Advertising as Pedagogy?

Using Media Literacy and Critical Pedagogy to Empower Youth

Jaime Sportun

Department of Integrated Studies in Education

McGill University, Montreal

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Abstract

Partially grounded in the work of George Gerbner, and also in other media theorists including John Berger, Roland Barthes and Michael Hoechsmann, this thesis aims to explore the concept of media as public pedagogy. Based on these theories, an in-depth analysis of the advertisements produced by cellular goods and service providers and their effect on the youth generation with respect to the relatively new phenomenon of cyber-bullying will be examined. Then, through the works and writings of critical pedagogues including Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, Shirley Steinberg, Joe Kincheloe and Donaldo Macedo, a media literacy approach to education will be introduced which aims to empower youth by enabling them to critically examine the media designed for their consumption.

Résume

Principalement fondée par le travail de George Gerber, mais aussi présente dans celui de d'autres théoriciens médiatiques incluant John Berger, Roland Barthes et Michael Hoechsmann, cette thèse a pour but d'explorer le concept des médias comme pédagogie publique. Fondé sur ces théories, une analyse approfondie des publicités produites par les fournisseurs de produits en téléphonie mobiles et leurs effets sur la jeune génération dans le cadre du nouveau phénomène de cyber intimidation sera examinée.Ensuite, par l'entremise de travaux et d'écrits de pédagogues critiques tels que Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, Shirley Steinberg, Joe Kincheloe et Donaldo Macedo, une approche d'éducation médiatique sera présentée, ce qui a pour but de donner plus de pouvoir aux jeunes en leur permettant d'examiner d'une façon critique les médias conçus de leur consommation.

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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Introduction

I began work on this thesis nearly a decade after graduating high school and after teaching for several years in both the public and private school systems at the elementary and high school levels in Montreal. Intrigued, inspired, and often troubled by the extent to which technology has become a central site of youth culture, I began to investigate the ways in which youth engage with and regard emerging technologies and their associated platforms and programs. By "emerging technologies" I mean cell phones, smart phones, multi-player video game consoles like Xbox, and social media platforms such as Facebook, Instant Messaging Programs, and YouTube. These diverse forms of digital communication (as this thesis will demonstrate with regard to one particular example and context) are often media-influenced and accepted by the youth who engage with them. Although there are many things that youth are doing with these technologies which are transformative and positive, this thesis will examine one of the harmful ways in which youth engage with new technologies: cyber-bullying. Youth, for this purpose this thesis, are defined as under the age of the eighteen.

Beginning with a study of youth online identities for a course and continuing with research I am currently conducting as part of a team funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada to study cyber-bullying, I found myself increasingly immersed and interested in the role of both technology, and, by extension, media in the lives of youth. This interest has been on academic, professional and personal levels.

I was driven to better understand just how much youth culture has changed since I was young as a result of emerging technologies and, more importantly, the resulting implications. As a teacher, I believe that it is essential to be familiar with both media and technology, because those who truly understand what their students do and why they are doing it are better able to facilitate their empowerment, which assists them to assess their own actions and navigate their own world. For the purpose of this thesis, I contend that youth are engaging with technologies in ways that often can cause harm to others; and asking *why* they are doing this requires a look at the media they consume.

Returning to a post-secondary institution for my third degree has been a rewarding and valuable experience as I have met like-minded people who truly want to challenge the current state of Western education and work towards change. One of the major aspects of education that I would like to see altered is the incorporation of media literacy into the classroom on a regular basis and across multiple subject areas. (This topic will be discussed much more in the final chapter of this thesis.) Working with critical scholars such as Shirley Steinberg and Lisa Trimble of McGill University and reading others including Henry Giroux, Joe Kincheloe and Paulo Freire provided me with the opportunity to put a name to what I was - a critical scholar with a counter-culture perspective- and to learn the vocabulary and theories behind what I had always felt the need to articulate, but never quite knew how to do it.

Thesis Overview

The question I sought to answer when commencing working on this thesis was: "To what extent does advertising serve as a pedagogy, and what can be done to counter its effects in order to ensure youth do not passively succumb to the hegemonic influence

of corporations?" In Chapter 6 of this thesis, advertisements created by national and transnational cellular goods and service providers will be examined to determine the collective messages that are being sent to youth who consume and share these ads through various means. Specifically, how these ads serve to both condone and endorse acts of cyber-bullying will be discussed. Chapters 2 through 4 are designed to lay the groundwork for this thesis by examining the issues and theories involved in answering said question. Chapter 5 introduces the relatively new phenomenon of cyber-bullying, the role of cell-phones in the lives of youth, as well as the difference between the youth and adult generations of today when it comes to cell phone usage (for purposes of highlighting to readers of this thesis the extent to which cell phones are a central site of youth culture). The aforementioned research is then introduced, although it will be noted here that it is not an empirically grounded analysis, given its qualitative nature. The findings indicate that these corporations condone and often endorse unacceptable cellular phone usage and acts of cyber-bullying and the thesis concludes with a call to action for increased focus on media literacy in the classroom in order to empower youth to critically consider the messages delivered by the media.

This thesis is written from a critical pedagogical perspective and employs the bricolage approach to research and viewing the world articulated by Joe Kincheloe (Kincheloe, 2006, p. 1). By nature, critical pedagogy is informed by, and considers various points of view; therefore the works of several scholars from various fields including critical pedagogy, communications, and political science both inspired me, and are infused into this work.

Content Summary

Media literacy, critical pedagogy, and hegemony will first be defined and discussed prior to the introduction of a 1968 article by media scholar Roderick MacLean who warned of the impending infiltration of the media into the Western education system (MacLean, 1968, p. 4). This will provide the foundation for an analysis of the corporate media's impact on youth through the application of George Gerbner's Theory of Cultivation. The qualifier "corporate" is placed before media here in order to distinguish it from the term "media" because whereas "media" has the intent to communicate a message, "corporate media" is populated by the intentions of the corporate owners whose sole goal is profit and thus the purpose of the messages becomes much more precise. When the term "media" is mentioned in this thesis, I refer to "corporate media". The media's practice of studying youth culture in order to sell it back to them (as discussed in the PBS documentary *Merchants of Cool)* and how this results in the presentation of a distorted view of youth culture will also be examined.

How two successful corporations managed to merge their marketing efforts rather seamlessly with educational interests will then be examined as will other means employed by the media to obtain the attention of youth. The notion of youth as consumers will be explored in addition to why they represent an important market to advertisers. Measures taken to reduce advertising both to youth and in general will then be discussed along with the rationale for corporate opposition to this.

Next, a brief overview of the history of mobile phones leading up to their role in contemporary youth culture will be outlined as this discussion is pertinent to the forthcoming introduction of cyber-bullying as well as the analysis of advertisements

created for youth consumption by national and transnational cellular goods and service providers. The capabilities of these devices as well as the necessity for teachers to be aware of the prevalence of these and other devices in the classroom will be emphasized, followed by a discussion on the debate of whether or not they ought to be permitted within the classroom. Complicating this discussion is the generational gap between digital natives and digital immigrants, which will be unpacked.

I will analyze advertisements from a critical perspective and their effects on youth will be examined. After this discussion, the occurrences in the advertisements will be correlated to real-world instances of cyber-bullying in order to illustrate two points: 1) that acts of cyber-bullying in cellular phone advertisements are portrayed as humorous and 2) that acts of cyber-bullying in cell phone advertisements are portrayed as being without consequence. I will reflect on Gerbner's Theory of Cultivation as it sets the stage for the final portion of this thesis, which advocates the need for media literacy in the classroom, with an emphasis on the Quebec Education Program (QEP). I conclude with a call to action for a critically informed approach to media literacy which aims to reduce the hegemonic nature of the media in order to empower youth will be advocated and implications for further research will be discussed.

Chapter 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: CRITICAL PEDAGOGY, MEDIA LITERACY, AND HEGEMONY

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce key concepts which have given direction to and inspired the research presented in this thesis. Terms discussed by key scholars in the fields of critical pedagogy and media communication theory include, Paulo Freire, Noam Chomsky, George Gerbner, Antonio Gramsci, Joe Kincheloe, Shirley Steinberg, Donaldo Macedo, Henry Giroux ,and Michael Hoechsmann will be covered. Roderick MacLean's 1968 article, which warned of the impending infiltration of the media into the Western education system, will first be examined.

Early Speculations with Regard to Media and Education

In his 1968 article, "Television in Education," Roderick MacLean grapples with this relatively new medium's implications for education. He specifically examines and compares broadcast television to closed circuit television, also known as educational television, or ETV. While the majority of his comments would today be regarded as anachronistic, they do include some prescient early warnings and interesting musings which are applicable to both the educational and cultural environment that youth inhabit today.

MacLean first grapples with the definition of education, and is quick to acknowledge that the conventionally held notion of education at the time was changing with the presence of television, which rose in popularity in North America after the

cessation of World War II and was gradually embraced and incorporated into North American homes and classrooms over the two decades prior to the writing of this book. He noted that "we are betrayed by our shortage of appropriate vocabulary." (MacLean, 1968, p. 21) and contends that:

> It is this main stream of television - seldom education but often incidentally educative - that provokes in the professional educator an attitudewhich is compounded of admiration, fear and envy. It provokes his admiration because of its sheer capacity to communicate, to establish trends and to build up personalities whether real or imaginary. His fear springs from the belief that much of our television promotes a wrong sense of values, and that much of the information it conveys is glib and superficial. And he is envious because here in front of the domestic receiver is the mass audience which, as he sees it, should rightly be available for education. (MacLean, 1968, p. 23)

It is interesting he is able to identify so early in the evolution of television and media in the classroom that which teachers are experiencing and facing to much larger degrees in classrooms over forty years later. As a teacher, I often felt incapable of delivering engaging lessons, knowing what my students' standards of being engaging entailed. Like many others who study media literacy, I am aware of the "wrong sense of values" put forth through the media and am discouraged by how this is often embraced unquestioningly by youth and incorporated into classroom culture as a result. (These values to which I refer could are varied but include, for example, the belief that the excessive consumerist nature of society does not need to be questioned, the notion that voting with one's dollars is more important than voting with ballots or the conviction that having money and being famous is more important than being a good citizen.

MacLean continues on to warn that "programmes broadcast to schools have in many instances over recent years come steadily closer to the concept of direct teaching, and we may even be approaching the danger of overlap - in intention, if not in content - between the work offered by the broadcasters and that presented by the larger closed

circuit systems" (MacLean, 1968, p. 22). This statement acknowledges that these closed circuit systems had a primary mandate to educate and few ulterior motives including advertising and driving up sales, unlike the broadcasters. MacLean did not know how accurate he was, and to what extent this "overlap" would play out over the next several decades.

Critical Pedagogy

According to Giroux, critical pedagogy is

> the educational movement guided by both passion and principle to help students develop a consciousness of freedom, recognize authoritarian tendencies, empower the imagination, connect knowledge and truth to power and learn to read both the word and the world as part of a broader struggle for agency, justice and democracy … [It] currently offers the very best, perhaps the only, chance for young people to develop and assert a sense of their rights and responsibilities to participate in governing, and not simply being governed by prevailing ideological and material forces. (Giroux, 2010, p. 1)

Steinberg (2007) provides a synonym to this notion as she explains how critical pedagogues are "engaged in a pedagogy of insubordination" (p. x).

According to Kincheloe, critical pedagogy "understands that people around the world constantly have to deal with modes of oppression emerging from dominant power" and acknowledges that "[t]his means that those of us who are not part of such oppressive power networks have to constantly struggle to develop the skills to cut through the knowledge jungle created by power wielders to perpetuate their own privilege" (Kincheloe, 2008, p. vii). In *Knowledge and Critical Pedagogy*, Kincheloe discusses Freire's notion of epistemological curiosity, a process which involves learning about how certain things came to be (namely knowledge), in the media or certified school curriculum (Kincheloe, 2008, p. viii).

Paulo Freire, the author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) established the notion of a critical pedagogy along with many books and articles that challenge prevailing ideologies and encourage youth to "read the word and the world" (Freire & Macedo, 1987, book title). In addition to myself, many scholars discussed in this thesis have been inspired by Freire's work and the thesis itself is grounded in the concept of critical pedagogy.

Hegemony

The Kaiser Family Foundation notes in a 2005 report that "[w]ithout question, this generation truly is the media generation, devoting more than a quarter of each day to media" or roughly 6.5 hours in a 24 hour period (Rideout, Roberts & Foehr, 2005, p. 39). Jeff Share, in his book *Media Literacy is Elementary* further notes that

> [w]ho to admire, how to solve problems, what to think about groups of people you have never met, when and how to have sex, where to find what you need, and why care about others are just some of the lessons that children are receiving daily from mass media [...] Today's storytellers are enormous transnational corporations merging and expanding internationally to just about every corner of the globe and domestically to every nook and cranny they can reach. (Share, 2009, p. 2)

The notion of putting forth ideas in the media to "manufacture consent" (as media scholar Noam Chomsky terms it) is used to achieve hegemony from the target audience (Chomsky, 1992, video file). Derived from the Greek word for 'leader' and first articulated in a political context by Marxist thinkers and later refined by Antonio Gramsci, hegemony is the gaining of consent of a population without the use of physical coercion. Gramsci presented the notion of hegemony in terms of the relationship between the dominant class and the other classes, however, corporate media manufactures consent in order to achieve hegemony in much the same way: to impose certain norms or assumptions by presenting their way of viewing the world in such a

manner that others accept it without question. For example, the belief that certain goods and services are essential for happiness and success in life is cultivated by mainstream corporate media, which will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

Henry Giroux used the term "teaching machines" in reference to various Hollywood movies and other cultural curricula which serve to instill various ideologies into mainstream culture (Giroux, 2010, p. 53). This includes everything from reinforcement of the heteronormative mainstream values (such as in Disney films, to be discussed in Chapter Four) to bolstering political support (as discussed in his article, "The Powell Memo and the Teaching Machines of Right-Winged Extremists" [Giroux, 2009]). The notion of Hollywood "teaching machines" could certainly be expanded to include mainstream media advertisements designed to "educate" consumers, not only with regards to what they should be purchasing, but also in many cases to how they should be engaging with what they purchase. This will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

Gerbner contends that "[f]or the first time in human history, children are hearing most of the stories, most of the time, not from their parents or school or churches or neighbors, but from a handful of global conglomerates that have something to sell" (Gerbner, 1994, p. 1). In Hoechsmann's article entitled "Advertising Pedagogy: Teaching and Learning Consumption," he followed up on Gerbner's work, stating that over the past century, advertising has emerged as a pedagogy which is in direct competition with the pedagogy of the school when it comes to "socialization, acculturation, and self and group identity formation of young people today" (Hoechsmann, 2009, p. 653).

