

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: **MEDIA INFLUENCES EXPLORED: WHAT
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS SAY ABOUT THE
POWER OF NEWSPAPERS, TELEVISION AND
MAGAZINES**

Tamara Maxine Henry, Doctor of Philosophy, 2005

Directed By: Katherine C. McAdams
Associate Professor
Philip Merrill College of Journalism
Associate Dean, Undergraduate Studies
University of Maryland, College Park

A body of theoretical works on media, their effect and impact shows that the ubiquitous nature of media messages tinges the beliefs, attitudes and behaviors of media consumers (Katz and Blumler 1974; Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur 1976; Shoemaker and Reese 1991; and, Gerbner 1995). To investigate high school students' awareness of media, a survey of 355 Florida and Pennsylvania students was conducted during the 2004-2005 school year. Focus groups in both states in May and June 2005 followed up on survey responses. Both the survey and the focus groups sought to answer a central research question: How cognizant are high school students of media influences on various aspects of their lives, particularly the impact of newspapers, television and magazines? Today's youth are multi-billion dollar consumers, so the goal of the research

project was to understand how well students identify media messages, comprehend the purposes and sources of the messages, recognize the strategies of media to win conformity to their messages and appreciate why media suggest certain actions, beliefs and behaviors. This type of understanding is popularly known as “media literacy,” a relatively new, fast-developing field of study. Past media surveys and studies typically have focused on children and students’ exposure to and use of media, rather than on media literacy.

The dissertation’s cogent theme is that students need a sophisticated knowledge of how media function in society, a grasp of media’s disparate languages and the skills to successfully navigate their terrain. Data showed, however, that these high school students do appear to have an elementary understanding of the power of the media with the majority denying media’s influence in their choice of clothing, snacks and beverages or their opinions about such things as what makes teens popular or cool. These students do acknowledge media’s influence with intangible things like the issues that they consider important. In conclusion, the study found unequal effects of media on different racial and ethnic groups and suggests that further research is needed to develop specific ways to empower students to understand, enjoy and challenge the media, while avoiding unpropitious influences.

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by

Tamara Maxine Henry

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Advisory Committee:

Professor Katherine C. McAdams, Chair/Advisor
Professor Linda Aldoory
Professor Alice Bonner
Mr. Robert A. Dubill, JD
Professor Ray Hiebert
Professor Carol Parham

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To the memory of my father, Dr. F.W. Cooke, who left a legacy that continues to inspire me, and to my mother, Lillian Katherine Cooke, who taught me to question the obvious.

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“In the beginning was the WORD” ... for which I am eternally grateful.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

We don't recognize the cultural codes that surround us because many of their most influential signs aren't words at all; they are objects and social practices with hidden meanings that we usually don't think to look for. From advertising campaigns to the food we eat to the way we define our sexual identity, we are being secretly manipulated by our culture to believe certain things and to act in certain ways ... our entire society sends us a constant bombardment of signals that can shape our very consciousness and dictate our behaviors and values (Solomon 1988, 4).

SNACK FOODS, FASHIONS, CDs, MP3s

Choose any media, take note of the messages and soon it becomes apparent that young people are considered important consumers. Why? Teenage Research Unlimited (TRU), the nation's premier market-research firm focusing on the youth market, estimate teens aged 12 to 19 spent \$169 billion in 2004, or about \$91 per week. These teens, using their own money plus the cash they receive as gifts, allowance and other spending money from parents, purchase a wide range of goods, including food, sneakers, clothing and the latest gadgets, such as CD burners, MP3 players and cell phones. The U.S. Market for Teen and Tween Grooming Products forecast the sale of youth hair care, cosmetics, skincare, and ethnic items to hit \$8 billion by 2008. The statistics on spending are paralleled by American Academy of Pediatrics figures that show U.S. children over age 2 watches about four hours of television everyday and that the average child sees more than 40,000 commercials each year. A 2003 Kaiser Family Foundation study found that in a typical day, 59% of all children watch TV, 42% watch a video or DVD, 5% use a computer and 3% play video games.

When the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth asked teens aged 12-20 in 2002 to choose their favorite television commercial, more teens named commercials for Budweiser than for any other brand, including Pepsi, Nike and Levi's. Pollsters say these young people saw more television ads for beer and ale in 2001 than for fruit juices and fruit-flavored drinks; gum, skin care products, cookies and crackers, chips, nuts, popcorn and pretzels, sneakers, non-carbonated soft drinks or sportswear jeans.

These studies did not include billboards and advertisements that adorn store windows, park benches, street buses and clothing. Nor did they include so-called pop-up ads cluttering today's computers; the concept is so new that few, if any, studies exist that analyzes their impact on Web surfers.

Boston University professor Juliet Schor (2004), who is author of *Born to Buy: The Commercialized Child and the New Consumer Culture*, warns that advertisers follow children and students as their financial clout and spending power increase. She noted that evidence of the harm and negative impact on children's well-being is mounting. Self-esteem is one area pummeled by media ads and commercials. Officials say the diet industry is worth \$100 billion a year and, of that, about \$33 billion is advertising revenue. In 2003, *Teen* magazine said 35% of girls 6 to 12 years old have been on at least one diet and that 50% to 70% of normal weight girls believe they are overweight. Also, the research group Anorexia Nervosa & Related Eating Disorders said that one out of every four college-aged women uses unhealthy methods of weight control – including fasting, skipping meals, excessive exercise, laxative abuse, and self-induced vomiting.

Despite the negative effects of some advertisements, consumerism is a key characteristic of American culture and the concept, by itself, is not necessarily villainous. But it does underscore an important fact of 21st century life: Thriving in today's complex, highly technical, media-saturated world requires unique skills and strategies. And, while learning is enhanced with the increasing convergence of media and technology, even the simplest tasks are no longer easy. A mere telephone call on a cell phone requires deft fingering, and some knowledge of technology. To engage in the popular communication craze of text messaging, ambidexterity is essential to vigorously dance the index finger or both thumbs across the cell phone's keypad. The more traditional media, like television, radio and newspapers, are growing in complexity too, and necessitate keen discernment. For example, when youth read newspapers and magazines, listen to the radio, watch television news and entertainment shows, surf the web or engage in CD-ROM simulation games, they should be able to identify the underlying themes and ideas contained in the media presentation (including the sources of the covert and overt messages), recognize the purpose of the messages, and understand what they are being asked to do, believe or say. Comprehension of media precludes memorization or rote learning. Instead media-savvy students learn to reflect on ways media communicate and how multiple ideas are often simultaneously promoted. In addition, successful students learn to identify cumulative messages that saturate a variety of media channels and programs, understanding that they reinforce certain attributes of the American system or a particular world view. Acquiring the skills to navigate through the media messages ensures

empowerment and helps youth maintain control over impulsive behavior and manipulative schemes (Galician 2004).

As students traverse the educational system, they learn both to engage and challenge media institutions. Then, as adults, they can utilize media to make informed decisions in myriad arenas. Researchers Justin Lewis and Sut Jhally say that “for us, the risk lies in depriving students of a political education that is essential if they are to be capable of making rational decisions amidst a deluge of media messages. To evaluate those messages, students must learn to see them not simply as true or false, realistic or misleading, stereotypical or positive, but as authored voices with certain interests or assumptions about the world, voices that could be influenced or replaced” (1998, 119).

Knowing or understanding the media also requires a new view of literacy. Traditionally, literacy means the ability to read, write and decipher. Today’s students also must understand that what they see on television, hear on the radio and read in the newspapers are not simple reflections of external reality. The media create their own reality. Once this fact is accepted, then students can grasp the notion that media are responsible for the majority of the observations and experiences from which each individual develop unique understandings of the world and how it works. The media-created reality results from a network of influences, ranging from the personal attitudes and perceived roles of reporters and editors – also known as gate keeping - media work routines, organizational structure, ideological forces, and the interaction between the media and other social institutions. No, “good hand/eye co-ordination and the ability to multitask are not substitutes for critical thinking,” said Researcher David Considine

(2002), who stressed that more of the nation's youth have access to the Internet and other media than any generation of young people of the past. But access, he insisted, does not guarantee that they "possess the ethics, the intellectual skills, or the predisposition to critically analyze and evaluate their relationship with these technologies or the information they encounter."

UNDERSTANDING STUDENTS, MEDIA: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As media uses multiply, the undergirding theories evolve. A preponderance of traditional mass communication theory concentrated on the audience's reception and perception of the message, and on the effects they produce. Audience and effects are the final two elements of the "who says what, through which channel, to whom, with what effect" communication process suggested by theorist Harold Lasswell (1948). Researcher W. Phillips Davison (1985) developed the theory that a person exposed to a persuasive message in the mass media sees this as having a greater effect on others than on him or herself. And, George Gerbner (1995), a Hungarian poet who immigrated to the United States and pioneered "the Cultivation Theory," theorized that mass media (mainly television) socializes people into standardized roles and behaviors. Heavy exposure to television, Gerbner's theory states, leads to the development of attitudes that parallel media's version of reality, regardless of real life events or actual reality. On a similar track are the "Uses and Gratifications" theories developed by Elihu Katz, Jay G. Blumler and Michael Gurevitch (1974). These researchers found that people use media to their benefit and are not passive consumers, as once considered.

Media content is important too. Researchers Pamela Shoemaker and Stephen Reese (1991) argue that we must understand media content and all the components that go into shaping it or our understanding of mass communication theories will be deficient, even fragmented. Growth will come slowly, they say. Shoemaker and Reese say it's important to learn writing styles used by newspapers, how television presents news and the filtering process media use for news before offering it for public consumption.

More recent theorists focus on the mental processes involved in making decisions about media messages. Washington State University researcher Erica Weintraub Austin theorizes that there are important decision-making benchmarks that come between message exposure and later behavior by the recipient. Researcher Brenda Dervin of Ohio State University found that individuals construct their "picture of reality" by integrating others' observations with their own views.

All of these theories help in providing a frame of reference for the project.

SOCIAL LOCATION OF THE RESEARCHER

Investigating various media to understand their techniques to sway thought and behavior is a relatively new venture in journalism. So new, in fact, that a variety of terms are used to describe the process with the most popular being "media literacy." This study arose from a conversation with the Philip Merrill College of Journalism Founding Dean and Professor Emeritus Ray Hiebert, who shared his interest in media literacy. Almost immediately I was captivated. I already had a keen interest in finding ways to make media content accessible and understandable because I had worked more than 30 years as a journalist with the last 10 years of my career as a national education writer. As I

traveled the country writing mainly “trend pieces” for USA TODAY, I became thoroughly familiar with such educational issues as literacy, academic achievements, diversity and teacher certification. Already, in my own youth as an African-American, I had experienced educational inequities as authorities in the rural Missouri community where I lived – popularly called the “Boot heel” – fought all federal efforts to integrate schools as required by the 1964 Civil Rights Law. And, as a mother of two daughters, I spent most of my spare time working to teach my children not to accept media’s stereotypical messages about women and their alleged limited capabilities and African Americans and their so-called inferiorities. So, I bring to the project a unique perspective. My experience and background also facilitate a sensitivity to and appreciation for educators’ work and time within the school.

Experts say that researchers have begun studies pinpointing different aspects of media literacy but few have been published. The right questions must be asked to contribute to the sparse literature currently available. This study allows students to explain or share opinions about their behavior. Other studies have looked at “how much” exposure and “what” media students favor. This study allows students to reflect on “what I do” and “this is why I believe I do it.” Several noteworthy questions also assisted in formulating the survey instrument used to measure high school students’ proficiency in analyzing media and their messages.

1. Are today’s students aware of efforts – and to what extent – of the media to influence opinion, behavior, values and ideology?
2. How much do the factors of class, gender, and ethnicity determine a student’s ability to read and understand the media?

3. How well do students interpret symbols, grammar or word choice, connotative images, facial expressions, posture, gestures, use of space and other nonverbal communication behaviors?
4. Is there a gap between intellectual maturity and emotional maturity when it comes to interpreting media's messages? Whose responsibility is it to bridge the gap?
5. Can newspapers be used to improve media literacy in America?
6. What is in the media that high school students consume and what attitudes, ideals and aspirations are being represented?

The questions reflect society's assumption that today's students are quite sophisticated in their ability to interpret words, pictures, graphics, art, movements, behaviors, voices and other symbols used by the media to advance a message. With less exposure to a wide array of media, rural students could be more skeptical of the machinations of media. And, suburban students could be expected to be more discerning than either rural or urban students because of their access to media.

THE PRESENT STUDY

A 44-question, online survey shown as Appendix A was developed for the present research project. Working in partnership with USA TODAY, the survey was placed online so high school students could access it mainly in media labs at school. The goal was to address the stated research questions by testing decoding skills, critical thinking and discernment of missing information, while also examining students' awareness of media processes, ability to evaluate media quality or utilize strategic thinking about accessing media. The survey was administered to students in Pennsylvania and Florida because both states' curriculum standards include elements of media education. In these states, media studies are embedded in English, language and communication arts, social

studies, history and civics. But, Florida also includes it in health and consumer skills. For example, Responsible Health Behavior Benchmarks for grades seven through nine in Florida include knowing how messages from media and other sources influence health behavior and analyzing of the influence of culture, media, technology and other factors on health. Pennsylvania added a communications component in January 2001 that included studying the history of various media, basic techniques of broadcasting media, print media and film, and the functions of mass media, as well as a critical analysis of mass media. About a fourth of the students targeted for the present study participated in USA TODAY's in-school newspaper program, and another fourth were involved in their school's newspaper, yearbook or some extracurricular media activity.

The survey took into account the complexity of the media. Often, students are bombarded by messages that are verbal, aural or visual so, some survey questions sought to understand their ability to decipher these. One series of questions asked whether the truthfulness of a character can be detected by the facial expression, language used, camera angle or color of clothing. Other questions asked: "How likely are you to ...," "Have you ever done any of the following ...," "Overall, how truthful are newspapers' portrayals (or entertainment TV's) of ...". A preponderance of information was gleaned from the survey I developed with the help of my advisor, Dr. Kathy McAdams and Dr. John Cordes, coordinator of undergraduate research at the College Park Scholars program. My goal is to begin a series of studies that can help establish a clearer understanding of how much our high school students know about the media and comprehend their messages. But for the purposes of the dissertation, I will focus mainly

on sections of the survey that look specifically at media's influence. I have developed my own definitions of key terms that are used throughout the dissertation so I suggest that you consult the glossary. These definitions should assist in understanding the interpretations applied to the research data.

WHAT UNDERSTANDING MEDIA ENTAILS

Typically, media are viewed either as simple conduits of information or messages, distinct languages that use different production variables, depending on the medium, or environments with fixed characteristics that shape key aspects of communication on both the individual and societal level. Efforts to reconceptualize literacy are well underway. For example, print media use article lengths, spacing and placement to alter perception of content, while television and film use close-up shots, different camera angles and split screens to provide viewers with a particular perception. Everything matters – the voice intonations, the characters' gestures, the color of the clothes and scenery, and the background images and noises. Even hairstyles of performers and captioning typefaces are considered potentially important. This is all part of today's notion of media literacy. Marshall McLuhan understood media's impact and dared to suggest in his research that "the medium is the message." The power of that aphorism is acutely evident today, long after McLuhan's death.

Television *used to be* the main influence of our free-time, and awareness of political and social reality. Now the Internet dominates our time and attention, captivates students and inundates us all with sophisticated means of communication, from "instant messaging" to the online journals known as "blogs." Understanding how new media

operate is essential, especially since we know that young children, under age 2, are able to watch television long before they can learn to read text. New York University researcher Joshua Meyrowitz describes television as “a presentational analogic system” with discursive and digital information. He explains that children learn to read in phases with a gradual progression in the complexity of the material. Television, however, doesn’t have the same sort of initial screening division that books do, so children could be exposed to violent, crime-ridden programs like *NYPD Blue* or *Law & Order* before knowing about such programs as *Sesame Street* or *Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood*.

