

phase 2

COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY

unit **2.3**

March 10

Themes:

Mass Media and Communication;

Education and Indoctrination;

Propaganda and Persuasion

- "the engineering of consent"
- defining and enforcing norms
- education and indoctrination;
- self and society;
- individuals living/working/going to school in fields and contexts
- who is/am "I"?; who is/are "we"?
- allegiances, alliances;
- movements, coalitions, blocs

FACILITATION:

Study Group #3

PREPARATION OVERVIEW:

READ by **yourself** then DISCUSS in your **study group**:

2.3 – 1 Aronson, SA: Chapter 3: Mass Communication, Propaganda, and Persuasion (pp 46-91)

VIEW by **yourself** or with others then DISCUSS in your **study group**:

2.3 – 2 S. Kilbourne, J., Killing Us Softly 3: Advertising's Image of Women

(videotape – viewing time 34 mins.)

For additional information, including a series of provocative discussion questions and a study guide, see:

<http://www.mediaed.org/videos/MediaGenderAndDiversity/KillingUsSoftly3/studyguide/html>

2.3 – 3 Tough Guise: Violence, Media & the Crisis in Masculinity (Part 1)

(videotape – viewing time 43 mins.)

For additional information, including a series of provocative discussion questions and a study guide, see:

<http://www.mediaed.org/videos/MediaGenderAndDiversity/ToughGuise/studyguide/html>

THINK OVER by **yourself** then DISCUSS in your **study group**:

Introductory Notes:

In social systems of all kinds and sizes various means (mass media appeals, propaganda and persuasion) are developed for the purpose of encouraging conformity to prevailing mental and behavioral norms. Can you come up with some pertinent examples? After doing the assignments, you should be able to:

- define "mass communications;"
- identify some of the factors that may reinforce (or undermine) the perceived credibility of communications;
- understand how advertising and/or media appeals achieve "the engineering of consent?"
- define "emotional contagion;"
- compare and contrast: reason and passion; prosocial, asocial, and/or antisocial influences;
- understand why it is so difficult to distinguish between education and indoctrination;
- define and distinguish between the primacy effect and the recency effect.

By way of context, consider the following statistics:

- In 1983, 50 corporations controlled almost all of US news media; today there are

- 6 major media outlets.
- The average American adolescent watches 3-4 hours of TV daily; sees 20,000-40,000 commercials/yr.
- The average height/weight of American women is 5'4"/140 lbs.
- The average height/weight of the American woman model is 5'11"/117 lbs.
- 80% of American women report being dissatisfied with their appearance.
- In 2001, US advertising expenditures exceeded \$230 billion (up from \$105 billion in 1980).
- Media corporations have spent \$111.3 billion lobbying lawmakers and federal regulators since 1996.
- Between 1995-98, media companies (excluding telecoms) gave more than \$30.9 million to candidates for federal political office and party committees.
- An estimated \$2 billion is spent annually to target juvenile consumers.
- At 3 years of age, 1 American child in 5 is making specific requests for brand-name products.
- Channel One's in-classroom broadcast, featuring 2 minutes of commercials for every 10 minutes of news is compulsory on 90% of school days in 80% of classrooms in 40% of US middle and high schools
- Cigarette manufacturers spend over \$9.57 billion/year (> \$26.2 million/day) on advertising.
- Almost 500,000 children are estimated to have become regular smokers during 2002.
- Mass media comprise the main source of health-related information for a majority of adolescents.

2.3 – 2 video Killing Us Softly

This is the newest version of Kilbourne's groundbreaking video. In it, she surveys the contemporary advertising landscape to critically examine how corporations and their advertisers use images of girls and women to sell their products. Deconstructing advertisements with the same kind of care and thought that goes into constructing them, Kilbourne sets mass media images of femininity against social reality and advertising fantasy against the actual experience of girls and women. One of Kilbourne's underlying arguments is that advertising media – as the prime storyteller in American culture – have the capacity to both produce and affirm the very fictions about women's desires and identity that advertisers themselves often claim to be innocently tapping into and reflecting back at the public. In keeping with the industry's own self-stated mission to create the markets they pitch to, she argues that there is little that is natural, inevitable or innocent about the stories advertising tells us about women, that cultural standards of "femininity" are less given than made, and that in terms of sheer money, power and cultural presence, the maker that matters most is advertising itself.

2.3 – 3 video Tough Guise

While the social construction of femininity has been widely examined (e.g. see above) the dominant role of masculinity has until recently remained largely invisible. This is one of the first films to systematically examine the relationship between images of

popular culture and the social construction of masculine identities in the U.S. at the dawn of the 21st century. It is argued here that the widespread violence in American society – including the tragic school shootings in Littleton, Colorado, Jonesboro, Arkansas, and elsewhere – is overwhelmingly a gendered phenomenon, and that any attempt to understand violence therefore requires that we understand its relationship to masculinity and manhood. The film contends that:

- a) masculinity is made, not given (as opposed to maleness, which is biological);
- b) media are the primary narrative, pedagogical force of our time;
- c) media images of manhood – across distinctions of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic class – play a pivotal role in making, shaping and recycling specific attitudes about manhood;
- d) a sustained look at media images of manhood and violence reveals a widespread and disturbing equation of masculinity with pathological control and violence; and, finally that,
- e) looking critically at constructed ideals of manhood by definition diminishes the otherwise silent power these very images might wield in shaping our perceptions of ourselves, our institutions and each other.

Questions and Issues to Think About:

- What are "gender stereotypes?"
- Do media depictions of men and women (girls and boys) help to establish and maintain gender stereotyping or do they merely reflect existing gender realities?
- How do media depictions of people influence your self-image as a woman or man?
- How do media images of people in situations (e.g. women and men; alone; together with others in decision making and action situations) relate to currently influential "theories of human nature"?
- What is "patriarchy?" "androgyny?"
- Define "macho," "machismo," "masculine culture" "culture of honor"
- Compare and contrast: "chromosomal sex," "hormonal sex," anatomical sex," "physiological sex," "sexual identity," "gender identity."
- Resolved: pornography reflects and reinforces the "objectification" of women (and men) in our society. Argue pro or con.

With particular respect to yourself, consider the following:

- Impact on you of televised news events and "docudramas"
- Impact on you of televised commercial messages
- Your susceptibilities to "Infotainment"
- How do you cope with the "information overload"? (your reactance and resistance to influence; desensitization (numbing); habituation (acquired unresponsiveness, turning off, tuning out) etc.
- Collect some examples of "persuasive" and "unpersuasive" newspaper/magazine adverts; identify the persuasion tactics at work in the ad (attractiveness, credibility, use of vivid images, appropriateness to context.

Over the course of a day (or week?) try to identify and take note of instances in which you encounter an effort by an individual or group to influence your thoughts, feelings and actions. Include "live" encounters with salesclerks and other strangers; with friends, families, groupmates, classmates, roommates, housemates, etc. In the case of media appeals, look for messages coming from as broad as possible variety of mass media sources (tv, radio, print, billboards, product packaging or labeling etc.). Take note also of corporate logos and discuss whether the attempts in question were successful and if so how and to what extent and if not why not.