Critical pedagogue Donaldo Macedo equates Noam Chomsky's notion of the "manufacturing of consent" within Western media to the "manufacturing of consent" used by a rebel group to control the population of Guinea-Bissau after successfully over-throwing the previous democratic government in 1998:

> The rebel group that successfully put an end to all democratic hopes in Guinea-Bissau understood all too well that their success rested not only on the supremacy of its military prowess but also on the manipulation of the masses' collective imagination as a means to control the "bewildered herd" and subjugate it, once again, to their proper role - a role that, according to Walter Lippmann, should be as "spectators' and not participants in actions" It is for this reason that the rebel forces immediately seized control of an important radio station, and, in a short few days, they secured the support of "the bewildered herd." (Macedo, 2009, p. xvii)

Whether for political power or economic gain, the use of the media is essential for manufacturing the consent of the public. Once the people have been overpowered with this muted form of persuasion (as opposed to, say, military force), those in power can essentially do as they please; they now have at their disposal a compliant - but often not a bewildered or angry - population.

Media Literacy

The Media Awareness Network (MNet) is a non-profit, Ottawa-based organization that "focuses its efforts on equipping adults with information and tools to help young people understand how the media work, how the media may affect their lifestyle choices and the extent to which they, as consumers and citizens, are being well informed" (MNet, 2011, p. 1). Founded in 1996, MNet answers the question: what is media literacy? as follows:

> Media literacy is 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.

> Media education encourages a probing approach to the world of media: Who is this message intended for? Who wants to reach this audience, and why? From whose perspective is this story told? Whose voices are heard, and whose are absent? What strategies does this message use to get my attention and make me feel included?
>
> In our world of multi-tasking, commercialism, globalization and interactivity, media education isn't about having the right answers—it's about asking the right questions. The result is lifelong empowerment of the learner and citizen. (MNet, 2011, p. 1)

Shirley Steinberg, noted scholar in the area of media literacy playfully contends that there are four types of media consumers:

> 1) those who take it for what it is - who do not see anything more or less than that which is placed in front of them [...] sort of existential media consumers;
> 2) those who devour it, believe it, and live it [...] the media sponges;
> 3) those who deny its existence, demand censorship, and claim it has no effects on their lives and;
> 4) those who are suspicious of media and who critique it. (Steinberg, 2009, p. xiii)

Middle school and high school teachers will regularly encounter students from each of these four categories, perhaps with the exception of the third. I have yet to encounter a student who demands censorship or denies the existence of media, although I have encountered several who claim it does not affect them. In fact, Dylan (not his actual name), a grade eleven student to whom I taught Economics, vehemently denied that advertising had any effect on him. In order to prove this, he proudly produced an MP3 player from his pocket that was not an iPod, while many of his peers sat with Apple's technology hidden away in the bags, pockets and bras (should they be wearing a uniform skirt without pockets on that particular day). "See? I don't pay attention to ads!" he said. Dylan sincerely believed that through his conscious efforts, he was able to resist all effects of advertising. This discussion took place during a class where students were asked to critically engage with advertisements produced by the mass media - although not because the outdated economics curriculum called for this. It is important to mention, however, that this happened before the new Quebec Education Program

(QEP) took effect, as the old program did not have a comprehensive, cross-curricular approach to media literacy. The new QEP will be discussed further in Chapter Seven.

Hegemony, critical pedagogy, and media literacy lay the groundwork for this thesis insofar as I advocate for a media literacy approach to education by way of a critical perspective while acknowledging the hegemonic nature of society, and, more specifically, the media. Youth empowerment, another central theme in this thesis, can be realized by employing and incorporating the above perspectives and concepts into the classroom in order to achieve a power shift from the media to the youth after what Freire termed "*conscientização*" or "critical consciousness" has been reached. Freire contended that *conscientização* is what occurs as a result of taking an in-depth look at the world from a critical perspective and asserts that the disempowered and/or disenfranchised can be empowered once they recognize the hegemonic nature of the world in which they live (Freire, 1970). I contend that most youth are disempowered or disenfranchised in some way, albeit to varying degrees, and that media plays a role in this. Thus, giving youth the tools they need to critically read their world and evoke a power shift whereby youth recognize the powers exerted against them and become to recognize their own power and agency is one of the main purposes behind media literacy.

Chapter 3

MEDIA AND YOUTH: THEORIES, IMPACT & MARKETING

Introduction

Now that the perspective through which this thesis is being approached has been established, this chapter will introduce the theoretical frameworks pertaining to the media over the past several decades. The notion that the media is a "distorting mirror" that reflects society as well as how the media exhaustively studies youth culture in order to market it back to them and how this effects them will be discussed in this chapter (*Merchants of Cool*, 2008, video file). The intentions and purposes of media messages will be examined and the question of whose interests are actually being served by way of this means of communication to the general public will be briefly addressed. Many concepts introduced in both this chapter and the next will lay the groundwork for the remainder of this thesis and will be taken up in further detail in subsequent chapters.

Gerbner's Cultivation Theory and its Relevance to the Impact of Media on Youth Today

Communications theorist George Gerbner devoted decades of his life to studying the effects of media on the American population, engaging in longitudinal studies to analyze trends in television and the resulting effects on viewers. With colleagues at the Annenberg School of Communication (University of Pennsylvania), he focused specifically on violence on television and coined the term "mean world syndrome" which refers to the beliefs of those who watch large amounts of television over extended periods of time; namely that the world is a scary, violent place (Gerbner, 1994, p. 6).

The cultivation occurs gradually, often in nearly undetectable ways, but has a cumulative and consequential effect over the long term. Gerbner contended that violence on television brings about numerous detrimental effects for those who consume it, including the fortification of an individual's belief that others are dangerous, causing viewers to feel vulnerable and insecure as a result (Gerbner, 1994, p. 1). In addition, aside from causing viewers to believe that violence is a part of everyday life as well as an effective means to solving problems, it also serves to desensitize viewers to the suffering of abuse victims (Gerbner, 1994, p. 1).

It is important to note, however, that Gerbner did not subscribe to the notion that viewing violent acts on television is a direct causation of committing violent acts in the real world. Instead, he contended that television viewing alters beliefs, and that these beliefs affect an individual's behavior (Gerbner, 1994, p. 1). For example, if a young male assaulted a peer, it is one thing to say that he witnessed a violent act on television and was thus inspired to commit that same act. It is quite another to report that due to viewing large amounts of violence on television over the span of his lifetime, this individual came to believe that violence is commonplace, solves problems, and that the victim's physical and emotional scars caused by a violent act are irrelevant. Due to these beliefs, the young male would be more inclined to commit this act.

American psychologist N.S Goldstein wrote her dissertation on "The effect of animated cartoons on hostility in children," which directly examined the effects of violence in cartoons (Goldstein 1956). Her findings revealed that children who watched violent cartoons were more likely to act more violently immediately after watching as opposed to those who watched non-violent cartoons. Although Gerbner studied the

messages sent through violent television shows and Goldstein examined direct effects, both scholars came to the same conclusion: consumers of television violence are substantially affected by what they see.

Gerbner's theory, of course, is also applicable to other values, ideologies and concepts consistently delivered by various media when regularly consumed over long periods of time. Katherine Miller, author of "Communications theories: Perspectives, processes, and contexts" distinguishes between "First-order cultivation effects [which] refer to the effects of television on statistical descriptions about the world" and "Second-order cultivation effects [which] refer to effects on beliefs about the general nature of the world" (Miller, 2004, p. 287). Essentially, first order cultivation effects refer to general beliefs (for example, the belief that the world is a scary place and that most people are violent, according to Gerbner's research) and second order cultivation effects refer to specific attitudes such as the conception that a particular action or notion is right or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable. Both will be discussed further as they relate to the research put forth in this thesis which focuses on examining how the advertisements produced by national and transnational cellular goods and service providers serve to normalize, endorse and even condone acts of cyber-bullying amongst youth.

Cultivation theorists are generally of the belief that the media cultivates values which already exist in society. The PBS film, *Merchants of Cool* (2008) examines this phenomenon and highlights how youth are heavily studied and capitalized on in the advertising market. As youth are seen as the generation with the freshest ideas and one that has a substantial influence on the market, deriving information regarding what is

considered "cool" according to this demographic is of paramount importance. The Merchants of Cool are those who study youth culture and then use that information to market cool right back to the youth in order to gain their attention. This is in an effort, of course, to turn a profit. The PBS *Frontline* website summarizes the concept as follows:

> They are the merchants of cool: creators and sellers of popular culture who have made teenagers the hottest consumer demographic in America. [...] marketers have to find a way to seem real: true to the lives and attitudes of teenagers; in short, to become cool themselves. To that end, they search out the next cool thing and have adopted an almost anthropological approach to studying teens and analyzing their every move as if they were animals in the wild. (PBS Frontline, 2008, p. 1)

Media Theory, Continued and Marketing To Youth

The California based Girls Intelligence Agency (GIA) is one marketing firm that is in the business of engaging with teens in order to understand and define "cool" through the use of viral marketing (sometimes referred to as as word-of-mouth marketing), which aims to increase brand awareness by involving or recruiting others through pre-existing virtual or real-world social networks. GIA attempts to promote increased brand awareness through previously established social networks. Via the Internet, the GIA actively seeks out teenaged girls who are willing to be "Secret Agents," inconspicuous sleuths infiltrating their unsuspecting circle of friends at a sleep-over party organized for the sole purpose of obtaining information regarding what their friends believe is cool and worthy of being sold en mass so that they can report their findings to the GIA. Here's how they pitch it to prospective female "Secret Agents" on their website:

> Check it – you and your 10 best buds hangin' out all night with the yet-to-be-seen-in-stores stuff for chicas like you! We're talkin' everything from clothes to candy and movies to music. You'll practically stalk your mailman in wild pursuit of the giant box of coolio stuff! [...] Winning a chance to be a GIA

> Slumber Party Host is a very exclusive experience. 1000's of girls are hoping to get one of the rare spots. GIA honors selected Agents who take this responsibility seriously. (Girls Intelligence Agency, 2009, p. 1)

(GIA Logo, screenshot taken from GIAheadquarters.com, 2011)

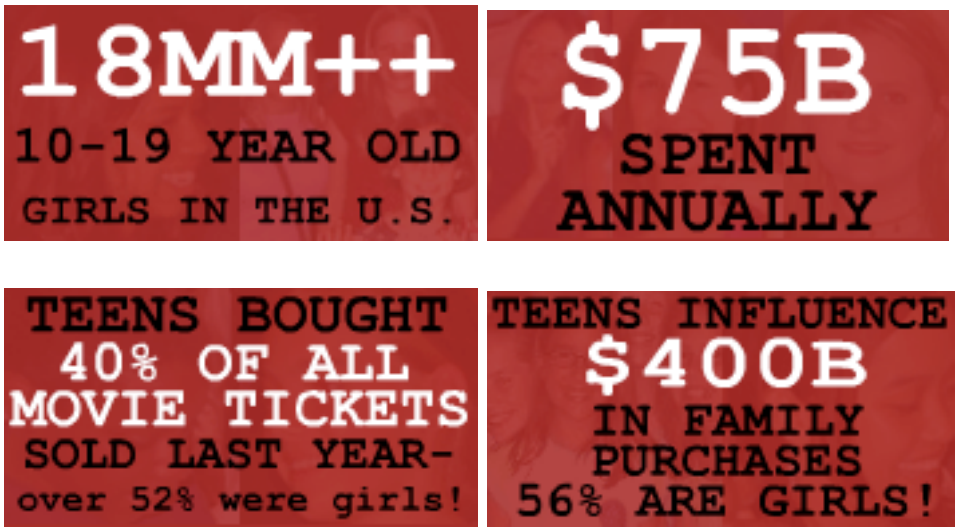
If a teen is selected to be a "Secret Agent" she will receive an "age-appropriate" slumber party in a box that includes "hot, new products that are pro-girl" (Girls Intelligence Agency, 2009, p. 2). Inside the box, according to photos of past boxes on the website, girls can expect to receive t-shirts, CDs, cameras and toques. There is no clear indication of what "pro-girl" actually means, but perhaps the fact that most items are pink allows the items to be categorized in such a manner.

(GIA merchandise, screenshot taken from www.giaheadquarters.com/sbox/past.asp, 2010)

In order to be selected (as not all want-to-be Agents can receive a slumber party in a box), GIA will "select hosts based on how active they are on www.giaheadquarters.com and their eagerness to participate according to the rules" (Girls Intelligence Agency, 2009, p. 1). Keeping active entails regularly taking polls and quizzes, and the rules can supposedly be found on their "Sbox FAQ's and Rules" page, although they are not explicit nor clearly laid out. However, what is expected of the Hosts is outlined below:

> Sbox hosts are responsible for having a great time with their GIA Slumber Party in A Box. Sbox hosts will do their best to provide a good time for her 11-12 friends. Sbox hosts are responsible for the Slumber Party in A Box between the day it arrives by mail and the day of the Slumber Party – to keep it intact and closed until the date of the Slumber Party. Sbox hosts are responsible to administer the games and activities during the Slumber Party Sbox hosts are responsible for providing feedback through quizzes at giaheadquarters.com/sbox/quizzes [sic]. (Girls Intelligence Agency, 2009)

According to an interview by *60 Minutes*, the GIA "charges up to a million dollars for it's insights, has doubled its businesses each year for the last three years and has attracted clients like Disney, Fox Network and Capital Records" (*60 Minutes*, February 11, 2009). In an interview with the Chief Executive of this company, a reporter from *60 Minutes* inquired if it was "worth all this work" to determine exactly what young girls like and want. The response was "[t]he tween is a 335 billion dollar market; that's a powerful consumer" (Leung, 2004, p. 14). The poorly laid-out and rather incoherent portion of their website aimed at perspective customers (i.e companies with something to sell) includes the following pieces of information:



(GIA statistics, screenshot taken from www.giaheadquarters.com/sbox/faq.asp, 2010)

The accuracy of these claims may be questionable (no sources are given) but what is clear is that this age group presents a profitable market and that there is no shortage of corporations that want to know more about what this market desires and deems "cool." In a *Boston Globe* article titled "Protecting kids from marketers' clutches", Barbara F. Meltz had the following commentary on this concept:

> For 8- to 13-year-old girls who are in the vulnerable stage of development where fitting in is paramount, this is a chance to be cool, to be a trend-setter, to get free stuff, and to be "special" Trouble is, many girls don't see that they are being used, that their friendships are being exploited. (*Boston Globe*, September 30, 2004, p. 1)

Many concerned adults would agree that infiltrating youth circles in order to better sell to youth is immoral and exploitative, but the fact remains that it is a successful and profitable endeavor which is likely here to stay. Once advertisers know what the youth want and can target them directly using this information, they can then play a role in altering and cultivating their beliefs (as in Gerber's Theory of Cultivation). This notion will be examined in more depth in later on in this thesis.