Meyrowitz says:

Macro level medium theory also offers one way of explaining why our schools now seem to be in perpetual crisis. Until recently, the school system played the primary role in giving young children access to general social information and in teaching children the basic skills they would need to gain access to non-local experiences throughout the rest of their lives – text literacy. The many relatively new, nonreading ways to gain access to information now weaken the informational power of the school and diminish the incentives to learn to read and write well. Many schools now feel the need to redouble their efforts to teach traditional literacy skills, while attempting to help students process the information they receive through nontextual media. Yet, the added staff, time, and resources that would be needed to work on these two fronts are rarely forthcoming (1998, 107).

So, the reasons why students in America need to understand the media grow exponentially. We need informed, responsible citizens who can actively seek out information that can be useful in various democratic arenas. We need wise consumers. And, basically, students today need to be able to make sense (comprehend and analyze) of the onslaught of messages that constantly bombards them.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education.

- Thomas Jefferson

LAZARSFELD, LASSWELL, GERBNER AND OTHER FRONTRUNNERS

No single date marks the definitive beginning of the age of mass communication. Print as a medium prevailed for centuries before the mass production of newspapers brought printed information to the ordinary citizen of the industrialized society. Films and movies date back to the 1830s as magazines appeared in the late 19th century. Radio emerged in the 1920s and television – though developed in the 1920s – captured the nation’s attention in the 1940s. Much of the early development of communication study occurred outside the United States until World War II when Adolf Hitler went on the rampage and drove such European researchers as Kurt Lewin, Paul Lazarsfeld and Theodor Adorno to American soil (Rogers 1994).

A fascination with propaganda expedited communication study; many prominent researchers enlisted with governmental efforts to win public support for the war and boost troop morale. The prevailing belief was that media had a strong, immediate impact – known as the Magic Bullet Theory. Not only did Hitler drive key immigrant scholars to America but also demonstrated media’s influence with his monopolization of the mass media to unify the German public behind the Nazi party. At the start of WWII, Harold

Lasswell at the University of Chicago sparked the government's interest in communication study by outlining research projects related to the war effort. Around that time, Lasswell, as mentioned in the introduction, also described communication as "*who says what to whom via what channels with what effect?*" When the government coffers opened, researchers responded with a plethora of communication studies that ran the gamut. Yale researcher Carl Hovland received a number of wartime government-funded assignments with the most famous being persuasion studies using Army films. The goal was to convince soldiers of the value of fighting Germans and Japanese during WWII. Contrary to popular belief, he found the Army films had only "limited effects" because the message over time got diluted and did not add to the soldiers' preconceived notions of the enemy.

The U.S. Air Force contracted with a group of sociologists at the University of Washington to assess the impact of civil-defense messages on leaflets dropped from aircraft. During WWI, American forces distributed about 3 million leaflets and the figure rose to about 3 billion during WWII. Officials estimate additional billions were used during the Korean conflict. The findings of the University of Washington group were similar to Hovland – the leaflets had only limited effects and the accuracy of the message was distorted during interpersonal communication. The results underscored the importance of direct connections with media by every member of the audience. However, Columbia University researcher W. Phillips Davison (1983) told of a document about a U.S. Marine Corps service unit consisting of black troops with white officers on Iwo Jima Island in the Pacific. The Japanese dropped leaflets from planes urging the troops not to

risk their lives for “a white man’s war.” The next day the unit was withdrawn. Davison said that the document explained that Japanese strategists “may not have expected the leaflets to have an effect on the troops themselves but were instead trying to goad the white military command” into withdrawing the troops, which they did. The theory is known as the “third-person effect” in communication, as noted in Chapter 1.

As Davison found, a person exposed to a persuasive message in the mass media sees this as having a greater effect on others than on him or herself. He said that the individual may reason that while he “will not be influenced,” he surmises that others persons “may well be persuaded” (Davidson 1983). He noted that in some cases, communication leads to action not because of its impact on those to whom it is ostensibly directed, but because others – the third person - think that it will have an impact on its audience.

The natural leap from propaganda research was to media effects research. Already communication researchers were all over the map, offering theories that suggested effects that were strong and immediate, limited or hidden and unanticipated. Besides analyzing media’s power of persuasion, researchers also delved into content and audiences. Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson and Hazel Gaudet analyzed the process of decision-making during a presidential election campaign in 1944 and quickly learned that informal, personal contacts were more influential in voting behavior than exposure to radio or newspapers. While Lazarsfeld’s group hypothesized about the “two-step flow of communication,” he joined with Elihu Katz, whose work was noted in Chapter 1, to develop a mass communication theory around the concept (Lazarsfeld 1948). The two

distinct stages of this theory are: individuals, who are also known as opinion leaders, pay close attention to the mass media and its messages to receive the information and then, these leaders pass on their own interpretations in addition to the actual media content. In line with those studies, Berelson (1948) sought to understand the function of the modern newspaper for its readers when he analyzed the impact of a deliveryman strike at eight major New York City newspapers in June 1945. Two key findings of the study, “What ‘Missing the Newspaper’ Means,” were that most readers value newspapers as a source of ‘serious’ information about and interpretation of the world of public affairs, although not everyone uses it in that way or miss it for that purpose.

Wilbur Schramm, considered the founder of the field of communication study in the early 1940s and key in sparking interest in the discipline at U.S. universities, spearheaded research that revealed readers or listeners of media select news in expectation of a reward, whether it’s delayed or immediate. Also, one 1949 study showed that the amount of news reading tended to increase with age, with education and with economic status (Schramm 1949). The study, “Age, Education, Economic Status: Factors in Newspaper Reading,” also revealed that women read less public affairs news and editorials but more crime and disaster news. And, women’s news reading come to a peak at a later age than men.

Studies by Schramm and others confirmed that the issues then were much the same as they are today.

George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communication at the University of Pennsylvania in the 1960s, was among a small group of researchers who

shared an understanding of the complexity of mass communication and its integration in society. He offered a definition of “masses” that emphasized the movement of messages rather than the organization of people. As noted in Chapter 1, he is best known for the “cultivation theory” or the notion that television is a “medium of the socialization of most people into standardized roles and behaviors, the chief function of which is to spread and stabilize social patterns”(Gerbner 1995). Russell H. Weigel and Richard Jessor (1973) bolstered Gerbner’s theory with their own 1970 study of television. They learned that the television “environment” is treated as a microcosm of the larger social environment. Also, they said that television is a source of learning and not only for a variety of behavior patterns, but also for norms, values, attitudes, social roles and personal identities. Even then researchers showed an interest in students’ television exposure and found that the average college student watched 4.4 hours a week while high school students watched 16.5 hours per week. Researcher Jonathan Gutman (1970) of the University of Southern California gathered data that showed that self- and ideal self-concept ratings differ significantly for light and heavy TV viewers.

MCLUHAN AND MODERN RESEARCH

Marshall McLuhan (1964), a Canadian scholar who rose in popularity in the 1960s, focused on how communication technology changes the basic senses of hearing, seeing, touching, smelling and tasting. He believed that changes in technology cause social changes in society. He lived during a time when testing his theories came easily. New communication technologies have proliferated since the 1970s, including such inventions as the microcomputer, cable television, communication satellites, and

electronic messaging systems. He died in 1980, before the birth of many of the new technologies that grace today's landscape.

McLuhan intuitively knew that technology is at the center of communication.

This fact, characteristic of all media, means that the "content" of any medium is always another medium. The content of writing is speech, just as the written word is the content of print, and print is the content of the telegraph. If it is asked, "What is the content of speech?" it is necessary to say, "It is an actual process of thought, which is in itself nonverbal." An abstract painting represents direct manifestation of creative thought processes as they might appear in computer designs. What we are considering here, however, are the psychic and social consequences of the designs or patterns as they amplify or accelerate existing processes. For the "message" of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs.

It is only too typical that the "content" of any medium blinds us to the character of the medium (McLuhan 1964, 8).

Like Gerbner, McLuhan understood the social and political implications of the media, but maybe in a slightly different way. McLuhan realized that media can involve the public in such disparate interests as famines in Africa, the plight of women in Afghanistan and affirmative action issues in the South. He predicted the attainment of a "global village" in which information and experience would be freely available for all to share (McQuail 2000). He noted that each medium has its own grammar and conveys reality in its own particular way.

McLuhan's work motivated a host of researchers, including Brenda Dervin (Neill 1993) who examined the way individuals construct their "picture of reality" by integrating others' observations with their own. Dervin, also mentioned in Chapter 1, said that this picture that's created guides behavior and determines how people move to make

sense of messages. Described as “constructivist” or “sense-making” theory, the idea counters the belief that people essentially are moved by the messages they receive.

In a related vein and as mentioned in Chapter 1, Erica Weintraub Austin has done work on children’s and young adults’ uses of the media in decision making (Arnett n.d.). Named the “Message Interpretation Process” or MIP, Austin said in a draft of the pending chapter for a *Journal of Adolescent Health* article that “individuals of all ages take an active role in their socialization through decision making that makes use of media messages.” As people process information, Austin theorizes that it goes through a series of filters or “benchmarks” that may at any time or during any step cause the information to be rejected out-of-hand. For example, a person may initially consider the “logic” or credibility of a message but then, in further analysis, weigh the desirability of the product, followed by a look at the social norms surrounding the object. So in receiving a message, the recipient asks logically “Is this realistic or correct? How does it relate to my life?” Emotionally the question is: “How appealing is this to me?” Then the person internalizes the impressions, asking “Do I want to be like this?” Next, the person considers expectations about behavior: “What happens if I imitate this?” Together, these processes result in behavior choices.

“Consideration of these filters can prevent overly optimistic predictions of media effects. Conversely, evaluations that neglect the filters can underestimate the effects of media use, because direct-effects models do not account for indirect effects that cumulatively have a considerable impact” (Austin, Chen, and Grube n.d.).

Austin added that more research is needed to identify the various filters that individuals use to evaluate messages and that once these strategies are known, weaknesses in the interpretation process can be identified. Media literacy interventions can be developed to strengthen weak strategies, she said. Already known is that parent can dampen a child's expectation for a product, which leads to a decrease in desirability, she added.

While the MIP is a relatively new theory, other more well-known theories also apply when considering media's influences on audiences. They include Uses and Gratifications, Media Dependency and Agenda Setting, three intertwined theories that experts say truly revolutionized the way Americans characterize mass communication (Katz 1974). Katz first introduced the Uses and Gratifications approach in the 1970s, when the prevailing assumption was that audiences are passive as a group. But Katz, and his colleagues Jay Blumler and Maryland's own Michael Gurevitch, developed the idea that audiences – in an effort to satisfy their personal needs and goals - actively seek out specific media and content to achieve certain results. In addition to media content and exposure to the media, the theorists say audiences also derive gratification from the social context that typifies the nature of the exposure. A key assumption is that an individual literally takes advantage of media, predetermining what is going to be absorbed to meet the need. Media, the theories state, are only one group of a wide group of choices that people have to meet their needs. Again this counters the idea that media use their audiences. But, it also explains why media try to create a need for themselves *and* a balance with non-media related sources.

Researchers (Rubin, Palmgreen and Sypher 1994) have conducted various studies to determine what needs people perceive media, especially television, can satisfy. The list includes people's use of media to manage moods, to understand social affiliation or what to avoid. At times people also use media to gain or seek reinforcement of personal and social identity. Then, there are some who use media for simple diversion, escape or merely to gain information.

A related theory is that of Media Dependency, first introduced by researchers Melvin DeFleur and Sandra Ball-Rokeach (1976). They found that the more an individual depends on the media to have his or her needs fulfilled, the more important the media will be to that person. With this dependency, the individual becomes more willing to give media more influence and power. Media also will encounter less resistance to efforts to set the agenda and play a key role in forming attitudes.

DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach's ideas also touch on the new concept of gatekeeping. They say, for example that "by controlling what information is and is not delivered and how that information is presented, the media can play a large role in limiting the range of interpretations that audiences are able to make." The concept of gatekeeping involves the processes of message selection, handling and control, and whether the message is communicated through mass media or interpersonal channels (Shoemaker 1991). Kurt Lewin, an émigré psychologist from the University of Berlin who fled as a refugee from Hitler's regime, was one of the first to apply the term "gatekeeper" in the 1930s. He conducted experiments to change Americans' eating habits during the food shortages of WWII. What Lewin found was that the changes had to be sanctioned by the housewives

who acted as gatekeepers because they decided what foods to purchase for family meals (Rogers 1994).

In 1950, David Manning White monitored the work of a middle-aged, male wire editor to illustrate the same point. The editor worked at a newspaper with a circulation of 30,000 in a city of 100,000 and used various strategies to select or reject a story for the newspaper. White concluded that “in many respects he is the most important ‘gatekeeper’ of all, for if he rejects a story, the work of all those who preceded him in reporting and transmitting the story is negated.” As noted in the introduction, researcher Pamela Shoemaker (1997) notes that the individual (gatekeeper’s) likes and dislikes, biases, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, values and morals saturate the choice and, therefore, diminish the importance of merely selecting the news. Meanwhile, Dan Berkowitz (1990) refined the gatekeeping metaphor for local television news because TV news decision-making is a group process instead of one made by individuals.

Marshaling Efforts to “Understand” 21st Century Media

Research into “understanding the media” continues to flourish and, in some cases, has picked up momentum in the new millennium. One reason for this intense interest could be that media appeal to younger and younger children who are beginning to increase their use and exposure, while pressuring parents to purchase more high-tech gadgets for their entertainment. Research suggests a pending crisis. A new Kaiser Family Foundation study (2005) said children between the ages of 8 and 18-years-old are exposed to about 8.33 hours of media each day, more than an hour over the 7.29 hours over the past five years. The extra time is taken up by “new media” like computers, the

Internet and video games. This study focused on non-school activities, so school work was not included in the measurement. Another study, conducted in 2002 by the Pew Internet & American Life Project for the American Institutes for Research, found that public middle and high school students depend heavily on the Internet to do their schoolwork. Kaiser, in an earlier study, stressed that even the very youngest in our society are targeted by marketers who promote “a booming market of videotapes and DVDs aimed at infants one to 18 months, and a multi-million dollar industry selling computer games and even special keyboard toppers for children as young as nine months old” (Rideout 2003, 2).

Getting students to understand the media takes on different meanings. Even the popular term “media literacy” is subjected to varied and sometimes conflicting interpretations.

Different people are using different labels. [The article “Shifting From Media to Literacy”] uses the term *media literacy*. Library media specialists are calling it *information literacy*. Computer scientists are calling it *technology literacy*. Critics are calling it *cultural literacy* or *critical literacy*. But make no mistake – we are all touching part of the same proverbial elephant. And the more that each of us can listen to the others, the more our own work will be improved. (Rogow 2004, 33)

Joshua Meyrowiz tackled the complexity of the media to highlight the problems. “Indeed, it is the pervasiveness of a wide array of media – movies, radio, television, computers, and so forth – that has stimulated the debate over how to reconceptualize literacy in the first place” (1998, 96). He presented media not only as a conduit that holds and sends messages but also as distinct languages that use different production variables,

depending on the medium. His research findings echoed many of McLuhan's conclusions.

New media add another wrinkle to the literacy debate, especially as researchers seek to extend well-worn conceptions to computers, the cybernetics, Internet, networks and digital. According to researcher Sonia Livingstone:

“The crucial point is not that computers are replacing television, just as television did not replace print; rather, people now engage with a media environment which integrates print, audiovisual, telephony, and computer media. Hence, we need a conceptual framework that spans these media. Literacy seems to do the work required here: It is pan-media in that it covers the interpretations of all complex, mediated symbolic texts broadcast or published on electronic communications networks; at the same time, because historically it has been tied to particular media forms and technologies, literacy foregrounds the technological, cultural, and historical specificity of particular media as used in particular times and places” (2004, 5)

The nature of media not only compounds problems with finding appropriate labels but also explains the scarcity of literature on the “understanding media” issue. Researchers point to the fragmentation of the electronic media and predict an increase in the debate and the complexity of the issues. Others note that while the debate highlights issues related to older media, such as film and television, today's youth concentrate mainly on newer electronic media such as computers and the Internet. But some experts say that the predominant reason efforts to understand the media are not eagerly embraced in the United States is that Americans vehemently believe they are shrewd enough to know the literal meaning of media's messages and that is sufficient (Silverblatt 1995). Robert Kubey (1998), director of the Center for Media Studies at Rutgers University, said

that media often are seen as mainly entertainment. Also, some Americans view “media literacy” as merely the ability to adeptly play any video game on the market, program VCRs and surf the web with professional zeal. Given these obstacles, there’s little wonder that America, compared with other countries, is moving at a snail’s pace in the movement to teach schoolchildren strategies to understand media.

