, P., Forster, J., Foust, D., & Brady, D. (2002). *Why were so fat: Fast food at school, huge portions, and relentless TV ads make it easy.* Retrieved April 17, 2007 from http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/02_42/b3804082.htm

Reece, B. B., Rifon, N. J., & Rodriguez, K.(1999). *Selling food to children: Is fun part of a balanced breakfast?* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Riccio, N. (2002). How alcohol ads target teens. *Current Health, 2,* 14-17.

Rubin, H.J., & Rubin, I.S. (1995). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Salamon, J. (2001). *When it comes to tv, coveted adolescents prove to be unpredictable.* New York Times. New York.

Saltman, K. J. (2000). *Collateral damage: Corporatizing public school--A threat to democracy.* Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield.

Schlosser, E. (2002). *Fast Food Nation.* New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin.

Schor, J. (1998). *The overspent American.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Schutz, A. (1997). The metaphor of "space" in educational theory: Henry Giroux through the eyes of Hannah Arendt and Michael Foucault. *Philosophy of Education,* 1-10.

Shaw, D. Center for Media Literacy. Retrieved July 21, 2009, from http://www.medialit.org/reading_room/article631.html

Seidel, J., & Kelle, U. (1995). *Computer-aided qualitative data analysis: Theory, methods, and practice.* London: Sage.

Signorielli, N. (1997). *A content analysis: Reflections of girls in the media*. Kaiser Family Foundation.

Sinclair, D. (1996). Media literacy: Elementary, my dear tl. *Emergency Librarian, 24*(2), 26-29.

Singer, D. G., & Singer, J. L. (1998). Developing critical viewing skills and media literacy in children. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 557*, 164-179.

Singer, D. G., Zuckerman, D. M., & Singer, J.L. (1980). Helping elementary school children learn about TV. *Journal of Communication, 30*, 84-93.

Singer, J. L., & Singer D. G. (1998). *Barney & Friends as entertainment and education.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sizer, T. R. (1995). Silences. *Daedelus, 124*(4), 77-83.

Slater, M. D., Henry, K. L., Swaim, R.C., & Anderson, L.L. (2003). Violent media content and aggressiveness in adolescents. *Community Resource, 30*, 713-736.

Snyder, M., & DeBono, K. G. (1985). Appeals to image and claims about quality: Understanding the psychology of advertising. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 49(*3), 586-597.

Steinberg, S. (1995). *Strategies for media literacy.* New York: Peter Lang.

Strasburger, V. C., & Brown, R. T. (1998). *Adolescent medicine: A practical guide*. Philadelphia, PA, Lippincott/Williams & Wilkins.

Strasburger, V. C., & Donnerstein, E. (2000). Adolescents and the media in the 21st century. *Adolescent Medicine: State of the Art Reviews, 11*, 51-68.

Strasburger, V. C., & Wilson, B. J. (2002). Children, Adolescents, & the Media. J. B. Funk, E. Donnerstein and B. McCannon. Thousand Oaks, London, & New Delhi: Sage.

Sturkin, M., & Cartwright, L. (2001). *Practices of looking: An introduction to visual culture*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Tarpley, T. (2001). *Children, the Internet, and other new technologies*. Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage.

Tallim, J. Media Literacy. Retrieved July 17, 2007, from http://www.mediaawareness.ca/english/teachers/media_literacy/what_is_media_literacy.cfm

Vinson, K. D., & Ross, E. W. (2003). *Image and Education: Teaching in the face of the new disciplinarity.* New York: Peter Lang.

Wadsworth, D. (1998). *Do media shape public perceptions of America's schools*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Walker, Chip (1996). "Can TV Save the Planet?" American Demographics, 18, 42-3.

Ward, G. (1997). *Teach yourself postmodernism*. Chicago, Illinois, Contemporary Books.

Ward, L. M. (2005). Children adolescents, and the media: The molding of minds, bodies, and deeds. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development, 109*, 63-71.

Wartella, E., & Jennings, N. (2001*). Hazards and possibilities of commercial tv in the schools.* In Singer, D., & Singer, J. (Ed.), Handbook of children and the media (pp. 559-560). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Weaver, J. I. (1994). *Media, children, and the family: Social scientific, psychodynamic, and the clinical perspectives. Pornography and sexual callousness: The perceptual and behavioral consequences or exposure to pornography*.

Zillman, D. Bryant J. & Huston. A. C. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Williamson, J. (1978). *Decoding Advertisements* [as cited in Postmodernism, Ward, 2003]. Chicago, Ill: Contemporary Books.

Williamson, J. (2002). Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and meaning in Advertising. London: Marion Boyars.

Wolf, M. J. (1999). The Entertainment Economy: How Mega-Media Forces Are Transforming

Our Lives. New York: Random House.

Women, A. A. o. A. (1999). *Voices of a generation: Teenage girls on sex, school and self.*
    Washington DC: Author.

You Tube (2006). BMW. Retrieved December 4, 2007, from
    http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sxD-U0O1mZ4&feature=related

You Tube (2007). Call of Duty 4. Retrieved December 6, 2007, from
    http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2JC3UMJ2It4

You Tube (2006). Calvin Klein. Retrieved December 5, 2007, from
    http://youtube.com/watch?v=NdBk3cnhtP4

You Tube (2006). Carl jr. Retrieved December 5, 2007, from
    http://youtube.com/watch?v=P82hABWq1To&feature=related

You Tube (2006). GNC. Retrieved December 5, 2007, from
    http://youtube.com/watch?v=DtlNrAjo0Z0

You Tube (2006). Calvin Klein. Retrieved December 5, 2007, from
    http://youtube.com/watch?v=NdBk3cnhtP4

Zollo, P. (1999). *Wise up to teens: Insights into marketing and advertising to teenagers 9.* Teen
    Research Unlimited: Author.