Often the question of what/whom affects what/whom is raised when examining the media and youth culture. *Merchants of Cool* contends that the media is a distorted

mirror when it comes to reflecting youth culture (*Merchants of Cool*, 2009, video file). I would contend that this is so for two reasons: first, it reflects youth culture as marketers interpret it (due to the surveillance and infiltration of youth, the scope and depth of which was only partially described above) and second, it adds its own information to the message being produced on top of that, thus distorting the supposed authenticity of the youth culture being presented further. The information added to the message is not only carefully constructed, but also comes as a result of excessive amounts of money spent determining how best to frame and deliver it to a youth audience. This message, from a critical media perspective, is one of 'buy this; you need it to make your life better' or 'you are inadequate without this" or "everyone else has this and thus you should, too.' What results is a hybrid image of youth culture that is similar to the authentic one and which speaks to the needs and desires of youth that it is accepted and often times even celebrated (by means of sharing it in on-line spaces) by the youth demographic. For both of these reasons, I agree with Hoechsmann's contention that the media presents a distorted version of youth culture and that this is being done for the sole purpose of maximizing the profitability of the youth market (Hoeschmann, personal communication, 2010).

In his article "Reclaiming our Cultural Mythology", Gerbner noted that "[p]eople think of television as programs, but television is more than that; television is a mythology - highly organically connected, repeated every day so that the themes that run through all programming and news have the effect of cultivating conceptions of reality" (Gerbner, 1994, p. 1). Gerbner's theory of cultivation essentially states that over time, television viewing affects viewers' perceptions of reality.

The question is thus raised: who is doing the cultivating, and why? Roland Barthes (1957) discussed the creation of socially accepted myths formulated by the media that served to perpetuate the ideologies of the dominant class. While the ideologies of the dominant class certainly continue to be preserved in the media today, there is a much greater motivation to cultivate the viewers' opinions and perceptions of reality: profits. Corporations have a vested interest in cultivating consumers from an early age so they will purchase their products from an early age and continue to do so over the course of their life. What results, (and will be discussed further in more detail in Chapter Four) is that television and other media not only cultivates conceptions of reality, but, as a result, actually serves to alter the cultural landscape and shape new socially accepted practices which favour the bottom lines of those who created them.

In 1972 John Berger wrote *Ways of Seeing*, which examined visual images such as oil paintings and, more relevant to this discussion: advertisements (referred to as 'publicity' in the book). Berger, not unlike Barthes, aimed to identify messages and ideologies hidden within media and other images. Notably, Berger wrote that the purpose of publicity is to send the message that there is little wrong with society and that one's potential is limitless. There is, however, something wrong with or missing from an individuals' life and that something, can be rectified by (or in many cases actually is) the product being sold in the advertisement (Berger, 1972, p. 134). He discussed the idea of envy and how human beings desire the envy of others, and how having that right product can achieve this: "publicity is always about social relations, not objects" (Berger, 1972, p. 131). He also notes that "[w]e are now so accustomed to being addressed by these images that we scarcely notice their total impact" (Berger, 1972, p.

130). I believe that these two quotes are accurate when it comes to discussing the media in relation to youth; they are two points that I have observed while working with youth over the past decade while being mindful of the media they consume. Both points served as motivation and a starting place for my research on the advertisements of cellular goods and services providers and the culture of cyber-bullying amongst youth, which will be discussed later in this thesis.

Chapter 4

THE MERGING OF MEDIA AND EDUCATION AND MEASURES TAKEN TO REDUCE ADVERTISING

Introduction

Kincheloe asserts that"[w]e live in an era of disinformation - self-interested data distributed by those with the most power and resources" (Kincheloe, 2008, p. vii). This chapter examines how two successful corporations managed to merge their marketing efforts rather seamlessly with education as well as other means employed by the media to obtain the attention of youth. Measures taken to reduce advertising both to youth and in general will be discussed as will the rationale for corporate opposition to this. This chapter concludes with a discussion of why the youth demographic is important to corporations.

The Merging of Media and Education: Channel One News and Disney English

The purpose of this section is to highlight how two corporations, Channel One and Disney, have taken the education of students by the media to unprecedented levels by formulating models which allow them to have a pedagogical role within the classroom, speaking directly to students as they sit in their desks. By way of providing incentives to underfunded schools across the United States in the case of Channel One and by using a brand known and embraced by youth around the world in the case of Disney, both corporations have been succeeded in bringing their ideologies directly to students in a trusted educational environment where they are obligated to sit up straight and pay attention to the message.

Channel One News was launched in the United States in the early 1990s and was touted by the company itself as age-appropriate for high school students. According to Channel One's website, it aims "to inform, educate and inspire by making news relevant and engaging for young people and sparking discussion around the important issues impacting youth today" (2010, p.1). The program is conveniently delivered to students - along with the all the necessary equipment required to view it as they sit at their desks. Along with news, students also view special segments including "The Play of the Week" (a segment that runs a clip from a high school sporting event), "Glory Road" (in which an individual volunteering their time to better the lives of others is profiled) and the "Question of The Day" (which encourages viewer participation and is related to a recently broadcasted Channel One news story).

Upon further examination of the three seemingly praiseworthy segments discussed above, one learns that the Play of the Week is sponsored by Gatorade, Glory Road is sponsored by the US Marine Corps, and the Question of the Day is sponsored by Cingular Wireless. And the advertising does not stop there. Past guests on Glory Road have included Selena Gomez, a young woman who is introduced as UNICEFs youngest ambassador, but who is also conveniently the star of Disney's Wizards of Waverly Place. Supermodel Tyra Banks also made an appearance to discuss female cliques in high school, which was conveniently the topic of her recently produced movie (available on DVD at the time of filming). A final example includes the presentation of a large Gatorade cooler to the school which had its clip aired on the Play of the Week. Aside from advertising within programming, Channel One also contains regular advertisements between news and other segments, as well.

Although this programming and the required equipment may sound expensive, certainly far outside the budgetary reach of most public schools and many private schools, part of the contract is that schools do not incur any extra costs. All they have to commit to in exchange for this service and the lease of the associated goods is ensure that 80% of classes watch Channel One on 90% of the regular school days (The Center for Commercial Free Education, 2002, p. 2).

Of course, everything comes at a price, and in the end it is the students that are metaphorically paying with their minds. According to Bybee multiple studies show Channel One's programming to be "80 percent advertising hype and 20 percent infotainment" (Bybee, 2006, p. 139). Infotainment is fact-based stories that are relevant only in the realms of entertainment and advertising; a modern day example being TMZ.com. For twelve minutes of most school days, many students whose schools subscribe to this program are being directly targeted by advertisers.

Channel One has a host of critics, including StayFree, a nonprofit magazine "that explores the politics and perversions of mass media and American (consumer) culture" (StayFree, 2009, p. 1). StayFree and The Center for Commercial Free Public Education asserts that not only does Channel One "[exist] to advertise, not to educate," they also "disproportionately [take] advantage of low-income schools, exacerbating unequal education in the United States" and are not "educationally effective" (as cited in Stayfree, 2009, p. 2). They also point out that Channel One "costs the public six full days of learning time each year, one of which is consumed by commercials alone," when the total time spent watching the program is added up over the course of the school year (cited in Stayfree, 2009, p. 2). Nonetheless, Channel One was sold by

founder Christopher Whittle just four years after its nationwide launch for a rumored two hundred fifty million dollars proving that advertising to a youth is a profitable endeavor and is likely here to stay (Lippman, 1994, p. 1).

Founded in 1923, the Walt Disney Company came to be known by children around the globe for its motion pictures. But that is not all Disney sold: fond childhood memories of millions likely include not only outings to the latest Disney movie or watching an old favorite in the family room, but also everything from lunch boxes and t-shirts to Disney-themed days at school and family vacations. It is my view that Disney is in the business of not only telling stories, but of selling both consumer goods and ideological concepts.

In a chapter titled "Are Disney Movies Good for Your Kids?" Henry Giroux noted that:

> "[t]he significance of animated films operate on many registers, but one of the most persuasive is the role they play as the new "teaching machines," as producers of culture. [...] [t]hese films appear to inspire at least as much cultural authority and legitimacy for teaching specific roles, values, and ideals as do the more traditional sites of learning such as the public schools, religious institutions, and the family. (Giroux, 2006, p. 53)

Despite a wide range of criticisms pertaining to the nature of the messages sent in the films - ranging from racism to sexism to heterosexism - many media illiterate Disney fans never notice its shortcomings and are simply captivated by the story, music and fairy tale endings. Fans of any age can be spotted around the world wearing sweatshirts or carrying bags displaying their favorite Disney character or destination.

Having this degree of influence and presence in the global culture wasn't quite enough for Disney, however. Aside from its films, theme parks (in the United States, Tokyo, Paris, Shanghai, and Hong Kong), and impressive amount of merchandise and other undertakings, Disney has set its sights on extending its brand further, launching

several new projects over the past fifteen years. In 1998, Disney Cruise Lines was born, complete with its own private island to dock on in the Bahamas. Guests on the cruise can enjoy "character experiences," dine in a Disney-themed restaurant and take-in live shows such as "Disney Dreams – An Enchanted Classic Celebration" (Walt Disney Corporation, 2010, p.1). The town of Celebration, Florida also came into being during the nineties. Designed and regulated by Disney, Celebration is described on its website as having "successfully combined education, health, community, technology and architecture into a community with a strong sense of self" (Walt Disney Corporation, 2010, p. 1). Along Celebration Avenue, one can find Celebration Town Hall and Celebration Eye Care, and Sycamore Street is the site of Radio Disney ("home of the music that families can enjoy together!") (*Celebration Town Center*, 2011, p. 1). Every town needs a school, and Disney was certainly on top of that aspect of community life.

According to Giroux, Disney has been active in the education system within the United States for some time, sponsoring Teacher of the Year Awards, as well as scholarships and financial aid for students (Giroux, 2006, p.168). But Celebration School, despite being a part of the local school board and following federal curricula, was certainly a major step forward in furthering Disney's interests in the education system and also in actualizing MacLean's previously mentioned concerns exactly forty years prior that there would be an "overlap" between those interested in educating and those interested in furthering corporate interests under the guise of education. Celebration school lists forty-six business partners on its website including Hershey's Ice Cream, Celebration Town Tavern, the Outback Steak House and the Nike Factory store.

In 2008, Disney took a huge step in further involving itself in the education of youth by opening its first school in Shanghai, China. On its website, Disney English boasts of its patented "learning system" called Disney I.S.A (Immersive Storytelling Approach) which they claim is a "Holistic Approach for Language Learning.", Many parents bought into this program, and seemingly saw little problem with having the world's largest media conglomerate educating their children. Disney graduated its first class at the end of the 2009 school year, complete with Mickey Mouse ears graduation hats, and reveled in their perceived success of merging corporate interests and education by opening two more centres in Beijing in 2010. Disney has played an indirect role in educating youth for generations, but it has now found a means to do so directly.

(Disney English, screenshot taken from www.goabroad.com/providers/disney-english, 2010)

Measures Taken to Reduce Advertising

Channel One and Disney are two examples of corporations that developed business models that have permitted them to speak directly to students within a classroom environment. This, however, is the exception and not the rule when it comes to the media's role in educating youth. Most teaching on the part of the media occurs in

less direct fashion and, thanks to concerned parents, teachers, and policy-makers, efforts are being made to keep it outside of the school environment as much as possible. When not in the classroom, however, youth are entertaining themselves with activities such as the Internet, television, and trips to the movie theatre and mall. In each of these places, messages from corporations are placed for youth consumption. An article in the *New York Times*, entitled "Anywhere the Eye Can See, It's Likely to See an Ad" estimated that city dwellers see five thousand advertisements each day (Story, January 15, 2007, p. 1). When inundated with this many traditional types of advertisements (those containing little more than product information or those placed within the rectangular confines of a billboard, for example), it is understandable that the population becomes immune to their effects and messages. From quickly turning the page of a magazine when one sees an advertisement to tuning out billboards altogether, the attention of many, including youth, simply can no longer be attained if these conventional means of advertising are being ignored. Thus, innovative ways to obtain attention and interest must be developed. In response, advertisers must get their attention using more and more creative and outrageous means, a practice known as 'guerrilla marketing'. The term is named after 'guerrilla warfare,' which involves the use of surprise, usually in the form of raids or ambushes, on its targets. Guerrilla marketing tends to be creative, unorthodox and even risqué at times, and thus is particularly effective amongst youth. Examples of guerrilla marketing include: Axe's advertisements masked as directional signage depicting a man running towards an exit followed by women who evidently (given the nature of the products sold) can not get enough of his scent, and images of

Durex condoms painted directly onto areas of city streets which are already textured in such a way that they give the condoms a "rib" or "knob" - like texture.

The same *New York Times* article referenced above also notes that people living in cities thirty years ago viewed three thousand less ads each day as compared to those living in cities today (Story, January 15, 2007, p. 1). In light of the increasing pervasiveness of advertisements, the city of Sao Paulo, Brazil passed a law outlawing advertising in public spaces in 2006. "Visual pollution" was the term used by mayor Gilberto Kassab to describe the over eight thousand billboards erected across the city (Kassab, 2007, p. 1). The EU banned "tobacco advertising in the print media, on radio and over the Internet" and also prohibited "tobacco sponsorship of cross-border cultural and sporting events" in July of 2005, and Canada had passed similar laws nearly a decade earlier (EU News, 2005, p. 1). Well before any students currently enrolled in the Quebec school system were born, this province banned all advertising to children under the age of thirteen under the Quebec Consumer Protection Act and in Ontario, attempts are currently being made to ban junk food advertising to kids. When measures such as these are put into place to prohibit or restrict the ability of corporations to advertise, those pushing these laws through are met with tough resistance from corporate lobbyists. According to The Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, through antics such as, "[s]uing or threatening to sue governments", "[d]rafting and then exploiting tobacco-friendly loophole ridden legislation" and "[c]hallenging ad bans" these lobbyists are often able to ensure that corporate needs are met (The Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, 2008, p. 2).