MEDIA EDUCATION

Media education is the term widely used in Europe. In the United Kingdom, media education has a long history that began in 1933 with research by literacy critic F.R. Leavis and his student, Denys Thompson. They took the approach now known as inoculation because they proposed classroom exercises that taught students to critique popular culture with skepticism about its purpose and intent. But soon theorists began to understand that cultural expression takes many forms and involved students’ everyday experiences. In comparing Britain’s beginnings of media literacy with America’s initiation, David Buckingham noted that a “moral defensiveness” permeates U.S. efforts. Buckingham, now professor of education at the Institute of Education, London University, attributed that to anxieties about the effects of sex and violence in the media and, to some extent, about the media’s role in promoting consumerism and materialism. He acknowledged, though, that his search has determined that media education in general is proposed as a way of dealing with some very wide and complex social problems (Buckingham 1998).

In Canada, Australia and England, a course in media literacy *is required to graduate* from secondary schools. Media education is now mandated in the

English/Language Arts curriculum in every Province in Canada. The Ontario Ministry of Education's 1989 Media Literacy Resources guide notes that Canadian students, by the end of high school, will have spent 11,000 hours in school, compared to more than 15,000 hours watching television and 10,500 hours listening to popular music. In other media exposure, the document notes the students will have viewed hundreds of films and been exposed to innumerable advertisements.

Since the mid-1990s, Australian language teachers have been mandated to teach nonprint media from kindergarten through 12th grade. Reviewing documents by Victoria's Board of Studies, researcher David Considine explained that Australia's rationale for media education is that media significantly impacts people's lives by influencing the way they spend their time, helping shape the way they perceive themselves and others, and playing a crucial role in the creation of personal, social cultural and national identity (Considine 2002, 8). He added that media studies include a two-hour examination that involves, among a host of things, media production and design, social values and communication theories and models.

In England, thousands of high school students are tested in media studies. Again, Considine said that the British Film Institute has been the most consistent in its use and promotion of media literacy. He explained that the institute not only has published widely but also developed curricula and engaged in teacher training.

Despite trailing other countries, America is making vigorous efforts to implement rigorous standards in all U.S. public schools. All 50 U.S. states have incorporated in academic standards some language dealing with media literacy; most appear in English,

social studies or health classes. One common complaint heard both inside and outside the education community is that these curricular guidelines are either completely ignored by teachers, not handled in a comprehensive fashion in classrooms or have little impact. However, the standards do incorporate the five key questions that the main media theorists and researchers agree (Hobbs 1998) students should be taught:

1. Who's the author and what's the purpose?
2. What's left out?
3. What techniques are used to grab my attention?
4. How are different values, lifestyles, and beliefs presented?
5. How might another person see this message differently than I do (How is it intended to influence me)?

There has been some success since media education gained more visibility in K-12 schools during the 1990s. Florida has "Responsible Health Behavior Benchmarks" for grades 7 through 9. In one Florida standard, "the student analyzes the influence of culture, media, technology and other factors on health." Specifically, students are to "know" how messages from media and other sources influence health behavior. Pennsylvania added a Communications standard in January 2001 that included history of various media and basic techniques of broadcasting media, print media and film. The standard said that Pennsylvania students also were to study the functions of mass media and critically assess it. North Carolina made visual literacy a goal as early as 1985. And a recent analysis of that state's media education program drew praise from Kubey and Frank Baker of the Partnership for Media Education. The two also described California's

history/ social sciences research framework for grades 9-12 as among the most complete. A recent resolution by the National Council of Teachers of English's board of directors pledged to its 60,000 member teachers to encourage pre-service, in-service and staff development programs that will focus on "new literacies, multimedia composition and a broadened concept of literacy."

Kubey and Baker point to Texas as having the most developed and comprehensive media education framework. Media literacy expert Renee Hobbs (2004) noted that the state of Texas codified media literacy in 1998 and since then, resources and curriculum materials have rapidly increased for K-12 educators and the more than 4 million K-12 students enrolled in Texas schools. The state offers a high school elective course in media literacy and emphasized the concept in English language arts and reading in grades 4 through 12. Students also are encouraged to use photography, video cameras, microphones, presentation and graphic design software and other media formats and technology tools to create their own media messages. In recent years, the state test has been revamped to include media-literacy questions and officials attest to improved test scores. In both Texas and Maryland, Discovery Communications Inc. has partnered with state education agencies on media education initiatives on technology skills. The cable association also is involved in the Texas effort and a similar project in Colorado, which supports a day-long staff development program for 3,000 teachers.

Development and implementation of standards are one issue, approaches to teaching are another.

Educators have diverse and conflicting perspectives about the mass media. Most have a love-hate relationship with the mass media that is

complex and multidimensional, which shapes their instructional practices in the classroom. Because of this diversity, different approaches to media literacy are emerging simultaneously in the 15,000 school districts in the United States as educators begin introducing students to instructional practices of media analysis and media production (Hobbs 2004, 43).

Hobbs (1998) identified several “foundational” debates that define the field of inquiry for practitioners at the present time. One debate, known as the protectionist or inoculation, is “Should media literacy education aim to protect children and young people from negative media influences?” Buckingham makes a strong case when he agreed in a 1998 paper that educators should seek to nurture children’s natural emotional engagement with the media and the genuine pleasures they receive. Other countries reject this approach for reasons of class bias and elitism. But in America, educators said that this approach to media literacy tends to get the most funding and corporate/foundation support or approval by parents, administrators and government officials (Kubey 1998). Another debate surrounds the merits and pitfalls of using popular media texts in elementary and secondary school classrooms. Also, educators contemplate whether media literacy should have a more explicit political and ideological agenda. For example, teachers may see it as a vehicle to promote social changes in students’ attitudes about racism, sexism, violence or homophobia. Hobbs, in the past, questioned the willingness of power brokers – educators, parents and administrators – to revamp the educational systems. According to Hobbs (1998, 24), “Are U.S. public schools likely to change within the next 20 years in the fairly dramatic ways that media literacy would require? Instead of reading eight classic novels in the 10th grade, how many communities will

accept the practice of students reading four books, studying two films, and analyzing a newsmagazine and a web site?”

Also at issue is whether media literacy should be taught as a specialist subject or integrated within the context of an already overcrowded curriculum. Officials of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills say that media literacy is not a new subject to teach but rather a new *way* to teach and even more important, *a new way to learn*. Teachers must learn to handle traditional subjects in ways that reflect the realities of today’s information age.

And, finally, parents don’t quite comprehend why their children should study the media when their preference is that their children watch less television and have less involvement with different media. But officials at the Center for Media Literacy insist that “the field has matured to a greater understanding” of media’s potential, “not just as a new kind of literacy but also as the engine for transforming the very nature of learning in a global multimedia environment.”

A FRESH LOOK AT THE MEDIA LITERATE CITIZEN-CONSUMER

There are gaps in knowledge in the prevailing literature on understanding media – media literacy. The *American Behavioral Scientist* journal devoted its September 2004 issue to the topic: “High Time for “Dis-Illusioning” Ourselves and Our Media: Media Literacy in the 21st Century.” Much of the material recapped, clarified or spotlighted portions of earlier work. This may be indicative of the struggles with labeling, definition and approach. Faith Rogow (2004), past president of the Alliance for a Media Literate America, predicts that media literacy education may one day become an academic field.

This is not a call to abandon media effects research or cultural criticism. To the contrary, we need to expand, not constrict, the research agenda. In particular, we need to help educators improve practice by investigating the efficacy of different kinds of media literacy education. There is, however, a clear message for researchers: Connect research to practice. Where research findings are accompanied by recommendations for action, the action needs to make pedagogical sense. To do that, researchers will need to develop models that account for things such as real-world repetitive viewing and listening patterns rather than single exposure. In addition, they will need to consider how a media literate person might respond differently than a person with no or limited media literacy skills before declaring that the power is in the medium rather than a combination of media and audience (Rogow 2004, 33).

The task of empowering students to actively participate in our Democratic society worries Kubey (2004), who raised concerns in his article “Media Literacy and the Teaching of Civics and Social Studies at the Dawn of the 21st Century.” He noted a precipitous drop in voter interests and turnout that coincided with an unprecedented rise in media and information technology. Mary-Lou Galician of Arizona State University added that “in 2000, more votes were cast for the candidates for ‘American Idol’ than for the candidates for U.S. president. Many nonvoters in the political arena said they could not see a difference between the presidential candidates.” The solution Kubey offered is the teaching of civics and social studies through media literacy. He listed such programs as Kids Voting USA and Project Vote-Smart as examples.

Some recent research has explored the impact of media-literacy instruction on the cognitive skills, attitudes, and behaviors of young people, says Hobbs. Little has been published. Hobbs’ interest in the impact of media literacy on the development of reading

comprehension and writing skills led her and colleague Richard H. Frost at Babson College, Wellesley, MA, to a project at Concord (MA) High School. The two evaluated the impact of a secondary language arts curriculum, exploring whether it improved skills of message analysis (Hobbs 2003). A key finding was “media literacy instruction improves students’ ability to identify main ideas in written, audio, and visual media.” Students also showed an ability to “identify the purpose, target audience, point of view, construction techniques used in media messages, and the ability to identify omitted information from a news media broadcast in written, audio, or visual formats,” the study showed. But Hobbs and Frost concluded that “further work is necessary to identify the best practices that lead to the greatest increase in skills over time” (2003, 352).

Buckingham, in a summer 2005 issue of *The Journal of Media Literacy*, stressed the importance of approach in media education. He disputed the notion that students passively accept the myriad messages of media as if they are incompetents, victims or dupes. In addition, he rejected the idea that teachers are saviors and that their mission, in instructing students about media, is to “rescue” students or “show them the error of their ways.”

“The media can be understood best if put in the context of other social, historical and cultural forces,” Buckingham said, “and that seeing this in terms of simple notions of ‘cause and effect’ often leads us to ignore the complexity of what we are concerned about.

“I am also saying that the media themselves are more diverse, and in some areas more contradictory, than is often assumed; and that they are used and interpreted in very

diverse ways – not least by the young people whom we teach,” said Buckingham (2005, 19).

A look at the history, growth and ubiquitous presence of media explains, and in some ways gives credence, to efforts to incorporate media literacy into the nation’s schools. But like all other movements, the review of literature not only details the complex nature of the effort but underscores reasons why success tends not to be uniform. The literature review also shows the gaps and the dearth of information about students’ view of media, which sets the stage for the current study. The next chapter explains in details how this research project began.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

STUDY DESIGN

Throughout the 2004-2005 school year, high school students in selected Pennsylvania and Florida schools completed an online survey that was posted on both the University of Maryland website and a USA TODAY link. The survey, cross-sectional research design was selected as the best way to address research questions (stated in Chapter 1) by making specific inquiries of students and then examining relationships among the variables. The survey method was selected despite the common knowledge that all surveys are basically exploratory and that the researcher can only make inferences because of its value in new areas of study. To compensate for shortcomings of survey methods, focus groups also were held at several of the survey sites in Pennsylvania and Florida.

As noted earlier, Pennsylvania and Florida were selected for study because both states have made efforts to incorporate “media literacy” into statewide curriculum standards. Geographic diversity also was a goal; in addition, USA TODAY has successful in-school newspaper programs in both states. By May 30, 2005, 358 students had completed the survey, including 29 students from Hayfield Secondary School, Alexandria, VA, who inadvertently participated. The Virginia student surveys were removed and replaced with results from 26 paper surveys of Philadelphia, PA, school students. The paper version was identical to the survey posted online. The Philadelphia students also participated in a discussion session with the researcher.

Nationally, more than 60 million students are in public and private elementary and secondary schools, according to U.S. Census Bureau 2003 statistics. That number includes more than 15 million in grades 9-12. So, the representativeness of this self-administered, small-scale survey was a key concern. An effort was made to collect as large a sample size as possible but circumstances beyond the control of the researcher limited the size to the 355. With this number, the researcher succeeded in maintaining a 95% confidence level to assure the generalizability of the survey results. Teenage Research Unlimited identified its teen market as between the ages of 12 to 19; this age range was the initial target group for the survey too. While middle school students initially were to be included in the sample, alpha and beta tests conducted after development of the survey showed that numerous adjustments would have to be made, reducing the reliability of the results. The survey, in its final version, was intended for high school students in grades 9-12. So, the age range would be from 13-years-old to about 19-years-old.

Four main sources provided the student sample. First, sales representatives from USA TODAY's in-school newspaper program in Pennsylvania and Florida were asked to contact schools or teachers. When that effort faltered, a directory of high school teachers certified by the Journalism Education Association was consulted to identify teachers willing to ask their students to complete the online survey. Also, e-mails and telephone calls were made to solicit help from fellows of the High School Journalism Institute of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. Other names of teachers, schools and administrators were procured through friends and relatives.

Throughout the search for participants, the goal was to identify *teachers* willing to support the effort. So, while the teachers may have been specialists in journalism, media or Yearbooks, the students were not necessarily interested or involved in the subjects. High school teachers tend to teach a wide range of students. Of the participating students, here is a breakdown by the high schools represented and the order in which the survey was completed:

# of Students	High School name, city	County	Region
<u>14</u> :	Jean Ribault Senior HS, Jacksonville, FL	(Duval)	Urban
<u>1</u> :	Pottsville Area HS, Pottsville, PA	(Schuylkill)	Rural
<u>46</u> :	John Harris HS, Harrisburg, PA	(Dauphin)	Urban
<u>1</u> :	Choctawhatchee HS, Fort Walton Beach, FL	(Okaloosa)	Suburban
<u>23</u> :	South Plantation HS, Plantation, FL	(Broward)	Urban
<u>17</u> :	Garden Spot HS, New Holland, PA	(Eastern Lancaster)	Rural
<u>33</u> :	Southeast HS, Bradenton, FL	(Manatee)	Urban
<u>47</u> :	William Boone HS, Orlando, FL	(Orange)	Urban
<u>53</u> :	Neshaminy HS, Langhorne, PA	(Bucks)	Suburban
<u>5</u> :	Downingtown East HS, Exton, PA	(Chester)	Suburban
<u>26</u> :	Dobbins AVTS, Philadelphia, PA	(Philadelphia)	Urban
<u>89</u> :	South Western HS, Hanover, PA	(York)	Rural

Deciding the type of region for each school was difficult because a school may be located in a metropolis, in the middle of a mid-sized city or in an area that's considered the outskirts of a city but so heavily populated that the count rivals those within the city limits. So, the school regions were decided according to U.S. Census Bureau information, which also is used by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), a division of

the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI).

The teachers, once they agreed to help, used their own methods to select students and encourage participation. The same was true for principals and department heads who identified teachers within the school. Both the University of Maryland and USA TODAY enforced strict rules related to use of students in the project. For example, Maryland did not approve the project until the Institutional Review Board agreed that the "Informed Consent Form" and the student "Assent Form" were appropriately developed with sensitivity (Appendix F). USA TODAY attorneys required that the survey include the caution that the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act limited the amount of information that students under age 13 could provide such as age, grade, family makeup, gender, race or details of family life.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

Of the 355 participating students, 147 (41.3%) identified themselves as male and 196 (55.1%) as female (Appendix B). The rest, 13 (3.7%), either marked both sexes or skipped the question. The majority of the students, 270 or 75.8%, were between the ages of 16 and 18 years old; 55 or 15.4% were between 13-15 years old and 21 or 5.9% were between 19-21 years old. The remaining did not answer. The majority of the students were seniors, 149 or 41.9%. However, 57 or 16% were freshmen, 69 or 19.4% were in 10th grade and 71 or 19.9% were in the 11th grade. The rest of the students did not answer that question. The majority of the students were white (222 or 62.4%), while 86 or 24.2% were African-American, 21 or 5.9% were Hispanic-American and seven or 2% were Asian-American. Twelve students marked "other," meaning that their race or

ethnicity was not listed, they were biracial or declined to answer. Fortunately, the racial breakdown of the students mirrored that of the United States. According to the latest U.S. Census Bureau statistics, 75.1% of Americans are white, 12.3% are black and 12.5% make up the other races with the majority of them being Hispanic. Within the regions, the racial breakdown was:

	African-American	Hispanic-American	Asian-American	White
Urban	44.6% (82)	10.3% (19)	2.2% (4)	39.1% (72)
Suburban	1.7% (1)	1.7% (1)	5.2% (3)	87.9% (51)
Rural	2.8% (3)	.9% (1)	.0% (0)	93.4% (99)

To get a feel for the students' backgrounds, questions were asked about their families. Most of the students, 91.4%, said they have brothers and/or sisters and the majority, 58.7%, lives with both parents. About 31% said they live with their mother, 3.5% live with their father and 6.9% live with neither. The educational level of both parents tended to be about the same with 42.5% of students saying their dad graduated from college and 57.5% saying he did not. The percentages were nearly the same for the mothers, 42.6% graduated from college and 57.4% did not.

STUDENTS TELL HOW THEY USE MEDIA

As far as media use, students acknowledged spending more hours watching television than reading magazines and even less time reading newspapers (Appendix B). For example, when asked "How many hours a week do you spend" watching television, students were divided between 0-5 hours (40.8%) and 6-10 hours (35.5%). While 15.6% of the students acknowledged watching TV 11 to 15 hours a week, nearly half that

number (8.1%) confessed to spending 16-20 hours watching TV. However, most of the students said they spend only up to five hours reading magazines and newspapers.

When reading newspapers, students say the news section is not the first they select. A quarter of the students said they read the sports section first and then news, followed by the entertainment, style and arts sections. The actual question was: “When you read the newspaper to which section are you likely to go?” The choices offered were: news, sports, comic strips, entertainment/style/the arts, editorial, business, metro, and health/science.

Table 1 Responses to other media use questions:

	“watch TV news shows in school” 18.3% yes 39.4% sometimes 42.3% no	“watch most at home” 68.6% entertainment TV 12.1% television news 19.3% other
“read newspapers at school” 41.5% yes 44.4% sometimes 14.1% no	“when” 58.5% morning 9.2% lunch period 32.3% afternoon	“where” 88.3% classroom 3.2% lunchrm/lounge 8.5% elsewhere
“read newspapers outside of school” 29.2% yes 52.0% sometimes 18.8% no	“when” 26.4% morning 27.1% afternoon 46.5% evening	“where” 89.7% home 2.6% library 7.6% elsewhere
“how much do you use the Internet for news” 22.7% a lot 47.2% sometimes 19.1% not much at all 11.0% does not apply to me	“use internet for fun and games” 61.7% yes 28.2% sometimes 10.1% no	“how much” 37.9% a lot 34.7% sometimes 20.0% not much at all 7.4% does not apply to me

Because of the wide array of variables for the sample, explanations for data results could consider the students’ age, grade, region, education of parents and exposure to various types of media.

SURVEY CONSTRUCTION

Young people are considered important consumers in America, a fact supported by a host of statistics. But, are high school students aware of the impact media play in making decisions to buy or in the particular purchases they make? Do today's students have the skills or understand the need to acquire the skills to interpret words, pictures, graphics, art, movements, behaviors, voices and other symbols used by the media to advance a message? The survey was developed with these questions in mind. The ultimate purpose – as is the scientific tradition of most academic surveys – was to gather information that can be used to build or test theories explaining behavior.

The questions dealt mainly with use of television, newspapers and magazines, with only a few questions about Internet use near the back of the survey. The Internet was mentioned just to acknowledge its emerging importance in society. Newspapers were an obvious choice, considering that USA TODAY offered in-kind service to post the survey online. Also, the researcher's entire journalism career has been with the print media, mainly with wire services and newspapers. Historically, school children have been exposed to in-school newspapers since the late 1800s – long before television and radio were ever contemplated. The researcher's interest in print extends to magazines. In addition, magazines are popular among youth. Reading literacy must be at the foundation of all media before students can acquire an adequate depth of understanding. So naturally, print media are essential in the development of basic literacy skills, regardless of today's preference for electronic media. Television became a focus of the survey

because of its widespread popularity and appeal to all ages, races, ethnicities and socio-economic groups; Print and broadcast are inextricably linked (Roberts 2005).

Deciding what to ask, the wording of the questions and response choices took some research and careful thought. The survey was divided into several parts: How students “say” they are influenced; students’ opinion about the believability of media’s portrayal of categories of people; students’ awareness of media’s impact; students’ understanding of the media and the depth of that understanding. The final questions asked for personal information that included students’ own assessment of their media use. In most instances, the students were offered closed-ended questions to which they were given three to four possible responses.

Questions 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7 dealt with how much students “say” they are influenced by the media. They were asked:

Q1: How likely are you to:

- Dress like someone on TV, in a newspaper ad or in a teen or fashion magazine?
- Buy a toy or game seen on a TV commercial, in a magazine of any kind or discussed/debuted in a newspaper?
- See a movie, play or show reviewed on TV, reviewed in a magazine or reviewed in a newspaper?
- Attend a party or sporting event (basketball, hockey) advertised on TV, in a magazine or in a newspaper?

Q2: Have you ever done any of the following:

- Used an idea from a TV show or article you read.
- Aspired to a career touted on TV (such as Crime Scene Investigator like on “CSI”)
- Tried to create a job seen in an AD (selling lemonade on a street corner)
- Applied for a job you saw on television or in the newspaper

Q 5, 6, 7: How likely are you to use magazines – whether teen, news, etc. – television and newspapers to decide:

- Which snacks to buy or eat
- What issues to be concerned about
- Which beverage to buy or drink
- A goal or career
- Whom to date
- If you are popular or cool
- What to wear
- An answer to a problem
- What to do on a date
- Where to go for recreation
- If you are handsome/beautiful
- What's important in the world
- What you think about
- About other cultures and ethnic groups
- Which cosmetics/shaving materials to buy-use

The list of choices included tangible items such as food and clothing, suggested behaviors, and intangible things like ideas, beliefs and issues.

Questions 3 and 4 focused on students' opinions, which are easier to elicit in wording questions than students' attitudes. Students were asked about the "truthfulness" of newspapers and entertainment TV's portrayal of these groups of people: teenage boys and girls, parents, people who are religious, people with drinking or drug problems, foreigners or immigrants, African-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, high school students, the wealthy, the poor, Asian-Americans and the elderly.

Question 10 dealt with how well students understand the media. Students were asked to agree or disagree with various statements about the media. Granted that no question is worded perfectly, but an effort was made to create quality questions without bias. Within the list, statements 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18 dealt more with a basic understanding, while statements 1, 2, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13 concerned a more sophisticated level of awareness.

Q10: List whether you agree with the following:

1. Media always tell the truth.
2. Media can make me do something I'd never done before.
3. Minorities are underrepresented in the media.
4. Media reflect that Americans are loved throughout the world.
5. My friends and I may get different messages from the same TV show.
6. Only a few people decide which articles are published in newspapers or magazines.
7. I learn a lot from television
8. I learn more from reading newspapers than I do from watching television.
9. I learn more from watching television than I do from reading newspapers and magazines
10. Television's mission is to educate and inform the public.
11. Newspapers' mission is to educate and inform the public.
12. Advertisements are only for entertainment.
13. Television tells you about the real world.
14. Media offer a lot of good ideas and advice.
15. Television shows starring women tend to have less violence.
16. Television shows featuring African Americans tend to have more violence.
17. Media do a good job of showing how celebrities really live.
18. Media do a good job of understanding the needs and issues of the poor.

Questions 9, 11, 13, 18 and 19 also looked at a more mature understanding of the media. Question 9 asked students if, when watching any television show, they can “tell the truth about a character” by facial expression, language used, angle of the camera, way he or she walks, color of his or her clothing and gestures. Questions 15 and 16 asked about media costs. Questions 18 and 19 asked about identifying mistakes on television and in newspapers.

In addition to the closed-ended questions, opened-ended approaches were used for Questions 11 and 13, which dealt with media ownership. Students were asked to explain

their answers to the questions “Is it important to know who owns” a television station, newspaper or magazine.

The ultimate goal of the survey was to elicit consistent, credible responses to the questions posed in Chapter 1, and to accurately measure the concepts of interest. Since the target was high school students, the questions were short, direct and free from jargon. Questions were phrased so that answers could be interpreted unambiguously. Double-barreled questions and those that could be misunderstood were eliminated. The order of questions also was considered, especially as it related to a particular medium. For example, in Q1, the order of the media was TV, magazines and then newspapers. Most of question 2 dealt with the electronic media. However, Q3 began with newspapers, while Q 4 focused on entertainment TV. The reason for the focus on the order of questions was addressed in a study by Jon Krosnick who found that respondents may be influenced by the order in which items appear in a survey. In the case of Krosnick’s survey, however, it was the order of candidates’ names on election ballots (Miller, Krosnick 1998).

The questionnaire was organized so that one question flowed from another in a comfortable or “non-threatening” way. Questions on similar topics were grouped together.

GETTING RELIABLE ANSWERS

Great effort was made to create answers for the closed-ended questions that were not biased and accounted for all possible opinions. Research showed that a respondent can make up to seven distinctions reliably (Weisberg 1977). So, intensity was added to the responses by asking if the student was (1) very likely (2) likely (3) unlikely and (4)

Not likely at all. Variations of that were: (1) very truthful (2) truthful (3) somewhat truthful and (4) not truthful at all; and (1) very often (2) often (3) seldom and (4) never. To avoid order-effect, also known as “acquiescence,” the survey, particularly in Question 10, asserts certain notions and then offers the reverse in others (Krosnick 1999).

A “no opinion” option was added to a few questions to avoid or reduce the number of students who might randomly select a response even when they have no true opinions (Krosnick 2002). However, researchers also note that some people will mark the “no opinion” box to avoid revealing how they really feel about an issue or to circumvent critical thinking efforts.

TESTING THE SURVEY

Initially, a paper draft of the survey was developed, with assistance from Drs. McAdams and Cordes. At this time, the idea was to use both middle and high school students in the research project. Accordingly, the survey was tested in late February and early March 2004 on two middle school students, a boy and girl, both African Americans who live in Prince George’s County. In separate meetings, the youth were asked to complete the survey and then discuss each question and their answers. The girl, aged 13, appeared to have a greater understanding of media and noted she occasionally reads *The Washington Post*, which is delivered to her home, and subscribes to *Teen People* and *Word Up* magazines. The boy, aged 12, admitted that he seldom reads the newspaper but his mother subscribes to *Time* and *People* magazines, which he occasionally reads. The parents of both youth control the amount of time they watch television. Based on these

interviews, some of the survey questions were modified to include the phrase “you and your friends.”

In mid-March 2004, a Beta Test was conducted on a group of students at Northwestern High School in Hyattsville, MD. Despite promises of pizza and soda, efforts to get a diverse group failed. About 15 African Americans - one boy and 14 girls - completed the survey and participated in a focus group led by Dr. McAdams. This session revealed problems with the numbering of survey questions. Some students also felt the survey was too limited by focusing on only television, magazines and newspapers. They wanted radio and movies included. From this group, though, the survey results showed that newspapers were more credible to these students than television, although television apparently was the favorite. To these students, television’s message was more accepted on material things like makeup and activities. Newspapers appeared to be opinion leaders on key issues and cultural matters, and on what should be considered important. Magazines seemed to have little, if any influence on these teens.

Then, on April 28, 2004, a final test was conducted at Walter Johnson High School in Bethesda, MD. The “Introduction to Journalism” class consisted of 18 students who were taking the year-long elective as a requirement for writing for the school newspaper. The students were a mixture of 10th through 12th graders with two Hispanics and the rest white; they all appeared quite familiar with the media. Teacher Hilary G. Gates said that she subscribes to *The Washington Post Sunday* newspaper, which arrives at the school on Tuesday. But she noted that most students read the newspaper online and “it’s hard to justify buying the paper.”

After completing the survey, the students were quite critical of many of its aspects. The survey was changed drastically and narrowed to focus on high school students. As with the Northwestern students, this group at Walter Johnson showed that newspapers have a great deal of influence on intellectual concerns such as setting goals and choosing cultural activities, but little on buying products. There seemed to be some confusion over who or what pays most of the costs for media, which was surprising considering the students' maturity and sophistication in other areas.

LAUNCHING THE POLISHED INSTRUMENT

In early November, the survey was put online through the colorful, user-friendly Zoomerang software program that USA TODAY uses frequently. A website, with a joint University of Maryland/ USA TODAY logo, was created that outlined the project and stressed confidentiality so students were fully aware of what they were being asked to do and why (Appendix A). With Zoomerang, students punch buttons that indicate "yes," "no" and other quick responses as well as provide longer typed answers to open-ended question. This online version was tested by more than 100 University of Maryland students enrolled in a beginning journalism class. The majority were freshmen who volunteered to complete the survey after their first class of the semester.

Zoomerang automatically tallies responses, providing access to the aggregate results of all respondents and showing which school did and did not respond. Offline, the raw data was viewed via a download into Excel and then transferred to SPSS, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. I agreed to destroy the data after one year.

THE QUALITATIVE TOUCH

Four focus groups and a chat session were held to compensate for limitations the survey may have as far as students with reading problems and limited test-taking skills. Questions ranged from those about media use habits to those investigating students' concerns about violence and truthfulness of media. The discussions enabled students to elaborate on their answers and the opinions that were briefly stated in the survey. In a few instances, students revealed some related but unanticipated concerns in the groups. The focus group chapter follows a thorough analysis of the data in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4

DATA ANALYSIS

WHAT INFLUENCES STUDENTS?

A majority of the 355 Florida and Pennsylvania high school students completing the survey during the 2004-2005 school year denied media's power over their choice of clothing and in certain other aspects of their social life. The students' mindset, although self-reported, repeatedly countered popular belief that media greatly influences teens' purchasing habits and challenged the intent of businessmen who invest billions of dollars to influence students' perceptions, choices and behaviors. Overall, student responses indicated both interest in and distrust of media, with significant differences appearing when results were analyzed by medium and by gender and race of respondents.

Of the media listed in the survey, newspaper fashions encountered the greatest resistance: 89% of the students said they were "unlikely" or "not likely at all" to "dress like someone in a newspaper ad." A similar response came from 56% of the students reacting to television, while 59% said the same for magazines (Appendix C – items 1, 5, 9). When asked "how likely are you to use" newspapers, TV or magazines to decide "what to wear," again students were vehemently opposed to using newspapers with solid majorities saying "unlikely" or "not likely at all" to TV and magazines (Appendix C - 4). As far as attending a party or sporting event advertised in media, the response was similar to that of clothing. Sixty-eight percent said they were "unlikely" or "not likely at all" to

attend a party or sporting event advertised in a magazine, compared to 60% that felt that way about newspaper ads and 53% about television ads (Appendix C – items 4, 8, 12).

Interestingly, though, a large percentage of students – though not a majority – were “likely to” dress like someone in a television commercial or magazine ad and, they were willing to use magazines to decide what to wear.

Table 2 Clothing/Fashions in Media

	Television		Newspaper ad		Magazine ad	
<i>How likely are you to:</i>						
Dress like someone on/in	4.6%	very likely	3.4%	very likely	8.3%	very likely
	39.2%	likely	7.5%	likely	33.1%	likely
	33.1%	unlikely	33.6%	unlikely	29.6%	unlikely
	23.1%	not likely at all	55.5%	not likely at all	29.0%	not likely at all
	(Appendix B)					
	Magazines		Television		Newspapers	
<i>How likely are you to use</i>						
<i>to decide:</i>						
What to wear	10.0%	very likely	10.6%	very likely	2.5%	very likely
	34.8%	likely	31.7%	likely	8.0%	likely
	27.1%	unlikely	33.5%	unlikely	33.4%	unlikely
	28.0%	not likely at all	24.2%	not likely at all	56.1%	not likely at all
	(Appendix C)					

Students acknowledged taking media’s advice when searching for an interesting movie, play or show. For example, 89% were “very likely” or “likely” to see a movie, play or show reviewed on TV, 70% would use a magazine review and 66% would use newspapers. In each case, the “very likely” and “likely” posted strong percentages of students (Appendix C – items 3, 7, 11). However, television was the only winner in regard to the question “How likely are you to ‘buy a toy or game seen’ on a TV commercial.”