In addition, accusations of censorship and violations of freedom of speech laws are often made. In Sao Paulo, the Brazilian Association of Advertisers called Mayor Kassab's law "unreal, ineffective and fascist." Berger contends that advertising is usually explained and justified as a competitive medium which ultimately benefits the public (the consumer) and the most efficient manufacturers - and thus the natural economy. It is closely related to ideas about freedom: freedom of choice for the purchaser; freedom of enterprise for the manufacturer. The great hoardings and the publicity neons of the cities of capitalism are the immediate visible signs of 'The Free World' (Berger, 1972, p. 131).

As many subscribe to this notion, regulating and prohibiting advertisements can prove difficult because the belief is that living in a society free of government restrictions is preferable to one where there is much regulation from above.

Resistance on the part of advertisers is driven by one important reality: corporations must reach consumers with their messages in order to sell their goods and/or services. As Naomi Klein noted in her book *No Logo: Taking Aim at Brand Name Bullies*, sound advertising is actually more important than having a sound product:

> Around [the eighties] a new kind of corporation began to rival the traditional all American manufactures for market share; these were the Nikes and Microsofts, and later, the Tommy Hilfigers and Intels. These pioneers made the bold claim that producing goods was only an incidental part of their operations, and that thanks to recent victories in trade liberation and labor-law reform, they were able to have their products made for them by contractors, many of the overseas. What these companies produced primarily were not things, they said, but images of their brands. Their real work lay not in manufacturing but in marketing. This formula, needless to say, has proved very profitable, and its success has companies competing in a race towards weightlessness: whoever owns the least, has the fewest employees on the payroll and produces the most powerful images, as opposed to products, wins the race. (Klein, 2000, p. 4)

The Importance of the Youth Demographic to Corporations

Now that the importance of advertising in general has been established, as well as the necessity to capture youth culture and sell it back to them, the question remains: why market to youth given that nine year olds do not have jobs and seventeen year olds can not cram exorbitant amounts of stuff into their bedrooms? The reality is that while each individual youth may not have substantial buying power, collectively, the youth have an immense influence on the market. Gone are the days when "children were not spoken of as spenders or customers but as savers and future consumers" (McNeal, 2011, p. 1). There are three distinct categories of consumers that advertisers are keenly aware of and each category can be best targeted when consumers are in their youth. These include current market consumers, brand loyalists and purchase influencers.

Estimates vary, but what researchers know is that youth in North America spend billions of their own money annually. The same PBS website which discussed the *Merchants of Cool* noted that:

> [t]eenagers are the hottest consumer demographic in America. At 33 million strong, they comprise the largest generation of teens America has ever seen--larger, even, than the much-ballyhooed Baby Boom generation. Last year, America's teens spent $100 billion, while influencing their parents' spending to the tune of another $50 billion. (*Merchants of Cool*, 2011, p. 1)

In this sense, youth are 'current market consumers' and thus are treated as such. Corporations know that they have desires and have money to spend on these desires and thus target them. This demographic is also important due to the belief that if a corporation establishes brand loyalty at a young age, then an individual will remain loyal for life ('brand loyalists'). This concept is known as "cradle to grave" marketing and, in the eyes of the advertisers, the earlier in life a consumer can be targeted and cultivated, the better. Examples of marketing of this type include Baby Gap,

McDonald's Happy Meals and child-sized shopping carts with a store's logo and "Future Shopper" printed on it. The third and final category is 'purchase influencers': advertisers know that children rarely spend their own money on, for example, cereal, but they do influence what type of cereal a parent purchases. This is why cereal for kids is often advertised directly to kids on a child-centred television network.

After examining these categories of consumers, it is easy to see why corporations target viewers from a young age. If we look at the cultivation theory once again and consider the term "cultivation" in the manner in which it is traditionally referred- the relationship between a farmer and the crops- it is clear there is little distinction to be made between this relationship and the relationship between youth and advertisers. Just as the farmer tends to the crops from an early period in their development in order to ensure that they grow to yield the results that will make him or her a profit... so does the advertiser to the youth.

John Berger stated that

> [t]he purpose of publicity is to make the spectator marginally dissatisfied with his present way of life. Not with the way of life of society, but with his own within it. It suggests that if he buys what it is offering, his life will become better. It offers him an improved alternative to what he is. (Berger, 1972, p. 142)

To the millions of youth who question their place within society and want to better their life, this is an effective means of advertising, to be sure. He also states that advertisements "never speak of the present [...] and always they speak to the future," which is also a concept that is well received by youth (Berger, 1972, p. 130).

Chapter 5

CELLULAR PHONE HISTORY, CULTURE & POLICY DEBATE AND DIGITAL NATIVES VS. DIGITAL IMMIGRANTS IN THE CLASSROOM

Introduction

This chapter will provide a brief overview of the history of cell phones leading up to their role in present-day youth culture. The necessity for teachers to be aware of the prevalence of these and other devices in the classroom as well as their capabilities will be emphasized and then a discussion on the debate of whether or not to permit these devices within the classroom will follow. Finally, this chapter will conclude with an introduction to cyber-bullying. The purpose of this chapter is to further set the groundwork for the following chapter where the aforementioned critical and media theories will be discussed during an analysis of advertisements which serve to cultivate various ideas about cyber-bullying within youth culture.

Cellular Phone History

The origins of the cellular phone can be traced back to the turn of the last century when Canadian inventor Reginald Aubrey Fessenden first experimented with radio telephony and successfully transmitted an audio message without the use of wires in Washington, D.C. on December 23rd, 1900 (Belrose,1995, p.1). Similar technology was employed during both World Wars, as this type of communication was more practical than those devices requiring wires, which could be easily damaged during combat. Over the past sixty years, the desire on the parts of both innovators in the field and the general public to have wireless communication has intensified and even somewhat of an obsession, with early interest placed on the notion of having a phone in

automobiles, as depicted in the movie *Sabrina* in 1954 and in the 1963 James Bond film *From Russia with Love.*

Bell Labs, Motorola and AT&T were on the forefront of the race to create such a product and are each credited with further advancing wireless communication in its early days of corporate development, although the Center for Science, Technology, and Economic Development contends that :

> [a]lthough several key developments during the 1960s and 1970s led to important supporting technologies that helped make cellular telephone systems a reality; no single technological "breakthrough" is responsible for the appearance of cellular systems [...]" (Center for Science, Technology, and Economic Development, 2011, p. 1)

and defines cell phones as follows:

> [...] cellular telephone systems are differentiated from their predecessors ... by the ability to provide mobile telephone service to a large number of mobile users (particularly in urban areas), as well as to permit these users to move freely and rapidly without significant service degradation almost without geographical limit. The quality of cellular telephone connections exceeds that of predecessor systems and frequently approaches that of land line telephone conversations. (Center for Science, Technology, and Economic Development, 2011, p. 6)

The evolution of cellular networks has been divided into four generations based on their ever-increasing abilities and innovations. In chronological order need dates we don't know if this is descending or ascending, these include: Analog Cellular Networks, Digital Networks, High Speed IP Data Networks and the latest generation know as All IP Data Networks or simply 4G. While the specifics of each generation is beyond the scope of this thesis, what is important to acknowledge is that the most recent generations, along with advances in cellular and smart phone technology, have permitted access to the Internet, opening up new possibilities for network subscribers. Smart phones are handheld computers with Internet access (assuming a customer pays their service provider for this plan or has access to wireless Internet) which, of course,

also function as phones. These devices also allow users such capabilities as capturing high quality photo images and video, which can be quickly and easily transmitted either via text message or over the Internet. For simplicity's sake, within this thesis, smart phones will include those which have Internet access capabilities and cellular (or cell) phones are those without this capability. Not all youth have cellular or smart phones but any teacher can attest that the number of youth bringing either of these devices into the classroom (and, of late, more specifically smart phones) is on the rise. A primary focus of this chapter will be on the necessity for 'digital immigrants' (parents and youth sector workers who are not overly familiar with technology) to understand the capabilities, implications and consequences of these devices and the potential negative affect they have on the lives of youth (or 'digital natives'; those who were born more recently and thus have been interacting with technology most of their lives) (Prensky, 2001, p. 1).

Phones and Youth Culture

Society's obsession with wireless communication and its associated devices is not a new phenomena, but I would argue that the obsession with and attachment to them has exacerbated itself almost at the rate in which the technological advances have proliferated. Many youth and adults alike would find it difficult to go about their lives for an extended period of time without the capabilities that their devices provide (mobility, text messaging, and Internet access, just to name a few). Most now consider the notion of keeping in touch on the go (via access to e-mail, micro-blogging or social networking) and navigating wirelessly through their world/day (via an Internet search or map application) to be essential to their lives. These capabilities and countless others are

those which, once made available to the youth generation, become a staple of their cellular and smart phone usage habits.

Social critic and media theorist Neil Postman coined the term 'technophiles' and described those who "gaze on technology as a lover does on his beloved, seeing it without blemish and entertaining no apprehension for the future" as such (Postman as quoted in Graham, 1999, p. 9). He contended that technophiles are those who believe that the technology is the answer to all problems and can only improve society for the better. The term technophiles would certainly apply to many digital who both appreciate and celebrate what their cellular or smart phones bring to their lives. Postman's work examined the negative implications of technology "mostly because everyone else seems to speak about the advantages technology will bring [and] [s]omeone needs to mention what may be lost" (Postman as quoted by PBS, 1996). Some of the negative impacts which Postman alludes to will be discussed in both this chapter and the next.

Phones in the Classroom: Digital Natives vs. Digital Immigrants

A CBC "In Depth" article on Technology began with the following two sentences: "Getting and holding kids' attention can be a challenge. Keeping them entertained might be described as a Herculean task" (Khan, 2007, p. 1). Upon reading the title, one might assume that this article would be about the difficulty teachers have in maintaining the attention of their students due to the influence of the media and/or technology in their lives. Indeed, many teachers face a challenge when it comes to competing with these devices for students' attention in the classroom and I believe that there are two main reasons for this:

1) The unfamiliarity or obliviousness on the part of the teacher with regard to the capabilities of these devices and how they are being used in the classroom. (In this scenario, the teacher is unaware of what students are up to).

2) The inability to compete with these devices due to the desire on the parts of students to use them. (In this instance, the teacher may be quite aware of what students are doing with their devices, but is still unable to prevent them from doing so). In either case, lessons, group cohesion, student focus and a host of other factors can be negatively affected.

With regards to point number one, unfamiliarity of the capabilities of particular devices are not only the purview of older educators or those who may be out of touch with more modern technology. The reality for many teachers is that it is often difficult to keep up with the ever-changing capabilities of cell phones and, in turn, how students are using them. In January of 2009, I considered myself to be a relatively in-touch-with-youth-culture kind of teacher while teaching art at a private high school in Montreal. Due to their high socio-economic status, many students were often able to obtain whatever they wanted quite quickly after it hit the market, and the iPod Touch and iPhone were no exceptions. Because I did not own nor know anyone who owned these devices and had not read up on their capabilities, I knew little about them. When the students asked if they could use their new devices to listen to music in class while working, I acquiesced. It took me some time to recognize that many of them were actually using these Apple devices - which I thought had the capacity to do little more than play music, as my older model Apple MP3 player did - to play games, go online, send texts and I'm certain a host of other activities which were not conducive to being

productive in class. I got wise after noticing how little work they were producing as well as how much time they spent engaging with their touch screens. I had began to wonder why they felt the need to change the songs so often and was constantly telling them to "just pick a playlist, put it down and do your work!"

Of course the school I was teaching at had a "no phone" policy as most others do. However, this was loosely enforced in the hallways and the classrooms by both teachers and administrators. I made the decision to allow these devices in the classroom for several reasons:

1) So that students weren't trying to use them behind my back
2) Because I believe that quietly listening to the music of one's choice can be beneficial in a creative setting and
3) I am not convinced that an all-out ban on these devices in the classroom is the best approach (to be discussed later in this chapter).

Reason 2, regarding the difficulty teachers face with regards to phones in the classroom, is the inability to compete with these devices due to the desire on the parts of students to use them on a regular basis. Aside from the desire to covertly listen to music, students could also be inspired to use their phones for more disruptive behaviours such as taking pictures of their classmates or teachers or even themselves in compromising or unflattering situations and then distribute these images. For example, students can slip a camera up a female's skirt, film a teacher yelling at a class or even engage in a practice known as "sexting" whereby a youth takes a photo of him or herself naked or simply photographs their genitalia and then sends it to another youth, usually a romantic partner. This may initially seem unlikely in a classroom, but I would argue that it is not

a stretch to believe that a male student sitting in math class could send a text message to his girlfriend in science class requesting that she place the phone down her shirt or up her skirt, take a photo and send it to him.

Many parents and teachers would attest that the best indicator of just how important a cell phone is to a youth can be revealed through their reaction to an adult trying to confiscate it. While teaching at a school in Montreal's East End, I witnessed the most severe reaction to any attempt I had ever made at confiscation.(I say attempt because often times obtaining a cell phone from a student does result in all-out refusal, which usually leads to a trip to the principal's office.) This particular occasion occurred on a Friday afternoon after a female high school student made a second phone call in the class in which I was substituting after receiving a (generous) prior warning in response to the first usage.

I walked up to the student in a non-threatening, yet no-nonsense manner, and told her to give me her phone while holding out my hand to receive it. Not only did she refuse to comply, and started to argue (which was nothing unusual), but she also became increasingly anxious about the prospect of not having her phone for any amount of time. In a shrill voice, she asked if I would return it at the end of class. Not one to bargain or discuss after giving directions (not to mention a prior warning), she soon realized that I might take her phone to the office after obtaining it from her (according school procedure) and that she would not get it back until after the weekend. As this reality sunk in, she made a decision: instead of risking not having her phone for the next three nights, she instead left the classroom thirty minutes before the school day was over, taking with her the phone and her other belongings, knowing full well that she would

face consequences from the administration upon her return to school on Monday morning. To many digital immigrants, this course of action would have been unfathomable but to this digital native it was necessary to ensure that she was not without her cell phone for any great length of time.