Table 3 Toys, Games and Gadgets in Media

<i>How likely are you to:</i>	Television	Newspaper ad	Magazine ad
Buy a toy or game seen on/in a	55.6% very likely/ likely	24.2% very likely/ likely	42.6% very likely/ likely
	44.4% unlikely/not likely at all	75.8% unlikely/not likely at all	57.4% unlikely/not likely at all (Appendix C)

The survey is merely a microculture and the data can in no way be generalized to the entire U.S. teen population. However, voluminous information can be extrapolated from the survey results to assist in understanding the perspective of high school students. The results discussed so far look at one variable at a time, a process based on the simplest kind of analysis that can be performed. Although these results represent merely the first step of the analysis, they do provide a glimpse into how, why and in what ways students are influenced. Consider other questions that deal directly with the influence of students. A large majority of students acknowledged using ideas promoted on television or in a newspaper or magazine article. What isn't known is whether the ideas were positive or negative, for self improvement or social promotion.

Table 4 Media and Ideas

Have you ever done any of the following:

	No	Yes
Used an idea from a TV show or article you read:	22%	78%

(Appendix C)

On the surface, statistics about using a TV idea may seem innocuous. But the data take on greater significance when viewed in context with other recent information. For example, a 1999 Kaiser Family Foundation report called "Kids & Media @ The New Millennium" said that children between 2-years and 18-years-old spend an average of about 5.5 hours a day at home watching television, playing video games, surfing the Web

or using some other form of media. Officials acknowledge that little is known about how this media affect their cognitive, emotional and social development, and whether the impact is positive, negative or neutral.

When the students’ race and gender were taken into account, interesting results were noted. The 78% of students who said “yes” to using an idea from a TV show or article included 81.5% of the females and 73.8% of the males. The majority of students of all races admitted to using an idea from TV and newspapers.

Table 5 Media and Ideas Through the Race Lens

	<i>Have you ever done any of the following?</i>			
Used an idea from a TV Show or article you read:	African/ American	Hispanic/ American	Asian/ American	White
YES	70.0%	66.7%	100%	80.5%
NO	30.0%	33.3%	0%	19.5%
Mean (based on 1 to 2 scale with 1 denoting influence): 1.219				
Sig < 1.0				

Looking at earlier questions through the lens of gender and race shows that students apparently paid more attention to television’s messages than they did to the messages of newspapers and magazines (Appendix D). For example, on the issue of dress, females were nearly split down the middle about dressing “like someone on TV.” But 65% of the males said it was “unlikely.” As far as the regional breakdown, 52% of students in urban areas admitted they were likely to dress like someone on TV, while 64% of students in suburban areas and 66% of those in rural areas said it is “unlikely” they would dress like someone on TV.

Which racial group was likely to “dress like someone on TV?” In Appendix D, data showed Hispanic-Americans were (63.2%), followed by African-Americans (60.5%)

and Asian Americans (57.1%). However, 65.3% of whites said it was “unlikely” and “not likely at all” that they would dress like someone on TV. Only 35% of whites said they were “very likely” or “likely” to dress like someone on TV. This breakdown raises interesting questions about the relationship between media influence and students’ knowledge and perception of media.

Overall, students denied being swayed by fashions in magazines. But, when divided by gender, the majority of females (53%) said they were likely to “dress like someone in a teen or fashion magazine.”

Again, 80% to more than 90% of the students denied being tempted to dress like someone in a newspaper ad. Gender and race made little difference in that attitude (Appendix D – items 1, 5, 9).

While students denied magazines’ influences in most areas, one-third to a fourth of the teens acknowledged use of this medium to decide “which cosmetics/shaving materials to buy-use” and “what to do on a date,” among a few other categories. The females apparently relied more on magazine fashions than males (Appendix D).

As a testament to television’s impact, 54% of the students said they were “very likely” or “likely” to use TV when determining which snacks to buy and 53% gave a similar response to “which beverage to drink.” However, 71% said they were “unlikely or not likely at all” to use magazines to decide on snacks and 84% said the same about using newspapers. As for beverages, 69% were “unlikely or not likely at all” to use magazine and 83% said the same about using newspapers (Appendix C - 1, 2).

This time, geography, race and gender made a difference. Urban students apparently acknowledged heeding TV's messages more than their peers in suburbia and rural areas (Appendix D). For example, half of the urban respondents said they were likely to use television to decide "what to wear" and "which cosmetics or shaving materials to buy," while large majorities of students in other regions said they were unlikely to do so. More than 70% of the African-American students agreed they were likely to use TV to decide about snacks and beverages.

Students acknowledged acting on TV's messages beyond the level of immediate gratification or materialism. When asked "what issues to be concerned about," 53.3% of the students said they were "very likely" and "likely" to use television. In this realm of ideology, newspapers competed with television's influence. On the question of issues, a close 52.3% of all the students said they would use newspapers, while 55% would use newspapers to decide "what's important in the world." Of those percentages, 56.5% of the females would use newspapers in deciding on issues. The females also took the lead on the "what's important" question as 57% said they would likely use newspapers to decide and 53% of the males said this.

The racial breakdown provided interesting insights. Eighty-six percent of Asian Americans and 56% of African-Americans said they were likely to use newspapers to decide "what issues to be concerned about." Sixty-five percent of Hispanic-Americans said they were unlikely to use this medium in this way. At 57%, Asian students had the only majority that said they would use newspapers in deciding on goals or careers. And,

in each racial group, the majority said they would use the newspaper to decide “what’s important in the world.”

Table 6	Media and Issues through the Race Lens		
<i>How likely are you to use to decide:</i>	Magazines	TV	Newspapers
What issues to be concerned about			
African-American	53% likely 47% unlikely	56% likely 44% unlikely	56% likely 44% unlikely
Hispanic-American	40% likely 60% unlikely	60% likely 40% unlikely	35% likely 65% unlikely
Asian-American	29% likely 71% unlikely	86% likely 14% unlikely	86% likely 14% unlikely
White	43% likely 57% unlikely	51% likely 49% unlikely	52% likely 48% unlikely
What’s important in the world			
African-American	40.5% likely 59.5% unlikely	57% likely 43% unlikely	59.5% likely 40.5% unlikely
Hispanic-American	45% likely 55% unlikely	42% likely 58% unlikely	50% likely 50% unlikely
Asian-American	14% likely 86% unlikely	57% likely 43% unlikely	57% likely 43% unlikely
White	30% likely 70% unlikely	47% likely 53% unlikely	55% likely 45% unlikely

The statistics used to develop this chart, taken from Appendix D, provided interesting information. Only the percentages dealing with the newspaper categories were statistically significant ($p < .05$), while the data for magazines approached significance and that listed for television apparently was not significant as determined by Pearson Chi-Square tests.

Students showed themselves to be quite savvy about who or what pays media’s bill as 59% said advertising pays most of the costs for television and 47% said the same about newspaper and magazine costs(Appendix D). About 75% to 100% of advertising revenue pays for costs of media, and this is particularly true for newspapers and

television. Television networks and radio stations also earn revenue from affiliate fees and syndications. Statistics from the Magazine Publishers of America said that in 2004, advertising covered 67% of magazine costs. In this complex scheme, the product is the audience (people – rich, young, old, middle class and all the other various niche groups). To sell products and services, a corporation purchases audiences from the corporate media. For television, for example, producers sell programs to networks, which in turn sell time to advertisers; advertisers use that allotted time to sell products to viewers by using information about which audiences will likely respond. For newspapers, and other print media, advertisers typically buy space in the publication at a cost that's based on the paid circulation figures of the organization.

When broken down by race, African-Americans were the only group that did not have a majority in agreement about TV advertising. Asian-American students apparently understood the value of newspaper and magazine ads.

Table 7 Paying for Media				
<i>+*Which of the following pays most of the costs for Television</i>				
	African-American	Hispanic-American	Asian-American	White
Taxes	28.6%	15.0%	0%	12.3%
Cable fees	28.6%	25.0%	0%	19.1%
Advertising	32.1%	50.0%	57.1%	67.7%
Contributions	3.6%	0%	28.6%	0%
<i>*Which of the following pays most of the costs for Newspapers/magazines</i>				
	African-American	Hispanic-American	Asian-American	White
Taxes	15.5%	10.0%	0%	10.0%
Advertising	39.3%	40.0%	57.1%	48.4%
Contributions	3.6%	0%	0%	1.8%
Subscriptions	27.4%	20.0%	0%	33.3%
News stands, vending machines				
Grocery stores	9.5%	20.0%	28.6%	5.9%

+three cells (20%) had expected count less than 5 respondents
 *Pearson Chi-Square registers a statistically significant difference in every category

ARE STUDENTS COGNIZANT OF MEDIA?

One goal of the survey was to examine whether students know they are being influenced, while another objective was to determine whether students know the sources behind the message and understand the strategies employed to heighten the message's impact. What should be common knowledge among students and adults alike is that media messages are constructed and produced within economic, social, political, historical and aesthetic contexts. Each medium has unique characteristics that typify various forms, genres and symbols in efforts to communicate certain ideologies and value messages. And, people's understanding of reality is tinged by media's portrayals (Hobbs 1998). A 1993 study by cultivation theorist George Gerbner found that the TV audience tuned into a world in which men outnumbered women three to one during prime time. He also said: white males in the prime of life constituted 40% of all prime-time characters; mature women are usually witches or crazy; blacks, Hispanics and poor or foreign-born are victims; elderly in both sexes are generally underrepresented and seem to be vanishing instead of increasing, as in real life. Overlay these facts with the knowledge that the media are businesses that have commercial interests and that only half a dozen large corporations own all the most powerful media outlets in the United States. This information is empowering.

To reflect the goal, one research questions was: "How well do students interpret symbols, grammar or word choice, connotative images, facial expressions, posture, gestures, use of space and other nonverbal communication behaviors?" Students who understand the media know that elements such as color, shape and movement convey

ideological messages. These messages and the interpretation placed on the information by the journalists, actors and other media communicators affect how they see things, attribute meaning and understand social relationships. Question 9 of the survey sought to find answers to the research question by asking students outright the number of ways they can tell the truth about a character.

Generally, students understood the various subtle ways the media communicates. However, the most obvious strategies employed by media were unrecognized. More than 70% of the students said that “facial expression,” the “language used” and “gestures” help tell the truth about a character. However, only 25% of the students said that “angle of the camera” helped and 21% listed “color of clothing.” Admittedly, knowledge of such media production elements suggests a level of sophistication that may escape high school students in particular.

Table 8 (Based on question 9) **Understanding How Media Communicate**

When watching any television show, can you tell the truth about a character by the:

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Mean</i>
1. Facial expression	73.1%	26.9%	1.269
2. Language Used	72.2%	27.8%	1.278
3. Angle of the camera	25.1%	74.9%	1.749
4. Way he/she walks	47.7%	52.3%	1.522
5. Color of his/her clothing	21.0%	79.0%	1.790
6. Gestures	74.4%	25.6%	1.256

Mean is based on a 1-2 scale with 1 suggesting awareness.
Sig. < 1.0

Also school students cannot be expected to be conversant about some issues unique to media, including ownership. At their age, it probably means little to know that

only five huge corporations now control most of mass media, including almost all U.S. newspapers, magazines, TV and radio stations, books, records, movies, videos, wire services and photo agencies. The media conglomerates are: The Walt Disney Co., which also sells annually billions of dollars worth of books, toys, clothing and other consumer products; Viacom, formerly CBS, the world's largest provider of cable programming; News Corp., which is owned by Rupert Murdoch; Bertelsmann of Germany and Time Warner, the world's largest media corporation. NBC, which is owned by General Electric, is a close sixth. Newspapers, after television news, are the most influential information medium in the United States with an estimated 60 million copies sold daily, statistics show. Not only are most students oblivious to media influences but they tend to exude an indifference about the ignorance.

When asked "is it important to know who owns a television station," 18.7% said "yes" and 67.5% said "no." As far as knowing the owner of a newspaper or magazine, 26.7% said "yes" and 17.3% said "no." A majority of the students (55.9%) said "don't know" when asked about the value of knowing the owner of a newspaper. Students were asked "why or why not" for both questions and the top responses vied between "it doesn't matter" to "I don't care." One student volunteered that it would matter "only if it was owned by some serial killer." Another student said: "Because it's irrelevant to my enjoyment of it." It would be interesting to know, however, if students' apathy would change if they understood that despite the wide array of media, the multi-billion dollar media conglomerates are nearly monolithic and reinforce each other with a single view of the world. There are very few alternative sources of facts or ideas accessible to the

general U.S. population. For both “why?” questions, however, about a quarter of the students said “to get a particular perspective/agenda/point of view”(Appendix D).

Another goal was to determine the students’ level of awareness of media’s goals and purposes. The students’ perspective of the media and perceptiveness of their influences often culminated in dichotomous survey results as seen in Table 8. A majority of the Pennsylvania and Florida students asserted there is an element of truth to television and newspapers’ portrayals of people (Appendix E). This perspective is matched with the 90% in Question 1 who “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” that “media always tell the truth.” In other instances, however, students clearly were ambivalent about media and their influences. About three-fourths rejected the idea that “television tells you about the real world,” question 13, and that its mission is to “educate and inform,” question 10. If they believed that, then, why was the response of nearly half of the students that they “learn a lot from television” as noted in statement seven of question 10. Also, students apparently understood that there is a filtering process that determines what news actually reaches the public, particularly as it relates to newspapers (statement 6, Q10). But then, 80.5% said that newspaper’s mission is to “educate and inform.” This belief apparently transcended race.

Table 9

(Based on question 10)

Media Literacy

List whether you agree with the following:

	<i>Strongly agree/agree</i>		<i>disagree/strongly disagree</i>	
1. Media always tell the truth.	(2.9%/ 7.4%)	10.3%	(56.6%/ 33.1%)	89.7%
2. Media can make me do something I’d never done before.	(1.7%/ 31.3%)	33.0%	(46.6%/ 20.4%)	67.0%
3. Minorities are underrepresented in the media.	(7.8%/ 37.6%)	45.4%	(45.7%/ 9.0%)	54.7%

Table 9 – continued**Media Literacy***List whether you agree with the following:*

(Based on question 10)

	<i>Strongly agree/agree</i>	<i>disagree/strongly disagree</i>
4. Media reflect that Americans are loved throughout the world.	(3.4%/ 22.1%) 25.5%	(55.5%/ 19.0%) 74.5%
5. My friends and I may get different messages from the same TV show.	(19.1%/ 61.6%) 80.7%	(16.5%/ 2.9%) 19.4%
6. Only a few people decide which articles are published in newspapers or magazines.	(7.2%/ 51.0%) 58.2%	(36.2%/ 5.5%) 41.7%
7. I learn a lot from television.	(6.9%/ 42.7%) 49.6%	(42.4%/ 8.1%) 50.5%
8. I learn more from reading newspapers than I do from watching television.	(13.0%/ 35.7%) 48.7%	(40.6%/ 10.7%) 51.3%
9. I learn more from watching television than I do from reading newspapers/ magazines.	(11.4%/ 32.0) 43.4%	(45.7%/ 10.9%) 56.6%
10. Television’s mission is to educate and inform the public.	(2.3%/ 24.9%) 27.2%	(58.5%/ 14.3%) 72.8%
11. Newspapers’ mission is to educate and inform the public.	(23.6%/ 56.9%) 80.5%	(16.4%/ 3.2%) 19.6%
12. Advertisements are only for entertainment.	(3.8%/ 22.6%) 26.4%	(62.6%/ 11.0%) 73.6%
13. Television tells you about the real world.	(4.3%/ 23.8%) 28.1%	(51.6%/ 20.3%) 71.9%
14. Media offer a lot of good ideas and advice.	(2.6%/ 41.6%) 44.2%	(46.2%/ 9.5%) 55.7%
15. Television shows starring women tend to have less violence.	(5.2%/ 36.0%) 41.2%	(49.1%/ 9.6%) 58.7%
16. Television shows featuring African-Americans tend to have more violence.	(12.7%/ 35.2%) 47.9%	(41.8%/ 10.4%) 52.2%
17. Media do a good job of showing how celebrities really live.	(5.0%/ 27.1%) 32.1%	(49.9%/ 18.1%) 68%
18. Media do a good job of understanding the needs and issues of the poor.	(2.9%/ 19.7%) 22.6%	(49.9%/ 27.5%) 77.4%

The chart shows that students have a rudimentary understanding of television.

This is especially evident when broken down by race or region. In Appendix E, a majority of Hispanic-Americans (57%) and Asian-Americans (71%) agreed that

“television tells you about the real world,” while 79% of whites and 60% of blacks disagreed. This response, matched against results from related studies and focus group discussions, may suggest that television is perhaps being used by Hispanics and Asians more to learn and understand American language and culture, than entertainment. The credence of this idea is bolstered by the growing influx of immigrants who come to the United States with little understanding of English or American culture. So, a key question is “What else is being learned while using media to study language and culture?”

CROSSTABS ENHANCE BASIC FINDINGS

To further understand and explain the students’ survey responses and attitude, more than one variable was studied at a time. Based on the results, here are other interesting findings about students’ level of awareness of media’s influences:

- Of the 236 teens who disagreed that “media always tell the truth,” 78% said they have “used an idea from a TV show or an article” they’ve read.
- 84.3% of students who said they learn a lot from TV disagreed with the notion that “Media always tell the truth.”
- 53% of those who disagreed that “media always tell the truth” said they were likely to use newspapers to decide what issues to be concerned about.
- Twice as many people disagreed (as agree) that “media can make me do something I’d never done before,” yet, three-fourths -74% - of those who disagreed said they have used a TV idea. Eighty-five percent of those who agreed said they have used a TV idea.

- Of those who disagreed that media have power over their behavior, half said they'd used television to decide what issues to be concerned about and 47% said they'd used television to decide what's important.
- Of the students who disagreed that "media offer a lot of good ideas and advice," 53% said they used "newspapers to decide what is important in the world."
- Generally, the majority of those who said they learn a lot from television were likely to dress like someone on TV or used TV to decide what to wear. One third of those who disagreed with learning a lot from TV still acknowledged dressing like someone on TV or using TV to decide what to wear.
- The majority agreed that newspapers' mission is to educate and inform but not enough to sway them to dress like someone in a newspaper ad or use a newspaper to decide what to wear. However, 44% of them agreed that "media offer a lot of good ideas and advice."
- Students appeared divided over the issue of whether they "learn a lot from television" or they "learn more from reading newspapers." Sixty-two percent of the students disagreed about learning from television but agreed they learn more from newspapers. Sixty-four percent agreed they learn from television but disagreed about learning from newspapers.

FINDING A BAROMETER OF MEDIA INFLUENCE

An effort was made to use the data to create an “index of media literacy.” The idea was that each student could be assigned an index to summarize his or her responses. This would indicate the level of awareness and understanding of media as compared to other students. Immediately, however, the problem arose that some students had skipped questions throughout the survey that they felt did not apply to them. For example, I learned after analyzing the data that a student might skip a question if it asked about Internet use and the student didn’t have access to a computer at home or at school. To create indexes of media awareness and literacy, the software program SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) counted only those surveys with all questions answered in the index count. Despite this limitation, the “compute” technique was used to create indexes for each of the three mediums studied.

As noted earlier, students’ knowledge of media’s influence is a key focus of this dissertation. So, the 12 parts of question one (“How likely are you to:”) were categorized by the three media addressed – television, newspapers and magazines (Appendix A). Scores were applied to each question based on the best answer that indicates an understanding of the media. Then, questions 5 (“How likely are you to use magazines – whether teen, news, etc. – to decide:”), 6 (“How likely are you to use television to decide:”), and 7 (“How likely are you to use newspapers to decide:”) were added to the appropriate categories, with scores calculated in a similar manner. Once the overall top scores were obtained, then the mean was calculated for each and placed on a rubric that determined “high” influence and “low” influence for each medium. This procedure

yielded four indexes for the influence of media: one to measure the influence of TV, a second for magazine, a third for newspapers and, as an overall index of media influence. Using question 10, similar steps were followed to create a “media literacy index.” Again scores were applied to each of the 18 statements that dealt with media truthfulness, mission and impact. The responses for the statements were combined and the mean calculated.

The limitations of the index prompted thoughts of possible solutions. In preparation for further study, the index did show some pattern of answers in the current survey, enough to develop a weight on the likelihood of how students will answer. So, in a future study, the answers can be redistributed based on the weights, making it possible to use all surveys. Although the present index cannot be fully used, the following interesting results did surface:

- Girls were significantly more likely to be influenced by magazines.
- Urban students tended to be least aware of media influences, regardless of whether the media are newspapers, television or magazines. However, suburban students appear to understand media best. Rural students scored higher in their awareness of newspaper influences.
- African-Americans students were the least aware of media influences, particularly in regards to newspapers and television. Asian-Americans appeared to be the most aware when it comes to newspapers, while Asians and Hispanic-Americans posted similar results as far as their awareness of TV influences.
- Only 19 of the 355 students who were surveyed made perfect scores for any of the computed indexes: three on newspaper awareness, seven on TV

awareness, three on media literacy, one on generally influenced, two on magazines' influence and three on television's influence. Most students appear to be only marginally aware of the power and influence of media.

A MICROSCOPIC LOOK AT RACE, ETHNICITY

The majority of students (76.3%) said they watched up to 10 hours of television a week but spent only up to five hours a week reading magazines and newspapers. When broken down by race, African-Americans admitted to the greatest use of television – 41.7% watch 6-10 hours a week. However, more of the Hispanic-American students, 95.2%, admitted to reading magazines up to five hours a week; this percentage could be skewed by the large number of females who acknowledged being influenced by magazines. And, 91.9% of the white students said they read up to five hours of newspapers a week, barely besting the 91.7% of African American students.

Table 10

Media Use

How many hours a week do you spend: (all are significant unless noted)

Hours	***Watching television				Reading a newspaper				Reading a magazine			
	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20
African-American	29.8%	41.7%	16.7%	11.9%	91.7%	7.1%	1.2%	0%	85.7%	11.9%	2.4%	0%
Hispanic American	47.6%	33.3%	19.0%	0%	85.7%	14.3%	0%	0%	95.2%	0%	4.8%	0%
Asian-American	42.9%	28.6%	0%	28.6%	85.7%	0%	0%	14.3%	66.7%	0%	16.7%	16.7%
White	44.1%	33.3%	16.2%	6.3%	91.9%	6.8%	1.4%	0%	82.7%	15.5%	1.8%	0%

***approaching significance, $p < .08$

The question above examined students' personal use of media. But the survey also asked students about their use of media in school. As noted in the methodology, Chapter

3, the majority of students, roughly 60%, acknowledged that they “watch TV news shows in school” – 39.4% said “sometimes” and 18.3% said “yes.” Also, 68.6% said they watch entertainment TV mostly at home with 12.1% listing television news and 19.3% “other.” As far as reading newspapers in school, 85.9% of the students said they did, mostly in the morning (58.5%) in the classroom (88.3%). A narrow majority, 52.0%, said they read newspapers outside of school in the evening at home. The racial breakdown for each of these categories was not statistically significant with the exception of questions 27 and 28: “If you read newspapers outside of school, when?” and “If you read newspapers outside of school, where?” About three-quarters, 75.6%, of whites said they read in the mornings, while 51.2% said afternoon and 64.3% said evening. Among African Americans, 35.4% of the students said in the afternoon, 22.9% said evening and 14.1%, morning. As far Hispanics and Asians, less than 10% of the students answered these questions. One insightful nugget shown in the survey was where these students get their information. Fifty percent of the African American students said they use the library to read their newspapers outside of school, 34.8% said “elsewhere” and 22.4% said “home.” Both Asian- and Hispanic-American students, 12.5%, listed library. As for white students, 67.5% said “home,” 34.8% said “elsewhere” and 25% said “library.”

Internet use (Appendix B) was favored by most of the students for fun and games, as shown in Chapter 3. When asked “How much do you use the Internet for news, 47% said “sometimes.” However, 61.7% said they “use Internet for fun and games.” Unfortunately, data for the racial breakdown of Internet use proved not statistically significant, although the indications were that the use by white students doubled and

tripled that of other races. This result was expected if, for no other reason, than white students' ability to access more media at home and school, particularly computers and technological gadgets that use the Internet.

One final interesting phenomenon surfaced while analyzing results of Asian American students. Only a handful of Asian-American students participated in the project and there is a risk of over-extending interpretations of the data. However, the survey showed overwhelming agreement among this group for such notions as the newspaper educating and informing the public, media making teens do things never done before, the television actually teaching and telling viewers about the real world. As noted earlier, a huge majority, 86% of Asian Americans said they were likely to use newspapers to decide on issues, goals or careers. The responses bring to mind the "media dependency" theory and confirm news reports too that recent immigrants use media to learn the English language and to seek an understanding of the American culture. Since Spanish-language media is growing exponentially in America, Hispanics and other Spanish-language ethnic groups would be less likely to use media in this way than those recent immigrants who don't have media communicating in their native tongue.

The following chapter analyzes student conversations about media and gives further insight into students' understanding of the media.

Chapter 5

FOCUS GROUPS

Without media, we'd be Amish
-16-year-old Pennsylvania student

NATURE STRONG-ARMS MEDIA

The urgent need for all Americans to understand and soberly interpret media messages reverberated recently when Hurricane Katrina devastated portions of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. An endless torrent of images, descriptions, characterizations and points of view poured from every medium imaginable. There were innumerable television newscasts, Internet web log (blog) postings, radio call-in programs, 80-point font newspaper headlines, magazine analyses and web-castings of all sorts. All media consumers -- viewers, listeners, and readers alike -- were touched in some way by the coverage of that horrific storm and its aftermath, the victims, local state and federal responses or lack of it and the world's reaction. Amidst all of the coverage, criticisms came fast and furious over the repeated display of a powerful example of media's hegemonic nature: portraying a white family "searching for food" at a store while describing a similar situation involving blacks as "looting" a food store. Only one year ago, Florida was the target of three hurricanes that packed 100-plus miles-an-hour winds in category three or four storms named Charley, Jeanne and Frances. While the images were not as controversial or stark in showing huge class differences in America -- as Katrina did, residents were just as devastated by property losses and breaks in communication. Many of the 111 Florida students that completed the survey at five

schools were affected by those hurricanes last year and discussed, in focus groups, their feelings about media's role.

Three focus groups were conducted at William Boone High School in Orlando, FL, in the final days of school last May – long before Katrina. Yet, many of the participating students admitted the hurricanes were seared in their minds and memories, along with the fearful realization that virtually all of their means of communication at the time were damaged or destroyed by nature. The survey was beneficial in learning students' understanding of the media and their influences. But, the students' personal experiences with losing communication during the hurricane would not have been known without the series of focus groups held at Boone High School in tandem with the survey. The revelations from these focus groups underscore the value of these sessions by illuminating information provided in the survey data.

FOCUS GROUP METHOD

Overall, four focus groups were conducted during May 2005. Besides the three at the urban Florida school that resembled more a sprawling college campus than a high school, one was conducted in Hanover, PA. On May 23, 10 students, mostly seniors, at South Western High School in Hanover gathered in instructor Bob Shue's room for a lively discussion about media and a lunch of pizza and soda. The relatively new school occupied spans of land surrounded by few buildings. These students had taken the online survey nearly seven months earlier at the rural school. Two days later, on May 25, more than 40 Boone students from three different classes formed three focus groups that met at different times in the lavish quarters of media teacher Renee Burke; roughly a week

earlier, these suburban students had taken the online survey. A similar format was used for each focus group. Dr. Katherine McAdams, a veteran focus group facilitator who at the time was associate professor at the Journalism school, guided the discussions in all four focus groups, while this researcher observed and monitored the recordings of each session. The student discussions offered information that helped in interpreting the data from the survey.

In addition, about 34 students at Dobbins AVTS High School in Philadelphia, PA participated in a chat session with this researcher after completing a paper version of the survey on June 9. For several reasons, the discussion in Philadelphia varied from the traditional focus group format but student comments and observations will be discussed later in this chapter.

Dr. McAdams opened the focus groups by having each student discuss the different media they use. Then, she turned students' attention to the following questions:

- Do students today use media differently than five years ago?
- Do students today think of media differently today than five years ago?
- How much more media do students have today than 5 years ago?
- What decisions about media today do you have to make that you didn't have five years ago? (Buy or not buy, phone vs. visit friends, truth vs. lie)
- Have media really made the world smaller for you? For example, you now know about events in virtually every state, have firsthand knowledge of natural disasters in other countries etc.
- Have media made the world seem more threatening by creating certain stereotypes of different ethnic groups, etc.?
- How much have media become a part of daily routines today?
- How much easier have media made your life?

- How much more exciting have media made your life?
- How much more knowledgeable are you with the media around?
- Do media tinker with your rights to be an individual?
- Instead of media literacy, what phrase would you use?

At Boone, the seniors had already completed their graduation requirements, so the 27 students who gathered for the Advanced Communication Methods class and the first focus group session were freshmen, sophomores and juniors. They first completed their Communication Methods class final exams so the focus group was regarded as a respite. They snacked on a potluck fare of donuts, bagels, eggs, brownies, chips, juice and other high school favorites. It didn't take long before the focus group discussions about media in general got specific and turned to last year's hurricanes that hit the Florida coast, the first time Orlando suffered a direct hurricane hit since 1960.

"Media today is an everyday thing, unlike in the past," volunteered one boy. "When we had the hurricane, everybody lost their power. We lost refrigerator power. Media was the first thing to go and I think it was very weird not being connected with other people. All we had was our cell phones and couldn't charge them. It really put into perspective everything."

As the young man explained it, the realization hit him and others that before the hurricane that he used his cell phone excessively and "it seemed so important, but now that I'm looking at these other things, I don't know that it's that important. I felt like I'd rather have my refrigerator than my computer."

Another student, a girl, added: "I felt isolated."

A third girl said: “The hurricane made everyone stop worrying about ‘inconsequential stuff.’ Many were forced outdoors and talked with neighbors,” some for the first time. “It brought people out of their houses” and forced them to communicate face-to-face, to socialize in more traditional ways. “We were all up early and it required us to get together” because the street was blocked with huge trees.

HOW STUDENTS USE MEDIA

The Orlando students’ list of media frequently in use included more of the newer technology. Besides the obvious radio, television, magazines, newspapers and the Internet, they also talked about IPODs, XM satellite radio, Yahoo launch, MP3s, digital Video Recorders and TiVos. Living close to the Disney megalopolis may affect the Orlando students’ perspective and knowledge of technology, but these largely urban students said they believe “there is more media in use” today, with their own homes inundated with media sounds.

For many of the Boone students, the decisions surrounding use of the media are relatively simple: “Whether you want to leave it on; what to watch and what not to watch.”

“When we were younger, we always agreed with our parents in politics and everything,” one male student said. “Now that we are older, we can make our own decision and understand what’s going on.”

Expanding on that point, another student added: “It both frees and burdens you because it really depends on your morals. If your parents have all 1,500 stations on digital

cable, it's really your morals that are telling you what to do, what to watch and what not, what to believe and stuff like that.”

In Hanover, PA, probably because of their rural location but most definitely because of the school's ties to regular subscriptions of USA TODAY for students, the students mentioned frequent use of newspapers. The general attitude was that the more important media were television, newspapers and the Internet, while IPODs and the like were merely expensive toys, purchased with surplus funds. “If I had money, I would buy” an IPOD, said one boy whose views received affirmative responses from the others in this agriculture-based community. Magazines also appeared low on their media list with most saying that if they are purchased at all, it was for the pictures or specific information.