Even if phones are rather effectively banned in the classroom by teachers who are aware of the negative potential of these devices (and will thus be more apt to curb their use in the classroom) students will still be very strongly drawn to them, and thus many will find a way to use them regardless. The reality is that many students resist learning the provincially-mandated, teacher-delivered curriculum and, as a result, become disengaged, seeking other things to do as opposed to listening and/or participating in class. Some recognize that they can learn about the topics they desire simply by doing an Internet search on their smart phone at the back of the class, or, should they not be inclined seek this self-driven knowledge, others still may decide that texting friends or playing games is more entertaining than remaining attentive to what the teacher is saying.

To be sure, students have been engaging in behaviours to keep themselves entertained as opposed to engaged in lessons for years. Note passing, paper airplane flying, spit-balling and, more recently, playing with electronic toys or video games were all ways to entertain one's self while waiting for the bell to ring. The father of a friend of mine recalls bringing a transistor radio to class in the early 1970's and covering his one ear with his hand to hide the earphone in order to hear the play-by-play of baseball games. Although this certainly would have had negative effects on his learning that day, the technology used by students today has the potential to have much more serious

outcomes on both the academic and social lives of students, which will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Many teachers find the increased cell phone usage amongst youth rude and disruptive, whereas students see it as increasingly common-place and acceptable. I have witnessed students asking both other teachers and myself, in all sincerity, what the problem is with texting or calling someone in the school hallways or even in the classroom during instructional time. Possible reasons for this include the increased prevalence of these devices in everyday society and the media's cultivation of the notion that their usage in inappropriate places is actually okay (to be discussed more in Chapter Six). During the 2009/2010 school year, I taught a student I'll call Alex who came up to me partway through an English class and reported that his friend Andy wanted him to pick-up his English paper from me because he needed to re-do it that night. When I told him that Andy could come up and get it himself, he looked at me like I was crazy and told me that Andy was not in that particular class. He was right. Andy was in another English class that I taught and had sent Alex a text seconds before with his request. Alex thought nothing of the fact that he was following-up on this in-class text message request from his friend.

Returning to the CBC article, the sentence in the article following the aforementioned "Getting and holding kids' attention can be a challenge. Keeping them entertained might be described as a Herculean task. [...] [b]ut that's the proposition facing cellphone carriers as they seek to capture the youth market" (Khan, 2007, p. 1). The article goes on to discuss how difficult it is for cellular service providers to maintain the "fickle" youth market (Khan, 2007, p. 3). As challenging as they have it, and

because of the devices and services they are promoting for youth consumption, teachers are having a difficult time maintaining the elusive attention of the youth in the classroom. It is a sobering thought to realize that teachers with few resources and little money who are just trying to keep their students engaged are up against national and transnational corporations with big budgets who were also desperate to get the same kids' attention. The reality of the situation as it pertains to cell phones in the classroom is that the answer to the question "May I have your attention, please?" is increasingly becoming a resounding "No."

A report from the Pew Research Center in New York discusses the differences between adult cell phone users and youth cell phone users and the findings illustrate the extent to which cell phones are central sites of youth culture. According to the 2010 report:

> [t]eens send and receive text messages in numbers that are orders of magnitude greater than what is sent and received by adults. The average teen (even including teens without cell phones) sends and receives five times more text messages a day than a typical adult. A teen typically sends or receives 50 text messages a day, while the average adult sends or receives 10. Fully 31% of teens send more than 100 texts a day and 15% send more than 200 a day, while just 8% and 5% of adults send that many, respectively. (Pew Research Center, 2010, p.17)

The article also notes that most teens "appreciate the ways [a cell phone] keeps them in touch, makes them feel safer, and [...] the way their cell phone makes it easier to change plans on the fly" (Pew Research Center, 2010, p. 22).

Changing and making plans on the fly is a key aspect of both cell and smart phone usage for the youth demographic. Based on my experiences both teaching full-time and substituting in multiple Montreal-area high schools, students often text one another their current or soon-to-be whereabouts. Word of parties, gatherings and even after-school brawls can also be quickly spread via text message using cellular phones. Smart phones

go one step further and access social networking sites such as Facebook where events can be created and shared as well. This prevailing trend of youth using these devices to communicate for purposes of meeting up leads to the question: what happens to youth without these technologies? This is referred to as the "digital divide" and has become increasingly recognized as problematic in Western youth culture.

The Digital Divide

Mehra et al. defined the digital divide as "the troubling gap between those who use computers and the Internet and those who do not" (Mehra et al., 2004, p. 2). The reality is that those who are of lower socio-economic status are less likely to be able to afford the Internet in their homes or to own mobile devices with or without access to the Internet. This divide affects those without access to the Internet in multiple ways, including, for example, access to government services for unemployed or disadvantaged citizens which are increasingly becoming available exclusively on the Internet, obviously to the exclusion of those who need them most. This is an issue that has been raised in Western politics since the early nineteen nineties right up to present time, with then President-elect Obama stating the following in a 2008 campaign speech: "Here in the country that invented the Internet, every child should have the chance to get online" (Obama, video file, 2008). Those without the means to access the Internet are also are falling further behind those who do have access with regard to social opportunities, access to information and the acquiring of skills associated with using the Internet and the related technology.

An excellent example of the negative social effect of the digital divide with regard to youth who do not own cellular and smart phones is provided by Hoechsmann.

He contends that youth no longer wish to call their friends on landline phones because parents are more likely to pick up; they instead prefer to send text messages or messages via social networking sites directly to cellular phones which can be instantly accessed by the owners of these devices without parental interference (Hoeschmann, personal communication, 2010). Thus, a youth without a cell phone will not only be missing out on text messages and updates from social networking sites, but will likely not even receive a phone call notifying them of a social event.

Phones in the Classroom: A Policy Debate

Once those teaching and working with youth understand the extent to which these devices are a central component of youth culture, the question that remains to be answered is: what should the policy be with regard to cell phone usage in the classroom? Rules in every school at which I have worked in Montreal and undoubtedly the majority of those across North America are something to the effect of "out of sight, out of mind" or "we see it, we take it." According to the student agenda from Vincent Massey Collegiate High School in Montreal "[s]tudents are not permitted to use iPods, cell phones or cameras in class" (Vincent Massey Collegiate High School, 2010, p. 12). (Although it is worth nothing that this is a poorly written rule as it implies that students can engage with other MP3 devices provided they are not of the Apple variety.) But there is a growing number of teachers, policy makers and academics alike who argue that permitting, encouraging and even incorporating cell phones into the classroom is not only a practical, but also a responsible approach to education. For example, Ottawa-area high school math teacher Robert Tang obtained iPhone touches for each of his students for the purpose of enhancing in-class lessons. According to CNN Student

News, one student took advantage of "the iPod touch's camera as he record[ed] part of Tang's lecture while taking notes. Another student talks about how useful FaceTime is when collaborating on homework. She can call up a classmate and talk face-to-face and even use the camera to show work on math problems" (CNN, 2010, p. 1). This way of thinking acknowledges the fact that many students are already using these devices in their daily lives and that this technology can thus serve as an educational tool when utilized with adequate guidelines and supervision within the classroom. Of course, offering this in school also serves to reduce the digital divide for those who are not using these devices in their daily lives.

Perhaps more important is in this debate, however, is the acknowledgment that because these devices are such a prevalent part of the daily lives and culture of youth, and as many will use them as adults in their careers, that it is the responsibility of the school system to teach students how to use this technology in an efficient, appropriate and socially acceptable manner. Other commonly cited benefits of incorporating these devices into the classroom include increased motivation and engagement, the capacity for these devices to make lessons more applicable and hands-on, and the fact that this initiative has the potential to come at little to no fiscal cost to the school boards, provided the majority of the parents are able to pay for both the device and the service (although this last point is not a possibility in all schools, of course).

There is much criticism for and resistance against this shift in the way of thinking about this policy in schools including the notion that allowing part of youth culture into the classroom will contribute to the breakdown of classroom culture. This way of thinking aligns with the notion that "the streets don't belong in the classroom"

and is similar to the belief that allowing students to wear whatever they wish (as opposed to school uniforms) will have the same eroding effect on the classroom environment. Other considerations include the possibility of reduced focus, the potential for students to find themselves engaged in activities on the device that are not conducive to learning and increased instances of cyber-bullying, which will be defined and discussed in the following section and examined further with regard the cultivation effect of the media in the Chapter Six.

Cyber-bullying

Shaheen Shariff, a leading scholar in the field of cyber-bullying, acknowledges that varying definitions have been put forth to define cyber-bullying and notes that it could have been Bill Belsey who initially coined this term. Belsey defines cyber-bullying as follows:

> Cyber-bullying involves the use of information and communication technologies such as email, cellphones and pager messages, instant messaging, defamatory personal Web sites, and defamatory online personal polling Web sites, to support, deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or group this is intended to harm others. (Belsey as quoted in Shariff, 2008 p. 29)

Shariff herself defines peer-to-peer cyber-bullying "as comprising covert, psychological bullying, conveyed through the electronic media such as cellphones, weblogs, and web sites, online chat rooms, 'MUD' rooms (multi-user domains where individuals take on different characters) and Xangas (online personal profiles where some adolescents create lists of people they do not like" and noted further that she would also include social network sites such as Facebook to this definition (Shariff, 2008, p. 30). Definitions of cyber-bullying are in a constant state of flux due to the fact that the nature of cyber-

bullying itself is ever-changing as new technologies emerge and alter the scene tremendously on a regular basis, In the following chapter, cyber-bullying will be discussed in more detail and an analysis of ads that serve to normalize and either condone or outright endorse cyber-bullying will be discussed.

Chapter 6

TYING IT ALL TOGETHER: CRITICAL PEDAGOGY, YOUTH, MEDIA, CULTIVATION THEORY, CYBER-BULLYING, AND MORE

Introduction

This chapter will examine advertisements from national and transnational cellular goods and service providers and how they affect youth. The advertisements in this chapter have been divided into two categories according to my assessment: those that endorse cyber-bullying and those that outright condone cyber-bullying. After the advertisements themselves have been discussed, they will be correlated to real-word instances of cyber-bullying in order to further illustrate two main points in this chapter:

1) That acts of cyber-bullying in cellular phone advertisements are portrayed as funny (but that this is not the case in real life).

2) That acts of cyber-bullying in cell phone ads are always portrayed as being without consequence (but that this is not always the case in real life).

The final chapter of this thesis will emphasizes the need for media literacy in the classroom.

Methodology

The following words were used in various combinations while searching for cellular phone advertisements on YouTube: “funny,” “hilarious,” “cell phone,” “mobile,” “commercial,” “ad” and “advertisement.” These words (including synonyms and, in one case, an abbreviation) were chosen after conducting various searches on YouTube and following the “suggestions” links provided by the site. I was able to determine that these words appeared often in titles that I concluded were posted, shared

and commented on by youth. (This was deducted by examining both the usernames and the textspeak of those writing.) The recognition of these trending words in combination with the youth engagement with these particular ads is what led me to focus my research on these videos, given that the purpose of my research is to examine what youth were viewing. The hits resulting from this search were difficult to accurately count as many were shared numerous times, with similar titles.

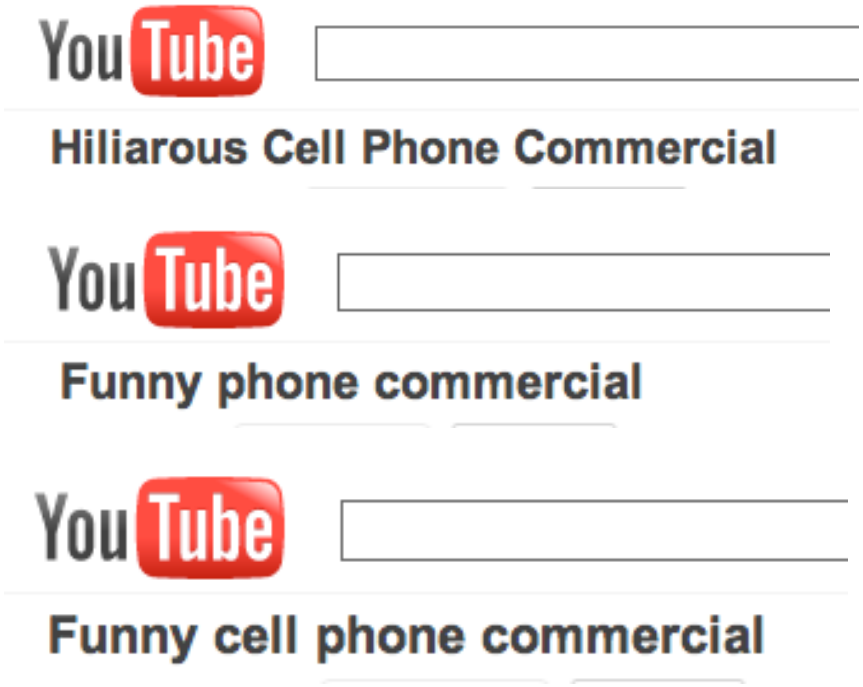
All ads were examined and documented, and sorted into either 'condoner' or 'endorser' categories based on the extent to which they promoted the acts depicted. Although it was not my initial intention to sort the ads into these two categories, it became increasingly clear as I watched that they each fit into one category or the other. Some ads merely incorporated inappropriate use of these cellular devices without having it be the main focus of the piece, and these were termed "condoners." For example a Sprint advertisement depicts two men engaging in a face-to-face discussion in a locker room with their cell phones out; this is implicitly portraying this type of behaviour as acceptable, when in actuality is not - this practice is prohibited as a means of ensuring that inappropriate photos which can be distributed in various ways are not being taken. Others (the "endorsers") focus specifically on inappropriate acts, often times presenting explicit "how-to" guides demonstrating how to use the cellular device to carry out an inappropriate act. And example of this is one particular Rogers ad that depicts someone taking an unflattering photo of someone, immediately posting it to Facebook and then continuing to discuss and demonstrate how others can comment on the photo so that the person in it is uncomfortable with these actions.

The ads were then selected for inclusion in this thesis based on both diversity the behaviours portrayed and diversity of country of origin. Limitations to this methodology include the anonymity of YouTube (for example corporations could post videos using titles and usernames that youth would be drawn to in order to generate more hits) and lack of empirical research.