“I buy a magazine every once in a while when there is something that I know is in there and I want it,” said one student. “But I don't subscribe to magazines or anything.”

Supporting that view, another student added, “Why buy a magazine when you can just turn on the TV or Internet” to get up-to-date or current news?

In Philadelphia, students had attitudes similar to those in Hanover. However, few of these urban students had access to computers either at home or at school; fully loaded cell phones, television and radio were the main media frequently used by these urban students.

HOW STUDENTS OBSERVE MEDIA USE

Students' use of media is reflected in their view or perspective of media. Some saw media as a modern convenience that can be used for the good or bad, depending on the user.

“The technology so far presents so many opportunities,” said one student in a Year Book class that formed the second Boone focus group. “Five years ago, it would take 10 minutes to open a file. Now, you just click on and go.”

Another student agreed that communication has greatly improved, especially with the advent of e-mails and text messages. “Yesterday I could talk to my chemistry teacher on line because I had a question about our final today. She’s online and it’s nice to have her there when you can just ask her the day before.”

“I think at least serious media enriches you to help you better understand other parts of the world, and see other people,” said a Pennsylvania student at South Western.

That same convenience can be harmful if not appropriately used, added a Boone student. “Seems like people are getting lazier. You can just turn on the TV and watch (one channel) to get your weather. Before, you would go outside and look.”

Media may be replacing some already valuable tools, such as books, other students said. The same Hanover, PA, student who talked about freedoms to use the media of choice, mentioned restrictions placed on library visits at South Western. “In school, there’s not much opportunity to use media, except for independent studies,” he explained. Students are required to get library passes in advance. Gone are the days when you could “walk in the library and expect (immediate) access or service,” he said.

A similar situation exists at Orlando’s Boone, where students talked about a reduction in the library staff and limited hours of operation. “It’s hard to get in the library now,” said one guy. And then, when you do gain access, other problems arise. One girl shyly

told how the class was given an assignment that forbade the use of the Internet. “I didn’t know how to check a book out of the library,” she said in dismay.

Overall, students acknowledged that media are necessary.

“I like media,” one South Western student said proudly. “If you didn’t have access to newspapers, TV, nothing, we wouldn’t know anything that’s going on. So it makes life more interesting. There is no way you can escape it at all. It is always going to be there.”

At Boone, a student said: “I think mass media is really helpful. It’s just people use it in so many different ways ... its part of everyone’s life and you use it. You don’t realize you’re turning on the TV, or you’re turning on music. That’s what you are suppose to kind of do. You get your information from them. You learn stuff and everything. So, I think it’s beneficial.”

Other notable comments:

- “They put the media out there and it’s your decision on how you use it. You can use it for entertainment, or research or bad things. But with newspapers and magazines, during the elections, a lot of them were biased. If you don’t know that, it can alter your opinions. You hear little kids singing stuff that’s totally ridiculous and they don’t have any idea what they are saying. It’s just how you use it.”
- “Media is like an orange grove. Its original purpose was for good and one of the trees got cankers, the disease that they get. If you don’t cut it off right away, it’s going to continue to grow and grow and spoil the entire thing. With censorship and how (in the past) you couldn’t say cuss words on television and (show) violence, but now only a few words are banned. You can turn on the TV and you can watch cops, and sex. ... I think it’s just going down the tube.”
- “Without media, we’d be Amish,” said one student, describing how quiet and “different” life was in post-hurricane Florida. He suggested that the ways we live would be radically transformed without media.

WHO ME? INFLUENCED? NOT LIKELY!!!

If media are pervasive as the student suggested, what is the impact on those exposed? Boone students seemed more skeptical and distrustful of media's purposes. One student shared: "The media puts out a whole bunch of different opinions so now you have to decide what you do believe and what you don't want to believe, what seems to be true and what applies to you and what doesn't." She said there are different forms of the truth "and you have to decide which ones you best believe."

Both Orlando and Hanover students insisted they pay little attention to commercials and can "turn off" those and other messages at will. They said they are in control of their own buying habits.

"If it's useful, you'll get it. If not, you don't," said one Hanover student, matter-of-factly.

Another Hanover student agreed and chastised the researcher for "trivializing the process of seeing something on TV and wanting it," adding, "I see something on TV and want it but not because it is on TV or because someone else is using it. I think you are buying it because you just want it."

Age has something to do with media influences, a third South Western student said, explaining that she is the oldest sibling. Her 10-year-old brother "will see something on TV, like a toy and he'll say 'cool, I want that.' Or, my sister, a freshman, will look at a show and want something and she'll really get sucked into it thinking 'I have to go buy that.' I'll look at it with my friends and we'll make fun of the commercials. As you get

older, you start to understand how they work. Kind of pick up on it, that it's kind of stupid."

A Boone student said, "I think I look at it differently than five years ago because when you were younger, you sort of saw (things) on TV and believed it was true ... other than infomercials. Now, you sort of know you have to filter in what's logical."

There is some influence on everyone, though, a few students admitted.

"You may pick up on what they are trying to do to you but I don't think you can underestimate it though," said one student. "Names get in your head. Half of the commercials I think are pretty dumb, but it still has that name behind it."

To support that point, a South Western boy offered an example. "We had to get a vacuum in my house and my mom was looking for an upright vacuum. I told mom 'what about that Dyson? On the commercial, he gives us this whole big spiel about the gadgets and how they make things easier for you.' I said that it looked pretty cool. I suggested it to her because mom doesn't get much time to watch TV but I do. But afterwards (once it was purchased), I saw a report that said the vacuum doesn't do as much as promised. In the commercial, it made it seem like it was a more useful vacuum, something revolutionizing."

Here are other notable comments of students concerning the persuasive aspects of media:

- "The way that the media makes it seem like its okay to have sex before marriage and everyone's doing it."
- "...it is overtaking us. We spend so much time with the media."
- "the media can over-dramatize certain aspects of everyday life."

- “the media will focus too much on the bad parts of the world and everyone will become too ‘on the edge’ and worry about doing everyday things.”
- “.. it will someday take over our whole lives and the value of the human mind to make our own decisions will vanish with the hassle of thinking for ourselves.”
- “When is the madness going to stop? It’s just an ongoing process of media that usually isn’t true. You have to second guess everything.”
- “The frustrating thing about media is that people do fall into the trap because they are so confused by it and they need everything. They become so materialistic and that’s what drives me crazy about media.”
- “How the media takes something and puts it right in your face. They put so much hype and emphasis on something that it might not be that important to who or where you are.”
- “There’s a sense of security. The more exposed you are the more informed.”

DO MEDIA TINKER WITH YOUR RIGHT TO BE AN INDIVIDUAL?

To a certain extent, most students agreed that today’s media-saturated world makes it more difficult to be an individual. “It’s not as easy to define yourself in terms of your likes and dislikes,” said one Boone student. “You’re not an individual any more because everyone is listening to what everyone is doing. It’s like they control you.”

A South Western girl noted that media adds to pressures on teen girls to be stylish, skinny and wear make up. “I think for girls it’s harder than for guys.”

However, one guy noted that media pressures them to have the latest technology, the latest fashions.

Other notable comments about media and conformity included:

- “There are so many different sides to different stories; it’s hard to decide opinions for yourself.”

- “Even being unique is the same. Media sort of put everyone on the same level. There’s no way to distinguish yourself.
- “*1984* or *A Brave New World* talks about how media become a thought police, control what you think and say. Media wants to control everything we think about. Once they do that, then advertising buy into that even more. Super Bowl is an example.”

HAVE MEDIA MADE THE WORLD SMALLER?

Students agreed they enjoyed knowing about neighboring states, other countries and cultures but some stressed “we don’t know what’s true and what’s not true.” And, other students said the increasing knowledge of the world, coupled with advancing technology - such as Cable’s 70-plus channels, could be mixed blessings.

“I have a picture of an earthquake in Asia or something like that,” explained a South Western student. “You couldn’t really see that except in the newspaper 30 years ago. But now it’s there. You at least feel like you understand what’s going on even if you really don’t. But it kind of creates that perception.”

The opposite was true for another South Western student who said media for her made the world seem bigger instead of smaller: “I feel all these different choices, all these breaking news stories; I can spend hours trying to catch up on everything. There’s so much out there. It seems like it’s such a big world now because we have access to everything. For me it’s so daunting.”

In trying to explain the genesis of media’s mission, one Boone boy said: “The original intent of the media, in its pure form was to give people knowledge about what’s going on. But now, because of events, greed – people want money – and yellow journalism ... it just kind of mutilated it all.”

A Boone girl agreed. “News stations are supposed to be objective but then they veer off and you think about where they got the information from. You wonder ‘are they helping us out or are they just annoying.’ Seems like they are stirring stuff up for sweeps and news.”

This role of media can be a distraction, a few students noted.

“People are more focused on the media and what’s going on in other people’s lives,” rather than on important events and issues that directly impact their lives and communities, said a girl in the first Boone group. She explained that while working as a cashier at a local grocery store, many customers stand at the counter and read magazines and books while their items are being checked. “They get caught up in the book and start to talk about it. It’s not that it’s a bad thing. It’s everyday, you see the same thing. People just talk about different things they see in the magazines, (like) relationships. It’s easier for us to think about Jen and Brad, or to think about Iraq and the Tsunami than to think about maybe improving things right here.”

Other notable comments about media’s portrayals of the broader world included:

- “The media is becoming so evolved and new things are constantly coming out that it just constantly swamps us with information.”
- “I gravitate to certain issues. I really don’t concentrate on inconsequential stuff like the Michael Jackson trial or Lacy Peterson trial. I just concentrate on political things, sports now and then and I had the browser set up for certain issues. Usually what happens is there is so much out there you just pick what you like, have a favorite news station, or a favorite weather site or something like that.”
- “I realize I’m not the center of the universe. I’m not a very big part of the picture. I feel it has to be something huge in order for it to make a difference. Yes, I feel disempowered.”

- “I think in our lives, media gives lots of good information, like the Iraq War, Sept. 11. Without a lot of media, we wouldn’t have found out as quickly as we did.”

HAVE MEDIA MADE THE WORLD SCARIER?

A key point made by students at South Western is that people determine for themselves how to receive media’s messages.

“I don’t think people ever think objectively,” said one student. “The big problem with us nowadays is we hear what we want to hear and we distort what we hear to make it sound like how we want it to sound. We don’t think objectively. Media hurts this.”

Another student added: “I think it (media) does create stereotypes. I think stereotypes can be used effectively. Certain things hold true for a large percentage of certain demographics. That’s just the way it is. I don’t know how well that helps me to understand my world. I get stereotypes from watching the news. (After 9/11), I operate thinking those people in the Middle East hate Americans.”

At Boone, students were ambivalent about media’s role in helping Americans understand the threatening and dangerous parts of the world. “It stops us from living our lives,” said one student, explaining that her peers were afraid to date because of the news about date rapes. “I think it just puts a lot of negative things in our head that wasn’t there before.”

Another student agreed: “They remind us of what has happened and keeps reviewing the past so much that it creates a climate of fear.”

When asked how many of the students felt that modern media made life easier and better, eight students agreed. Four students said media made life more difficult. Twenty seven students were in the session.

Other notable comments about fearfulness and media:

- “I think you have to take the good with the bad because so many positives have come out of it (media). You have to be aware that not everyone has the best intentions. I think kids that are growing up now, that are young, it’s kind of scary that a 5-year-old can turn on the TV and see such violence and such. It sort of warps your mind. We should be worried about the kids.
- “I think people will like to hear the scarier stuff because that’s what’s interesting. That’s what media give us. The one good thing about political stuff is that it’s not all bad.”
- “I think people would rather hear more about negative things in the news rather than positive.”
- “Media is becoming so scary and intimidating that I can’t live my life freely or openly because I’m scared.”

AN URBAN PERSPECTIVE

On June 9, 34 students, mainly sophomores and juniors, showed up in English teacher Tom McGlaughlin’s room at Philadelphia’s Dobbins High School to complete a paper version of the survey, talk about media and have an end-of-the-year pizza party. Media exposure for most of the Dobbins High School students has come mainly off school grounds, with the exception of newspapers. Teacher McGlaughlin gets copies of USA TODAY regularly and uses them for lessons on current events.

Only a handful of students said they “use computers more now.” One student volunteered: “I do my homework the old fashioned way.”

McGlaughlin, affectionately known as “Glock,” said students’ work on the computers is hampered by problems of one type or another. “The computer works or the printer doesn’t work, or you can’t download” material, he explained. Computer use is increasing, he insisted. “A lot of these students who are graduating in (Class of 07) use it a whole lot more than classes of ’97 or the classes of 2000.”

According to these students, media have not made the world smaller for them, nor have media made the world seem more threatening or tinkered with their right to be an individual. And, as was true with their peers in Hanover and Orlando, the students denied media’s influence and insisted they were independent from it.

Dobbins High School sits in the middle of a deteriorating residential area. The huge ominous copper-yellow brick building has numerous windows covered by dark brown or black metal instead of regular glass panes. It faces a brightly colored McDonald’s restaurant and Hope Plaza strip mall that’s home to a Thriftway grocery store and a Rite Aid pharmacy. An enormous newly built evangelical church located diagonally from the school, overshadows the dilapidated row houses that surround it. Visitors to Dobbins can hear Public Address system announcements before entering the unairconditioned building and once inside, a metal detector and guard await. Glock’s room had jacks for computers but only four Apple computers sat on a table in the back. All the windows were opened but there was little relief from the 90-degree temperatures as the “rap session” began.

Since the Philadelphia students' insisted that they were independent consumers, unaffected by media, they were asked to interpret the message of several magazine advertisements. One advertisement of a Sketcher brand sneaker grabbed their attention.

“So, you would buy Sketcher tennis shoes?” the students were asked.

One girl responded, “If they were cute I would wear them!”

“So, you would wear Sketcher tennis shoes even if you had the opportunity to buy Nike? Sketcher would be your choice over Nike?” the students were asked.

“No-o-o-o,” said a growing chorus of students.

“Then, what would make you buy Nike over Sketcher?” the students were asked.

“They look better,” they responded.

“Why?” they were asked.

“They just do,” they said, matter-of-factly.

LOOKING BACK AT THE SURVEY

Focus groups, in addition to allowing students to discuss issues and concerns not addressed in a survey, also give weight to individual opinions that may enrich discussions. All these positive aspects of focus group research came into play when the survey summaries were reviewed. The individual voices and opinions that were heard during the personal encounters tended to be muted, masked, ignored or overlooked in the sea of data. For example, data alone do not show that the Boone and South Western students who participated in focus groups apparently were greatly influenced by their parents and the ways they encourage or discourage use of the media. These students intimated that, unlike their younger days, they now were often left on their own to deal with the clashes media may have with the values they've grown up with. One Boone student acknowledged that “media can now influence some of the decisions your parents now let you make on your own.” So, when the survey showed that a majority of the students admitted using an idea from a TV show or a printed article, the next question –

which was not asked – is “Was the idea one that supported, expanded on or clashed with an original view?”

Also, survey data showed students’ skepticism of media, and this attitude was supported by the focus groups as well as the discussion in Philadelphia, where the students were predominately African American. When Dobbin High School students were asked, “Has media made the world smaller for you?” The initial response was silence.

“Do you know what I mean by that?”

“No!”

“Today, when you turn on the TV, you know what’s going on in India; you know what’s going on in South Africa.”

“They don’t tell us everything!”

“When you look at the newspaper, don’t you get news about what’s going on around the country?”

“Yeah, but not everything.”

“They may not tell you everything but they tell you more now than five years ago. Do you think the media has made the world smaller?”

“No because there is always something you don’t know.”

This exchange admittedly can be interpreted in various ways, but the students’ attitude clearly points to a pejorative view of the media as one more system that marginalizes certain groups. So, one interpretation of this exchange is that these minority students felt they were only getting a smaller view of the big world. Obviously, they are keenly aware of inaccurate descriptions of people, places and things in their lives. The initial “looters” versus “searchers” description of Katrina victims is just one more affirmation of “they don’t tell us everything.” For Dobbins students, the negatives of their world are highlighted while the positives are barely noted, if at all. If key parts and issues of their own lives are missing from news casts and shows, then these students logically

assume that media would exclude information about certain other regions and people. Also, for many low-income African Americans, they may have more knowledge about things, places and people but not have access to them, for whatever reason. In this broadening-of-the-world experience for our less affluent young people, media may create frustrations for them.