An Introduction to the Advertisements Put Forth by Cellular Goods and Services Providers

As previously discussed, Miller distinguishes between first and second order cultivations effects (Miller, 2004, p. 287). I will relate these two terms to the advertisements produced by national and transnational cellular goods and service providers serve to normalize, endorse and even condone acts of cyber-bullying amongst youth.

Using a cell phone in a locker room, capturing unsuspecting people in a photo or on video, calling or texting others who do not want this contact, and fabricating inaccurate pictures are all actions which are frowned upon and even prohibited in society. However, these scenarios play themselves out in a casual, harmless manner in the advertisements analysed in this thesis; advertisements, which, regardless of their intended demographics or geographical origin, are easily accessible on YouTube by North American teens. A quick YouTube search yields an abundance of ads by Bell, Virgin, T-Mobile, Rogers, and other such national and trans-national corporations, posted both for promotional purposes by media representatives as well as independent members who appreciate their humour. In fact, the majority of these advertisements have the word “funny” (or a synonym) in their YouTube title and/or comments.



(YouTube Titles for Cellular Phone Advertisements, screenshots taken from YouTube.com, retrieved August 27, 2010)

The cellular goods and service providers responsible for these ads, however, are not actively promoting appropriate and responsible use of emerging technologies. Instead they are inciting inappropriate usage (often with serious or harmful consequences) and thus require critical analysis by scholars, responsible adults in the lives of youth and youth themselves in order to recognise what messages are being infused into today's culture. Steinberg and Kincheloe first acknowledged and wrote of the cultural concept they termed *Kinderculture* in their book of the same title. They examined the role the media has played in affecting change in modern day childhood and noted in their second edition of this book that they "are still amazed by how many child professionals remain oblivious to these social and cultural alterations" (Steinberg and Kincheloe, 1997, p.1).

As discussed earlier, by creating their own media (advertisements) corporations are able to present and introduce their values into society. John Berger noted that it

> is true that in publicity one brand of manufacturer, one firm, competes with another; but it is also true that every publicity image confirms and enhances every other. Publicity is not merely an assembly of competing messages: it is a language in itself which is always being used to make some general proposal. (Berger, 1972, p. 129)

And, despite being in competition with one another, corporations want to be sending and normalising the same messages. The message, when it comes to providers of cellular goods and services, is that what they have to offer is both enjoyable and essential (and never, ever harmful or with negative consequences). Hoechsmann examined early advertisements and the resulting emergence of advertising as a pedagogy and found that "early advertisers positioned themselves as a significant source of moral and intellectual instruction" (Hoechsmann, 2007, p. 657). This trend continues today, as is clear in the analysis the three ads that follow, which I have termed "condoners" of cyber-bullying and other inappropriate behaviours.

Advertisements That Condone Cyber-Bullying and Related Behaviours

(Screenshots of T-Mobile advertisement taken from http://www.youtube.com/watch?index=11&feature=PlayList&v=ZUHT-p8svkc&list=PL08164B0202B6C820, retrieved August 27, 2010)

A family of four is having dinner when the mother casually asks her two teenagers if they have "picked their five yet" (referring to T-Mobile's MyFaves plan whereby customers can make unlimited calls to any five numbers of their choice). The

daughter responds in the affirmative and lists off her five female friends she has selected. Her younger brother replies that he has also selected his five, and recites the same five names his sister had, adding "your friends are hot" as she glares at him in disgust. She then turns to her father and asks if he is planning on intervening, to which he casually responds "maybe you should have uglier friends." The critical viewer is left wondering just how frequently this young boy will be making unsolicited contact with the girls he has included in his plan. Many youth will simply receive the message that these parents (portrayed as entirely "typical") have no problem with their son contacting others at his whim, thus normalizing this behaviour.

(Screenshots from Sprint advertisement, taken from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8N9gSS_HRcE,, retrieved August 27, 2010)

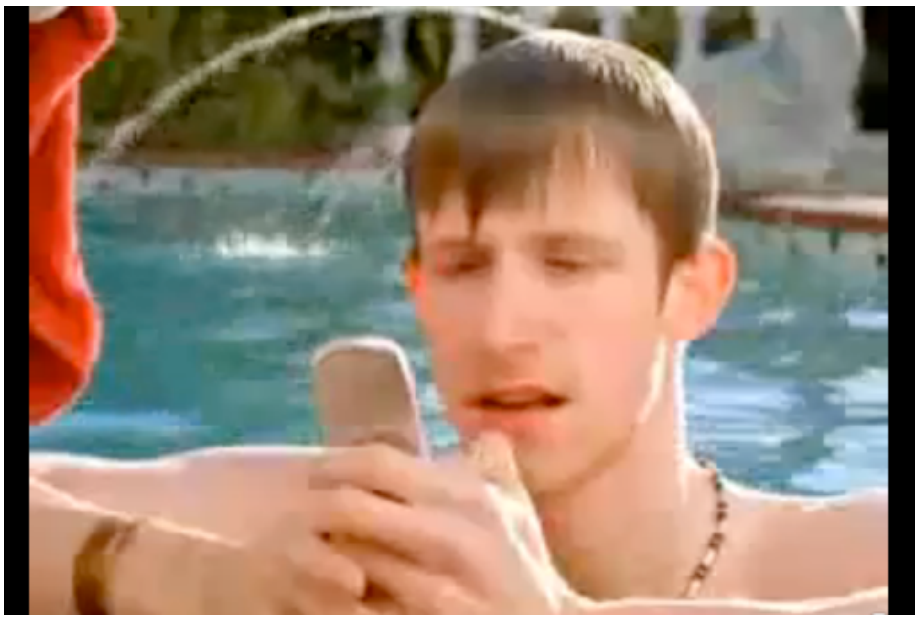
A men's locker room is the setting of a Sprint advertisement and it features two men with their phones in hand (one flipped open), discussing what their phones can do (culminating with Man A throwing his phone at Man B's head after claiming that his phone had "theft deterrent" and challenging Man B to try to steal his wallet). As in most fitness facilities, one could imagine that outside this particular locker room is a sign that reads something to the effect of "cellular and recording devices prohibited" which was obviously conveniently ignored by these particular patrons. Sprint likely left this detail out because they know that more people using their devices in more places means increased profit for them. So why not create advertisements depicting the use of them in socially unacceptable places in attempts to make this practice more socially acceptable? By not doing so, Sprint is condoning and normalizing the act of using phones in a locker room, which can often lead to inappropriate usage such as filming or photographing another in a compromising position and then sharing it via social media.

(Screenshots from Rogers advertisement, taken from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=75S5HaW5-Btws, August 27, 2010)

A young man heads home for the holidays and brings along with him a life-sized cardboard cutout of his brother, who is unable to attend that year. He ensures that this cutout makes it into numerous photo-ops with family and friends and then sends a photo album back to his brother at the end of the holidays. This is a feel-good advertisement that likely leaves many viewers feeling warm, fuzzy and nostalgic while yearning for the time when they, too, could be together with loved ones over the holidays. (And maybe they, too, can buy a camera phone from Rogers and do something equally as nice for someone special in the spirit of the season.) The implications in this otherwise rather innocent advertisement, however, are worth examining. Viewers are led to believe that falsifying photos is not only easy (which it can be, especially using programs such as Photoshop) but also harmless (which is certainly not always the case).

Critics of these interpretations thus far will likely argue that too much is being read into these ads; they are clearly not meant to be taken seriously. They simply serve to transmit a marketing message and earn a laugh along the way. For this reason, the above advertisements were termed “condoners” as opposed to those that I will now turn: “endorsers”. These ads clearly promote cyber-bullying and related behaviours as acceptable, and even cool.

Advertisements That Endorse Cyber-Bullying and Related Behaviours



(Screenshots from So Hi advertisement, taken from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1QkJGqr4Ir4&feature=related, retrieved August 27, 2010)

A young man who is obviously hungover and the host of a party the previous night steps over an empty case of beer and kicks over a bottle in his living room as he

makes his way out to his backyard swimming pool. Placing his cell phone and towel poolside, he bellyflops into the water and proceeds to expel some out of his mouth in a fountain-like manner as he floats on his back. His phone rings and he swims to the side to answer. He flips open his phone to reveal a photo message showing his friends peeing in his pool the night before. Realisation hits, and our main character's face sinks as he puts two and two together. The ad ends shortly thereafter, potentially with the viewer laughing and never wondering how this young man might feel as a result of being the brunt of his buddies' joke.

(Screenshots from Virgin advertisement, taken from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hi7r54TBf-A&feature=related, retrieved August 27, 2010)

In a Virgin advertisement from India the notion of "identity play" is introduced. Identity play is a term used to describe the practice of taking on the identity of another person, real or fictional. Because this can be done online and through use of various other means of technology relatively anonymously, it is seen as being low risk for the perpetrator, yet it can have an extremely negative impact on its victims. Identity play is a common theme in several ads, but in a manner which makes light of this phenomenon.

In this particular advertisement, an accountant pulls from his sock a crumpled flier with a phone number and "CANDY FOXXX CALL ME" printed across the top and he proceeds to dial from his office phone. It becomes clear to the viewer that this geeky accountant who put his wife's picture face down on his desk is actually speaking to a young man (emulating a woman's voice) as his friends sit nearby and laugh. The "woman" asks the accountant what he's wearing and tells him that he must be "good with figures," given his profession. Virgin was advertising a promotion that allowed

customers to get paid for receiving incoming calls, so that is why this particular customer went to the length of having printing off XXX promotional fliers displaying his number. Unlike real instances of identity play, however, there seems to be no negative repercussions, despite, perhaps confusion on the part of the accountant depicted in this advertisement after nothing materialised as a result of his phone call.

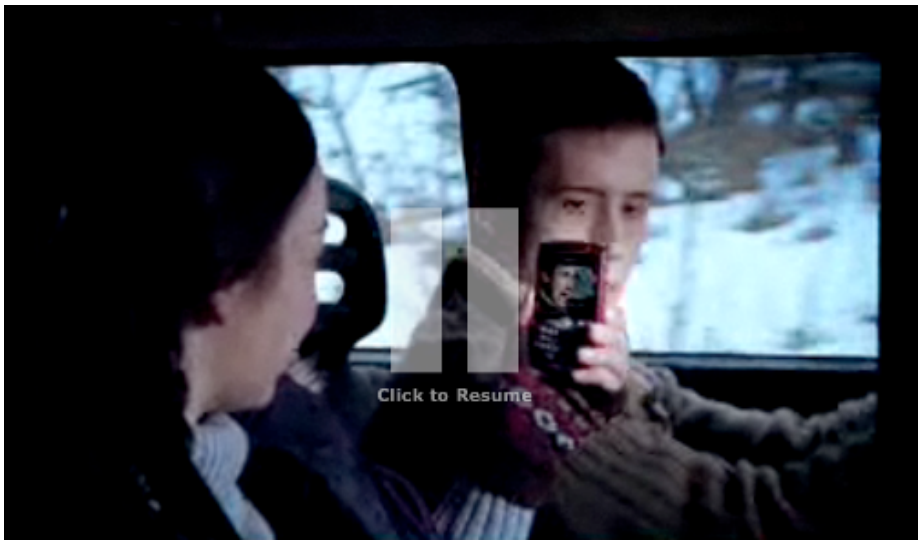
(Screenshots from SFR advertisement, taken from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RzBiGo4FKSE, 2010)

The most disturbing ad I came across was an ad from France that begins when a man notices an attractive female asleep on an airplane with an empty seat beside her. After glancing over his shoulder several times, the man slowly creeps up the aisle and lowers himself into the vacant chair. He reclines (leering at her all the while) so that he is face-to-face with the unsuspecting woman whose body is completely turned toward the once empty seat. She does not stir. He takes out his phone, puts his face up close to hers, smiles broadly and takes a picture. The woman adjusts herself slightly in her sleep as he sends the photo to his buddy, who spits out his coffee in disbelief upon viewing it. Back on the plane, the woman's new seat-mate pulls her blanket down to expose her bare shoulder and she moves closer to him in her sleep. The man moves in with his lips pursed for the ultimate shot to send to his incredulous friend. Just then his phone rings (guess who?) and the woman wakes to find a strange man's face just millimetres from her own. She covers her mouth in surprise and the man quickly and nonchalantly tells her that she was snoring a little. She apologises, draws the blanket tightly around her and moves away from him with a confused and embarrassed look on her face. Based on the comments posted below this video on YouTube, many found this quite humorous. But how many men were inspired by this ad and felt empowered to do something similar, given how it was presented as harmless and without consequences? And how many women would feel entirely violated if something similar happened to them? Below is a screen shot of several YouTube comments from said advertisement:

alcastuk 2 years ago 2	:)))))))))))))))))))))))) i cnt stop laughin....
fuckineah 2 years ago 5	ROFLMFAO FUCKIN AWSUM!!!!!
mishaal1 2 years ago 2	oh gosh,Legend,Absolute Legend!
leogordon 2 years ago 2	hahaha
HugsNTugs 3 years ago 2	ROFLROFLROFL.
pherydust 3 years ago	ca c'est drole!!! je l'aime
Irvestorm 3 years ago	loooolz gotta try that :D 5/5
u8qctph4 3 years ago	yea man me too ;p
in2dax 3 years ago	hhaha lol
HemGlassBilen73 3 years ago 2	woaw:D 5/5

(Screenshots from YouTube comments on the SFR video also posted on YouTube)

By reading the following comments, it is clear to see that how this ad serves to cultivate the notion that such an action is okay and acceptable in society (as per Miller's 2nd order cultivation effects, 2004).



(Screenshots from Rogers advertisement, taken from http://www.metacafe.com/watch/1126828/rogers_wireless_facebook_ad/, retrieved August 27, 2010)

A little closer to home, a Rogers' advertisement featured a group of five friends travelling in a car, listening to music. The female passenger captured a goofy, unflattering photo of the male driver as he sang along. Below is what transpired:

> Driver: Wait -- Whoa, What are you doing with that?
> Passenger: Well, first I'm going to put it on my Facebook page like this ... [uses her camera phone to update her Facebook page] ... then all my friends will see it and laugh... [friends laugh as they are able to instantly view this new post]. ... They'll

> make some funny comments on my wall ... [friends do so] ... and then I'll get to have a laugh! ... Oh that is funny!
> Driver: You're laughing at me? [looking anxious, as he does throughout the ad]
> Passenger: No... With you ... [with a slight roll of her eyes as she lies to her friend]
> (Rogers advertisement, retrieved from Metacafe, recorded by author, 2010)

This ad left little to the imagination regarding exactly what one could do with the technology (it was a step-by-step guide to cyber-bullying) and concluded with the slogan "Now you can upload pictures and tell the whole story as it happens." It received criticism for its content, was removed from television and is difficult (if not impossible) to find on YouTube.

I have already mentioned the use of humour as a possible rebuttal to why the "condoning" ads could be regarded as harmless, but once both the condoners and the endorsers are examined in relation to actual events, the correlation between what is being portrayed and what is actually occurring with increasing frequency becomes clear. Of course, the repercussions can be far worse than depicted in the advertisements. In fact, none of the advertisements discussed previously, nor any of the other ads researched but not discussed here ever reveal what happens after the harmless, humorous act is committed. In the case of these advertisements, the media plays a role in normalising these behaviours and downplaying their severity through a combination of repetition, humour and perceived lack of consequences. Once the idea that these acts are commonplace, funny and harmless has been infused into the culture, these acts become more widely practiced, often without question.

Relating Actions Portrayed in Advertisements to Actions Youth are Taking in Reality

Instead of simply having their phones out in locker rooms as in the first advertisement discussed, youth are taking it one step further and using them to snap inappropriate photos of friends and enemies alike, often posting them or forwarding them instantly for others to see. Taking photos or videos in another previously unfathomable location, the classroom, is also very common, as is evident from preforming a YouTube search with key words 'teacher yelling'. Many youth will capture their teachers giving an angry lecture or in a compromising position. Often these end up being posted on YouTube, and all have the potential to wreak havoc on the teacher's career. For example, in a Montreal area high school, a Facebook group devoted to a teacher's backside was created after a student took a picture of her from behind during class. Since this incident, I have taken on a long-term teaching contract at the school where this event took place. Staff members told me that this incident caused rifts amongst staff as well as between staff and administration due to perceived inaction with regard to this situation. As a result, numerous staff members boycotted the prom that year to protest the administration's refusal to ban the offending students from attending prom themselves.

Although there may not be an individual somewhere who added several "hot" older girls to his cellular plan so that he could have unlimited contact with them, rest assured that there are numerous individuals making excessive contact with others who do not wish to be contacted, especially through social media sites such as Facebook. Unsolicited and harassing instant messages from female classmates drove a male teen

from Virginia to suicide in October 2003. The "Fave 5" advertisement helped send the message that this is acceptable.

Each day youth across North America receive a photo message depicting "friends" doing something equivalent to peeing in their pool. But what are the repercussions? Does it end there, or does the victim seek revenge? What is the outcome when all is said and done? Many female-identified players who regularly play the online first-person-shooter game World of Warcraft have become accustomed to receiving harassing photo messages. Male players will send private messages containing images of their genitalia, not for purposes of "picking-up" this individual for a date or sexual encounter, but purely for purposes of intimidation and assertion of power (Ruth, 2010, personal communication). The female player's face, in this instance, might fall just as the character who had his pool peed in. But unlike the fictional character, the female player will likely be far more affected by the action against her.

Identity play, portrayed as a harmless, humorous pastime in the Virgin Mobile advertisement, made the daily life for Montreal teen Amy Boucher nearly unbearable. After accidentally angering another teen in an online art forum, she became the victim of an online campaign against her that included a group of youth posting and writing to others on the site under Amy's username (Cyberbullying, 2005, p 3). The harassment ensued for several years. In the Rogers' advertisement taking place in the car, one youth snaps a photo of another youth and immediately posts it on Facebook, to instantly receive "funny" comments on it from her friends in the backseat. Although the youth who had is photo taken is clearly uncomfortable with this process, it is apparent to the viewers that nothing truly horrible comes from this action. However, posting

inappropriate comments about and photos of others in online spaces occurs at high rates, and these are often anything but funny. For example, a website formerly known as Juicy Campus and now operating under the name CollegeACB (short for Anonymous Confession Board), provides an online space to post about and discuss anyone at a given college or university, without revealing one's identity. Their press release bills itself as "an honest, and engaging, web-based community," and this may be the case, but it certainly has negative social repercussions for those named in the post (College ACB, 2009, p. 1). Below are several comments taken from the discussion forums on College ACB:

> Topic: "SLUTS"
> Comment: "no one compares to ANNIE RUCH. hands down biggest slut in town. she will literally put anyone and everyone in all her holes"
>
> Topic: "POST THE NAME OF A BU STUDENT YOU DISLIKE/LOATHE, ETC."
>
> Comment:
> "OK people here's what we got:
>
> crystal choi -whore
> sarah ballister -bitch and uhm
> victoria sheridan -slut/tramp and evidently midget
> john smith -fag
> chris pearce -fag
> kevin dawe -fag
> andrea jayne welsh -bitch
> kelly koltun -bitch and evidently midget
> diane deng -OMFG herpes preggers slut
> michael apfelbaum -jewfag
> daniel horowitz -jewfag
> ariel dagan -jewfag
> dylan norton -with a name like that... fag
> sam burges -fag
> nora khaleel -slut
> evan klein -jewfag
> rafi jewsteingberg -jewfag
>
> Way too many jews for there to be an anamoly. But anyways, these are the people BU has chosen. Now come on, let 'em have it? Are they still at BU? If so, give them a smile by leaving some more shit about their ugly asses." (College ACB, 2009, p. 1)

The act of using a camera phone to falsely represent reality and sending the resulting photos to others was depicted in both the advertisement taking place on an airplane and the one where the brother was unable to make it home for the holidays. Both prove that doing this is easy and can certainly be done in more than one way. All one needs is a little creativity and, in the case of the French advertisement, little respect for the person being captured in the photograph. Posting or forwarding these images onto others can result in everything from humiliation to devastation and even suicide for its victims. The latter resulted when an ex-boyfriend of eighteen year old female Jesse Logan sent, in this case, un-doctored nude photos of herself to others. In the all-too-common practice of sexting, Jesse had sent these photos to her boyfriend when they had been a couple, thinking they were for his eyes only. Jesse was regularly shamed and called derogatory names by her peers at school who had received her image via text message. Two months after making an appearance on the *Today Show* in an attempt to help others become aware of the negative repercussions of sexting and to encourage other youth not to partake, Jesse hung herself in her bedroom closet. It is unlikely that Jesse's ex-boyfriend intended for her to end her life over this. In fact, it is unlikely that he ever conceived that it would come to that. This could be attributed to the fact that there are never any negative consequences associated with similar actions regularly depicted in cell phone advertisements.

The advertisements discussed in this thesis have one prevalent commonality: they highlight behaviours permitted by technology but not necessarily in society. However, behaviours such as those portrayed in many of these ads are becoming increasingly common, most notably in youth culture. Since it is known, from Leiss et al, that

advertisements "assume the task of instructing [youth] how to match their needs and wants with the existing stock of goods and consumption styles" (as quoted in Hoechsmann, 2009, p. 654). When discussing popular culture and the media, the question of which affects the other is often raised, and the effect is the "distorted mirror." When we begin to regard the advertisements as a tool to educate youth, it becomes obvious who is manipulating this aspect of the culture. Furthermore, when taking into consideration youth's views on school versus the media, there is one obvious victor:

> [w]here schools held young people captive, training many into blind obedience and mindless vocationalism while only reproducing the cultural capital of those socialized into privilege, advertisers captivated the imaginations of young people across different classes. (Hoechsmann, 2007, p. 657)

The ads discussed here and others like them are seen multiple times by youth (often viewed on television, easily searchable on YouTube, and shared on social networking sites such as Facebook) and thus serve to normalize and downplay the severity of the cyber-bullying and associated behaviours they portray. This is the education, or the re-education in some cases, of a youth culture more inclined to adhere to standards set out by the media than by their parents, teachers, or religious leaders. Furthermore, although the tone of such ads is predominantly light-hearted and humorous, the real-life implications can be anything but. Advocating for censorship of such ads is one potential solution to this particular problem, but would create a David and Goliath situation, especially given that most provincial and federal governments would shy away from attempting to regulate these corporations. A more realistic and reasonable alternative is a media literacy approach whereby educators and responsible adults teach youth "not what to think but how to think" so that they may critically

analyze and evaluate the behaviours that are being presented to them as socially acceptable in order to avoid the potentially devastating outcomes of engaging in such behaviours (Filene as quoted in Hoechsmann, 2007, p. 658).

Chapter 7

A CALL TO ACTION: THE NEED FOR MEDIA LITERACY IN SCHOOLS AND AN EXAMINATION OF THE QEP'S MEDIA LITERACY COMPONENT

Introduction

Share echos the authors of *Kinderculture* when he notes that

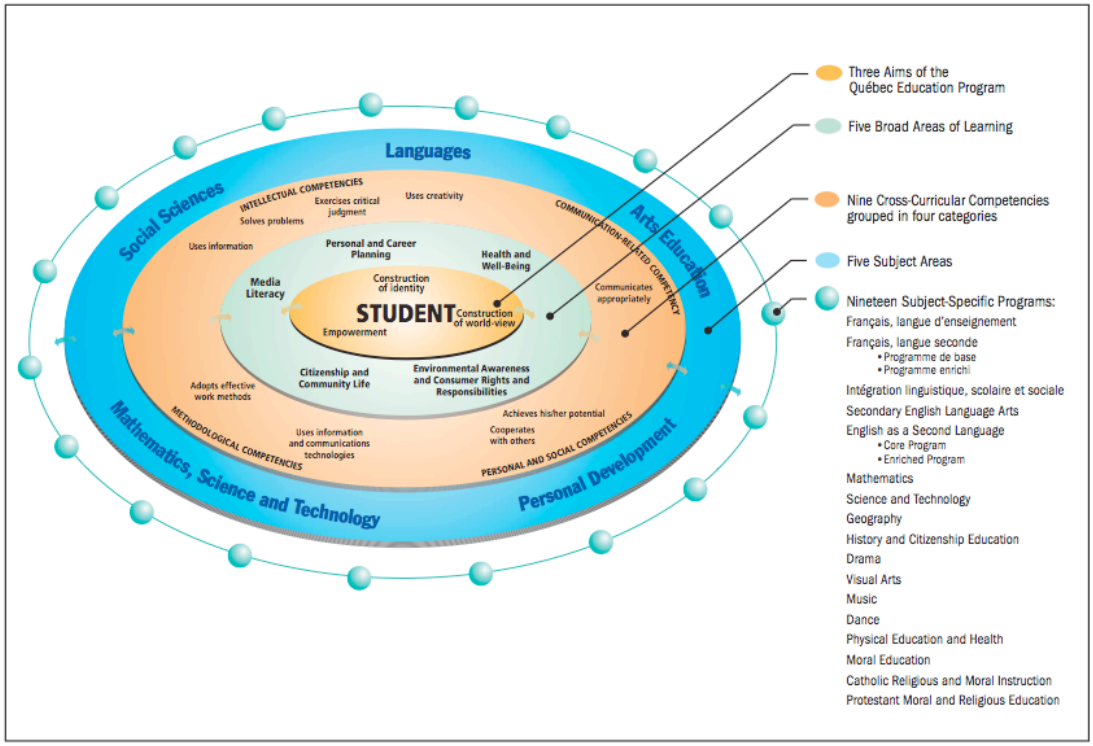
> [t]he world we live in today is very different from the one that most of us remember from our childhood. The 21st century is a media saturated, technology dependent, and globally connected world. However, most education […] has not kept up with advances in technology or education research." (Share 2002, p. 1)

This chapter moves away from theory and look at media literacy from both a policy and practical perspective. The role of media literacy both within the Quebec Education Program and in a larger Canadian context will be examined and a media literacy curriculum designed by independent NGO Adbusters will be summarized and discussed. The purpose of this chapter is to advocate for proper integration of media literacy by way of critical pedagogy in schools at the practical level as opposed to it simply being paid lip service at curricular level.

An Examination of the QEP's Media Literacy Component

The Quebec Education Plan (QEP) is comprised of three Educational Aims, five Broad Areas of Learning, nine Cross-Curricular Competencies, five Subject Areas, and nineteen Subject Specific Programs (each with up to three of their own Competencies). The diagram below provides a conceptual map of how each of the above comprises the curriculum. The program is meant to be delivered with each component mindfully and consistently attended to during both planning and instructional time. Media literacy is one of the five Broad Areas of Learning and thus, in theory, should be well emphasized

across all subject areas by all teachers over the course of a students' time within the educational system.



Québec Education Program

(Quebec Education Program, 2005, p. 2)

The aim of media literacy within the curriculum is to "enable students to exercise critical, ethical and aesthetic judgment with respect to the media and produce media documents that respect individual and collective rights" (Quebec Education Program, 2005, p. 27). The QEP goes on to note that "the media has an influence on our world-views, our values, our tastes, our personalities, our relationships with the environment and our personal, social and cultural identities" (Quebec Education Program, 2005, p. 27). This section of the QEP aligns with Gerbner and others previously mentioned, who contend that the media plays a prominent role in educating

youth. It also describes the important role the school has in educating youth with regards to the pervasive media in their lives:

> Although schools and the different media are rivals in many respects, the school has a major role in the following areas: familiarizing students with the functions of the various media, enabling them to master the different modes of communication employed in the various media, helping them develop the critical judgment necessary to take full advantage of the possibilities offered by the different media and enabling them to recognize their potential effects. (Quebec Education Program, 2005, p. 27)

Speaking from experience, however, the unfortunate reality is often that teachers (new ones, especially) tend to find themselves overwhelmed with just meeting the Subject-specific Competencies and tend to neglect to address the seventeen other Aims, Broad Areas of Learning, and Cross-curricular Competencies. This is understandable, considering that what is truly expected to be assessed and formally reported on by both parents and the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) are the Subject-Specific Competencies. Although, to their fault, MELS is constantly changing both the methods and scope of what teachers are expected to report to parents, thus trivializing the importance of all but the Subject-specific Competencies (which remain relatively consistent). I can attest that while teaching in the 2008-2009 school year, the Aims and Broad Areas of Learning were not expected to be formally evaluated nor formally reported upon. As for the Cross-Curricular Competencies during that year, teachers were asked to selected two or three to focus on and then have the students evaluate themselves on how well they did, and this was what was formally reported to the parents. While replacing a teacher long-term for both term three and four of the 2009-2010 school year, I was instructed to evaluate and report on only the Subject-Specific Competencies.

Herein lies the criticism for the QEP: in theory, it is a well-thought out and all-encompassing document. In practice however, it is difficult for teachers to actualize. Therefore important components often get omitted or neglected, including, of course, media literacy. The issue of the lack of media literacy in various provincial curricula as well as how best to teach it (in the event, of course, that teachers can find the time in their courses to do so and are inclined to do so) will be discussed later in this chapter.

Those students who fall into Steinberg's first and second categories of media consumers are generally easy to spot. They tend to follow trends with regards to how one "should" look and what one "should" own, often leading to excessive consumerism and resulting in the owning of similar objects when compared to their peers who also fit in this category. Appearances aside, these students can also be identified through the attitudes and beliefs they verbally articulate both in the classroom and beyond, relating to consumerism and the importance of having the latest and greatest trends so that their social status will not be called into question or compromised. Essentially, because students from these two categories are largely oblivious to the effect of the media on them and/or they entirely buy into these messages, they actually reproduce these messages (consciously or unconsciously) in their daily lives and conversations. To provide a brief example, (based on my experience working with Italians in Montreal's East End) the supposed "reality" show *Jersey Shore* causes some Italian students to highlight their 'Italianness'; embracing and often embodying the stereotypical notion of an Italian North American put forth by this program.

The most refreshing students to encounter in the classroom, however, are those who fall into the fourth of Steinberg's categories. These are the students who read media

with a critical eye and are often quite proficient at articulating their thoughts and beliefs on the topic. Not only do they actively read (as opposed to passively consuming) the media put forth for their consumption, they often also seek out other non-mainstream primary, secondary and even tertiary sources of media so that they may better understand their world and receive information from sources aside from mainstream media messages. No only do they tend not to passively consume, but they also actively avoid reproducing the media's messages. Because of this approach, their peers may feel intimidated by them as they don't understand why these students believe, act and/or speak out as they do. As a result, the voices of those in this category can be silenced by peer pressure as students tend to police one another to ensure that no one strays too far from the norms of teen culture. This is why the boy who wants to challenge gender stereotypes (largely reinforced by the media and, of course, further by those in category one and two) may get physically assaulted when he wears a uniform skirt as opposed to uniform pants to school. Or why the kid who asks why the football team is so well respected and celebrated and why the Muslim students can not have a space for prayer, for example, is shoved in the hallways. Therefore, students in this category have developed their perspectives and desire to interpret the various media sources not due the education system nor the ideology of their peers, but despite it.

MNet's description of media literacy accurately describes much of what media literacy entails, however, there is a critical component absent from this elucidation, one that is often missing when discussing media literacy. Just as a literate person possesses the ability to both read at text and write their own text, a media literate person must be able to not only "analyze the messages that inform, entertain and sell to us every day"

but also write their own which convey messages reflecting their beliefs that bring forth new or contrary ideas to those of the mainstream media. Thus an individual to transform from someone who is simply aware of the messages the media puts forth to someone who is actively involved in change.

Advocating for Media Literacy: An in-depth look at the Adbusters Curriculum

Adbusters is a Vancouver based organization comprised of, according to their website, "a global network of artists, activists, writers, pranksters, students, educators and entrepreneurs who want to advance the new social activist movement of the information age" (Adbusters, 2008, p. 1). Their aim is to "topple existing power structures and force a major shift in the way we live in the 21st century"; they are also "concerned about the erosion of our physical and cultural environments by commercial forces" (Adbusters, 2008, p. 1). For this reason, they support and encourage critical reading, engaging with, and creating media to counter the hegemonic nature of the pro-consumerist mass-media messages that generally puts profit first and ignores the other two factors associated with the ethically conscious triple bottom line which takes into consideration each of: people, planet and profit.

On the Adbusters website, educators can find information about ordering the Media Empowerment Kit containing easy to follow and thought provoking lesson plans. The kit is "[d]esigned as a flexible teachers' aid, [and] features 43 lesson ideas, including personal challenges, group activities, discussion starters and eye-opening readings" (Adbusters, 2008, p. 1). There are 3 major components to the manual:

1) "Explor[ing] Your Mental Environment,"

2) "Explor[ing] your Physical Environment"

3) “Creat[ing] Your Own Meaning”

(Adbusters Media Empowerment Kit, 2005, Table of Contents).

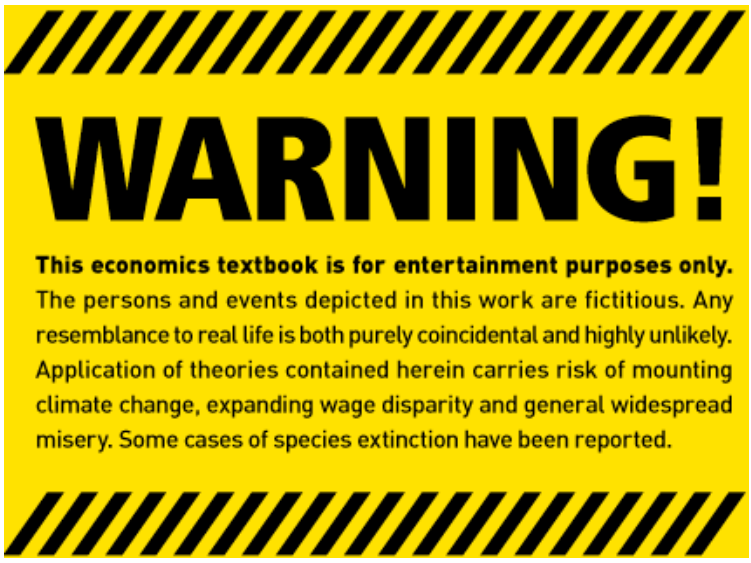
In the section Explor[ing] Your Mental Environment, students learn that their mental environment is a “vital resource we draw from and depend upon to make sense of the world” and are then asked to consider what types of things fill their mental environment (such as “images, tunes, facts, ideas, slogans [...] feelings and emotions”) as well as how they got there (Adbusters Media Empowerment Kit, 2005, p. 4 & 5). Next, they are asked to think about just how much of what makes up their mental environment comes directly from the media and how this “pollution of the mental environment” affects them (Adbusters Media Empowerment Kit, 2005, p. 6). This pollution, of course, is the messages that are conceived as a result of the media’s influence on one’s life, the hegemonic messages which glorify the status quo. Throughout the rest of the section, students are encouraged to go on a media diet (which includes aspects of a food diet such as being aware of intake and consuming in moderation), question whether or not their identity is their own, and abstaining from TV for one week (Adbusters Media Empowerment Kit, 2005, p. 11 & 12). Full colour and often full page ‘subvertisements’ are also included in this kit to allow students to consider and engage with counter-culture media sources, the messages of which can be added to their mental environment to potentially contribute to a shift in the way they view their world and their place in it. A subvertisement is a spoof on an already existing advertisement which aims to expose and ridicule its message, such as the examples created by Adbusters, below:

(Adbusters subvertisements, screenshot from Adbusters.org, 2007)

The section on 'Explor[ing] your Physical Environment' starts off with a challenge for students to think of more plant names than brand names; an impossible task to help them realize the presence of corporations in their lives as well as the effectiveness and pervasiveness of their advertisements. Next comes a lesson on questioning human consumption rates and the resulting effect on the planet and a lesson on examining their own ecological footprint. Students are also encouraged to look critically at the globally accepted means of measuring a given country's progress (the Gross Domestic Product or GDP) and compare it to one that takes the triple bottom line into account (the Genuine Progress Indicator or GPI). The GPI, according to the government of Canada website, "adjusts the GDP to account for "negative" growth (such as resource depletion and spending for crime prevention) versus "positive" growth. Its goal is to create a single-number indicator that will supplant GDP as a measure of economic and social welfare" (Government of Canada, 2000, p. 1).

After students take a critical look at these two environments in over the course of Sections One and Two, theoretically they are ready to move onto Section Three which encourages them act using their new knowledge for purposes of challenging the status quo with the desired result of invoking change. To put it simply, in this final section, students are asked to go from thinking critically to acting purposefully, thus embracing both essential components of media literacy: reading what is put forth for their consumption and creating media for others to consume.

The section on 'Creat[ing] Your Own Meaning' encourages students to start with small-scale, rather mainstream projects that involve voicing their opinions such as writing letters to the editor. As the manual progresses, however, students (and teachers!) are challenged to create an advertisement for mass consumption and attempt to purchase airtime in order to actually get it broadcast. Other ways students are encouraged to create their own media are through stickering (placing stickers on a mainstream ad that aim to debunk and/or ridicule the message such as the one below designed for economics textbooks), creating their own posters and banners on a topic they are passionate about, and creating their own subvertisments. One lesson involves pulling a "prank" to raise awareness about the social and environmental costs of driving a car. Within the Media Kit, a fake parking ticket is provided; it is intended for students to distribute to drivers in public places.



(Adbusters Warning Label, screenshot taken from Adbusters.org, 2008)

This is just one of many Canadian organizations (and many more internationally) who have made it part of their mission to provide resources to teachers to assist in the media literacy education of students. Presumably, this is because these organizations have identified a need for this amongst Canadian youth. Perhaps they believe that the curriculum does not adequately address this concept, or perhaps they believe that teachers are not properly equipped to handle this task. In my view, both components are factors which need addressing.

The Adbusters curriculum presents one method in which to introduce media literacy in the classroom. However, there are a few shortcomings. Firstly, the organization itself is criticized for not presenting the viewpoints aside from its own socialist perspective and this teacher's kit is no exception. For example, the notion that many may perceive some of the lessons as radical, irresponsible and even illegal (such as the aforementioned issuing of fake parking tickets to passing motorists or defacing school property when placing warning labels on textbooks) was not mentioned, or the resulting consequences for youth who engage in activities such as this. Given that it is

entirely possible that a teacher who has limited experience with media literacy might consider using this resource in the classroom, it would have been worth mentioning, perhaps in a forward to the teachers, a few introductory points explaining the Adbusters perspective in a greater context.

Adbusters came out with their unit prior to the Quebec government introduction of the new educational reform (the QEP) in 2005, which included media literacy (following suit from the province of Ontario which did so shortly before). Other Canadian provinces have been slow to react- Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia have not updated their curriculum to include media literacy relevant to today's climate and thus their attempts at ensuring students are media literate are outdated, misguided and often irrelevant given that these documents were written before the internet, smart phones and other forms of new media and advertising become such prevalent components of daily life.

Undergraduate teacher educations programs are often lacking compulsory courses in critical pedagogy and media literacy education and, as a result, many teachers are not aware of how crucial it is that students have the opportunity to examine, understand and challenge the assumptions put forth by the media. The reality is that the push to better educate students in math, sciences and, to some extent, emerging technologies means that other subjects fall by the wayside. Unfortunately, this supposed need to prepare students for life as contributing members of the workforce by way of the above mentioned subjects means that students are not properly equipped to deal with life as human beings trying to navigate a world inundated with media messages and hegemonic discourse. This is why I, and many others cited in this thesis, believe that an

education with a strong grounding in media literacy by way of a critical pedagogy perspective which aims to reduce the hegemonic influence in is essential for youth today.

Chapter 8

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I sought to answer the question: "To what extent does advertising serve as a pedagogy and what can be done to counter its effects in order to ensure youth do not passively succumb to the hegemonic influence of corporations?" As researched and discussed, scholars including Gerbner and Hoechsmann contend that media and advertising play a significant role in forming youth opinions and often trumps other 'teachers' of youth including parents, the church and teachers themselves (Hoechsmann, 2010, p. 653). Furthermore, my research shows that there are correlations between what youth are seeing in the media and what youth are doing in the real-world. To be sure, and as acknowledged, this thesis does not assert that youth are passive, helpless victims of the messages media are sending. However, given the combination of what media theorists propose, what my research has shown, and considering how much money is put forth by corporations when it comes to researching and specifically marketing to youth, I have concluded that the media has a strong pedagogical impact on youth.

Given this conclusion, along with the prevalence of different media in the lives of youth, the abundance of exposure to their messages, the extent to which said messages confirm one another and given the fact that they portray themselves as cool, it is important to educate youth to read the media designed for their consumption with a critical eye. That is why this thesis advocates for media literacy in the classroom in order to empower youth to critically examine the media messages they consumer for the purpose of countering their hegemonic effect.

Several implications for further research arise, including:

1) Applying Gerbner's Theory of Cultivation to the effect of cellular goods and services providers' advertising techniques on youth over a longer period of time. As smart phones are relatively new (with capabilities that phones of earlier generations did not have, thus with greater possibilities for cyber-bullying), it would be worth examining advertisements for these products and their effects on youth in a longitudinal study, as Gerbner did when he examined the effect of violence on television.

2) Examining the media's effect on the culture of cyber-bullying through various other forms of popular culture such as motion pictures, hip-hop music, or video games, To expand the study in this manner would provide a clearer indication of the media's cultivating effect on youth. For example the lyrics pop songs, including "Ayo Technology" and "Dirty Picture" (by 50 Cent and Ke$ha, respectively) could be examined in order to assess their effect on the cultivation of various beliefs regarding how to appropriately engage with cellular phones.

3) Employing empirical research methods to study both youth and the media in order to ascertain more information on how the cellular goods and service providers' advertisements affect them. This would involve collecting precise data through various means on both the advertisements and the youth themselves in order to better correlate the two.

4) Assessing market studies to ascertain if or to what extent the advertisements critiqued here were profitable to the corporations that produced them. Doing so would take an alternate perspective on this issue in order to better understand the motivation behind employing the cultivation effect.

Although the starting place for this thesis was critical pedagogy, which gave way to both media analysis and an examination of the role of the media in the lives of youth, my primary reason for writing this was to make a call to action for more media literacy in schools. It is my hope that one day the ideas presented in this thesis will become commonplace and that a student in an Education program years from now might discover and read this then outdated thesis and try to fathom their own public school education experiences and current post-secondary studies without the infusion of media literacy into the these respective curricula.

Near the completion of this thesis, in the Spring of 2011, the Lester B. Pearson School Board became the first province in Quebec to announce the launch of a program aimed at promoting socially responsible digital citizenship. With emphasis on reducing cyber-bullying through various means, including the incorporation of media literacy as per the QEP, this school board seems to be on the right track for both increasing awareness about how to be a good cyber-citizen as well as employing a critical perspective into classrooms within their jurisdiction. What remains to be seen, however, is if it will be a successful endeavor or if it will fall short of achieving its objectives and fail to be a meaningful, empowering experience for youth.

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