The focus groups also enabled students to expound on their knowledge of media. The survey showed that the majority of students said they watch 5 to 10 hours of television a week, and spend up to five hours a week reading newspapers or magazines. The majority also spend some time at school reading newspapers or watching TV news shows. Knowing this from the data, then, it was not too surprising that many of the students could intelligently discuss media operations and the various strategies used to influence audiences. The teens' approach was more intellectual than emotional, however. Their perspective was that the media exerted greater persuasive influence on "others" than on themselves, which supports the 1983 classic Third-Person Effect theory of W. Phillip Davison. The students in the focus group insisted – as first noted in the survey – that they were not influenced by media, although they worried about the influence it would have on others – especially younger children.

Focus group discussions, when viewed with survey data, answer some of the research questions stated in Chapter 1. This same information raises many other questions, such as whether minorities – African Americans in this instance – view media in an entirely different way than whites or other minorities. Media's coverage of Hurricane Katrina confirmed that we have two Americas. Also they raised questions

about our reality and the gaps in our society. My research shows gaps too. These will be discussed in Chapter 6, which concludes the project.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSIONS

OVERVIEW

The high school students participating in this research project appeared to have an elementary understanding of the power of the media – and technology, which is media’s playground. The majority said media do not influence their choice of clothing, movies, snacks and beverages or their opinions about such things as what makes teens popular or cool, or what looks constitute beauty. Ironically, though, while a *majority* of the students denied media’s power over key aspects of their lives, a *large percentage* of students acknowledged acquiescing at one time or another to these same messages offered by each medium, either separately or simultaneously. Also, the results underscored an apparent quest for independence among these teens, a resolute desire to make their own decisions about materialistic things like clothing, food and gadgets. But, the survey confirmed what some researchers have suggested: that these students reach beyond themselves for ideas, issues and other things related to values and ideology (Austin 1990; Krosnick 2003). Students overwhelmingly acknowledged using an idea from a TV show or article they’ve read. A majority said they also are likely to use television and newspapers to decide what issues to be concerned about or what’s important in the world (Appendix C).

While students may not fully understand or acknowledge media’s influence, they appear to have a solid understanding of the rudimentary operations of media. For example, most understood that advertising pays the bulk of media expenses (Appendix

D). Also, the majority realized “you can tell the truth about a character” by the facial expression, the language used and gestures (Table 8). However, most apparently did not understand the importance of the angle of the camera, the gait or walk of the character or the colors used in character clothing. And, an overwhelming majority not only said that media ownership is not important but they could care less about this hugely important issue (Appendix D). Communications researchers, social scientists and others should be alarmed by these findings when considering that media, especially the ubiquitous electronic media, suggest values, reinforce attitudes, offer points of view, convey statements about society and play an agenda-setting role (Masterman 1980).

Speculation abounds as to the reasons for these overall survey results. In general, the survey broaches the issue of whether media saturates society so thoroughly that it now has become difficult to disaggregate us – particularly our children – from them – the wide array of media that now propagate our landscape. Most baby boomers and those born earlier remember those times when we could live without television and telephones. But, 21st century teens, from their day of birth, have known about, seen and heard about or used telephones, televisions, radios, magazines, newspapers and a host of other media. This is just who they are and it shows up in mundane ways. This phenomenon alone may hamper their ability to examine media as an independent variable. Also, students could lack self-realization that they are being influenced; Students may deliberately hide the fact that they can be manipulated by media for fear of appearing weak or “not cool;” or, the repetition of media has truly dulled the senses of student consumers so they really don’t feel they are influenced. As author Mark Hertsgaard noted matter-of-factly in a

June 28, 2004, article on President Ronald Reagan in *The Nation* magazine, “in an information-saturated society, only messages that get repeated can pierce the static and register on the public consciousness” (Hertsgaard 2004).

KEY DATA RESULTS AND FOCUS GROUP TALK

Specifically, the survey found that urban students were much more likely to act upon media messages than students in rural areas. It’s unclear, however, that one group is more “influenced” than another. The issue could simply be one of access: products are more readily available to urban students, for example. Or, it could be – as is implied here – that the values, morals or priorities of rural students are different. This, of course, should be studied further.

Important as well was the statistically significant finding that girls are more likely to be influenced by magazines. For example, 52.7% of girls said they would dress like someone in a teen or fashion magazine, while 75.4% of boys said it is “unlikely” that they would; and, similar breakdowns occur with questions about “how likely are you to use magazines” to decide what to wear and which cosmetics or shaving materials to buy or use (Appendix D). Also, African-American consumers of media appear to be most affected by media’s messages by their response than students in other ethnic or racial group, survey results showed. They apparently are more affected but less critical. The evidence of their level of criticism would be through their behavior – the degree to which they respond, believe or react as suggested.

The survey data parallels animated focus group discussions during which teens insisted that their devotion to a particular brand was merely because of style not because

of an advertisement or some media display. Seldom – and many said never – were they swayed by the Nike check marks (called a swoosh by savvy teens) on sneakers and shorts, Mustang’s horse plastered on cars or Levis’ red flag decorating today’s hip-hugging, low-riding, boot-cut jeans. Instead, most teens bragged about single-handedly making their own decisions. Aside from the media, what is making teens spend billions in disposable income on these products? There’s something to be said about people who vehemently deny being influenced even when the evidence points to the contrary. Michael Schudson of the Center for Media Literacy offers a premise that actually supports’ the teens’ denial of influence. In fact, Schudson posits that advertisers only indirectly affect consumer buying decisions and is successful only in “selling consumers on the purchase of happiness” not the product itself (2002-2003).

If it’s true that teens don’t consider themselves buying a product but merely ascribing to an ideal, that could explain why the survey results show media apparently wields greater influence with the intangibles of life, such as ideas, issues, goals and what’s important? This is an issue that Gerbner discusses in wide ranging literature. It is important too because media can impact/influence lasting values that can translate into how the nation responds to its poor and the elderly, as well as the students’ own view of ways they can be productive members of society. Traditionally, these values were shaped by parents, family, peers and community institutions like the church. Of course, the idea that teens pursue ideals rather than products is only one explanation for the power of media and many more must be examined. Even then, a definitive answer may be elusive.

GENDER AND RACE SHADE UNDERSTANDING OF MEDIA

Matching the survey data with comments from focus and discussion group members yielded several interesting questions in regard to gender, race and ethnicity. One question was whether class, gender and ethnicity illuminated, enhanced or obstructed a student's ability to read and understand the media. Survey results did not allow the class issue to be examined because, out of respect for the minor status of students, both the University of Maryland and USA TODAY limited the information that could be acquired from them. The closest the survey came to implications of class were in questions that asked about the educational level of parents (Appendix A). Gender was a variable that was easiest to ask and analysis showed that being female or male apparently did have something to do with a student's understanding or interest in the media. As mentioned earlier, the survey found that the girls taking the survey were statistically significantly more likely to be influenced by magazines. While the guys apparently rebuffed fashion enticements, a large percentage, 67.9%, admitted they are likely to "buy a toy or game seen on a TV commercial" and, 57.2%, would "attend a party or sporting event advertised on TV" (Appendix D). There are many other examples from the survey, as shown in the appendices, to confirm the importance of gender in understanding media.

Race and ethnicity played greater roles in understanding media than originally anticipated. A data-focus group comparison gave rise to the question of whether different minority groups view and use media differently. African-American students showed the lowest level of awareness of the myriad ways they could be influenced or impacted by

television and newspapers; Asian-Americans tended to score the highest in this area, although the Asian-Americans tended to cluster near the whites, Hispanic-Americans and “others.” Large majorities of Hispanic- and African-American students acknowledged the likelihood of dressing like someone on TV, 63.2% and 60.5% respectively, and using magazines to decide what to wear, 61.9% and 53.2% respectively. But an even larger percentage of African-Americans, 75%, said they would buy a toy or game seen on TV and attend a party or sporting event advertised on TV (58%). More African-American students than the others also acknowledged using newspapers and magazines to decide on snacks, beverages, issues, cosmetics and shaving materials. African-American students were the only group with a majority agreeing that “Media do a good job of showing how celebrities really live” (Appendix E). Do African-American students view media differently? That’s a question that emerges when comparing the data with discussion group comments about media at the Philadelphia high school, where comments among this predominantly African-American group differed markedly from those of their suburban peers. Exploring the ways they do view media is outside the purview of this research project. However, some experts say that even in mere purchases, many African-American teens have a different motivation – to build self-esteem rather than mere entertainment (<http://www.blackenergy.com/Article59.phtml>). Self efficacy is another explanation given by some researchers for young African American buying choices, such as with music, clothing and DVDs. A further study on this would be beneficial.

Gender, race and ethnicity add an obstreperous layer to the issue of media influence. Societal restrictions overtly and covertly placed on students in these

classifications may determine student choices more than any messages that media can convey. In other words, the influence may be more from opportunity and access than mere media-driven choices.

Also, in regard to ethnicity, the survey revealed a pattern of responses among Asian American students that participated in the research project. Since, there were so few students in this ethnic group, caution is being used in interpreting results. However, it was apparent that Asian-American students tended to use media more as educational tools. The survey does not, however, show whether the aim of this use was for assimilation or increasing cultural competence. For example, large majorities agreed with the questionnaire statements (Appendix E):

- I learn a lot from television.
- I learn more from reading newspapers than I do from watching television.
- Newspapers' mission is to educate and inform the public.
- Television's mission is to educate and inform the public.
- Television tells you about the real world.
- Media offer a lot of good ideas and advice.
- Media do a good job of understanding the needs and issues of the poor.

Also, these teens tended to agree or favor issues dealing with American values, principles and ideology. For example, most of the Asian-American students agreed they would likely use magazines and TV to decide “what to do on a date,” “where to go for recreation,” “a goal or career” and “about other cultures and ethnic groups.” A large majority, 86.7%, said they would use newspapers to decide “what issues to be concerned about” (Appendices D, E). As mentioned earlier, the responses from these teens could be attributed to use of media by immigrants to learn the English language and to seek an understanding of the American culture. The survey does not reveal whether these Asian-

American and Hispanic-American students were first- or subsequent generations. Since Spanish language media is growing exponentially in America, Hispanics and other Spanish-language ethnic groups would be less likely to use media in this way. A possible explanation could be that this group would be less focused on assimilation with whites than are Asians. Again, further research is needed.

LOOKING AT KEY QUESTIONS

Six research questions were listed in Chapter 1 to guide the present study, theoretic methods of survey and focus group research. Most, but not all, were addressed. Among those lacking data from the study are: “What is in those media that are being consumed and what attitudes, what ideals, what aspirations are being represented by that?” Unfortunately, the answers to this pressing question are not forthcoming for several reasons. The quantitative design of the survey questions was mainly closed-ended so that the responses could provide a uniform frame of reference. Open-ended questions would have enabled students not just to give their opinions but to discuss “how” and “why.” But analysis of such data, although fertile ground for further study, was outside the scope of this project. Qualitative research or mixed methodology would be advantageous because it can be designed to tease out the “whys” left unanswered in the present exploratory study. Also, such research can identify themes in inductive and deductive reasoning, as well as help develop more probing, targeted questions for another quantitative study.

Two other questions round out the list of those cited in Chapter 1. They are: 1) Is there a gap between intellectual maturity and emotional maturity when it comes to

interpreting media's messages? Whose responsibility is it to bridge the gap? 2) Can newspapers be used to improve media literacy in America? Answers to these are nearly impossible to address with the survey that was used. Framing questions in a way to get appropriate answers to the questions would be difficult or would take a lot of research. The second question, however, shouldn't be as difficult to get answered but it would require a longitudinal type study.

Of interest, however, but outside the listed research questions, were the opening questions in all three focus groups and the discussion session: "What media are you into?" or "What are your favorite media?" Clearly relishing the exercise, students tossed out answers like guests toss rice at a wedding. The list of media ran the gamut. This exercise alone relegates the "what is media?" question to the archives. Instead, students should be asked "how is media used?" and "For what reasons." With this approach a wealth of information could be extracted about the audience – in this instance, students – and the cultures they represent. Also, the audience, by having a clearer understanding of the purpose and goals of media, can make better use of media or make demands for changes that better suit their needs. The goal of a diverse, democratic society should be unity not uniformity. However, today uniformity seems to be an overriding theme of media, which seek to multiply profits with less effort. The new partnerships forged by media seem more to reduce the costs of expansion and coverage, not to expand the breadth and depth of information. These arrangements have a way of homogenizing the news and depriving audiences of the diversity in reports while holding budgets in line. It

is important for students to know who owns the various components of media and teens need to be taught why.

Another non-listed question essential to this study is basic: Why study media literacy? That's a question tackled by Art Silverblatt of St. Louis, Mo., a Webster University media literacy expert who contends that mass media have overreached their role or function to assume those services traditionally provided by church, school, government and family. Media, he stressed, are privately owned organizations out to make a profit for the company. Media systems never were intended to serve as a social institution. So, news stories about immigrants teaching themselves "English by listening to the radio constantly" (Washington Post 13 September 2005) or understanding American culture from sit-coms should be met with alarm. Silverblatt warns of the dangers of looking for answers from an organization whose main goal is to attract a large audience by any means possible. Unless media messages are examined critically and put into meaningful perspective, he cautions that the guidance and support that is offered can be problematic.

Silverblatt's concerns echo those of pioneering researcher Paul F. Lazarsfeld, who in 1948 noted:

Since the mass media are supported by great business concerns geared into the current social and economic system, the media contribute to the maintenance of that system. This contribution is not found merely in the effective advertisement of the sponsor's product. It arises, rather, from the typical presence in magazine stories, radio programs and newspaper columns of some element of confirmation, some element of approval of the present structure of society. And this continuing reaffirmation underscores the duty to accept.

To the extent that the media of mass communication have had an influence upon their audiences, it has stemmed not only from what is said,

but more significantly from what is not said. For these media not only continue to affirm the status quo but, in the same measure, they fail to raise essential questions about the structure of society. Hence by leaning toward conformism and by providing little basis for a critical appraisal of society, the commercially sponsored mass media indirectly but effectively restrain the cogent development of a genuinely critical outlook (Lazarsfeld 1948; 107).

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

As stated earlier, the survey data is linked closely to Gerbner's "cultivation theory," DeFleur's Media Dependency and the "uses and gratification" theory pioneered by Gurevitch, Katz and Blumler. Of course, Gerbner (1995) theorized that heavy exposure to mass media – for him, mainly television – creates attitudes more consistent with that medium's version of reality. Heavy viewers are apt to scoff at real-life events about violence, people, and places and favor the media-created version of the world and fictionalized events. To Gerbner, television merely socializes most people into standardized roles and behaviors so that social patterns can be spread and stabilized. The Pennsylvania and Florida students acknowledged moderate media use (Appendix B; Table 10). For example, more than 76% said they watch television up to 10 hours a week, while 15.6% watch 11 to 15 hours and 8.1% admitted to 16-20 hours a week. More than 80% said they spend up to 5 hours reading a magazine and a newspaper, respectively. More than 13% said they read magazines up to 10 hours a week but only 7% said they spend that much time reading a newspaper. Less than 3% said they spend up to 20 hours reading either. Compare the media use with students' responses to statements in Question 10:

- Media always tell the truth. (10.3% agree / 89.7% disagree)
- I learn a lot from television. (49.6% agree / 50.4% disagree)

- I learn more from reading newspapers than I do from watching television. (48.7 agree / 51.3% disagree)
- Newspaper's mission is to educate and inform the public. (80.5% agree / 19.5% disagree)
- Television tells you about the real world. (28.1% agree / 71.9% disagree)
- Media offer a lot of good ideas and advice. (44.2% agree / 55.8% disagree)
- Television shows starring women tend to have less violence. (41.3% agree / 58.7% disagree)
- Television shows featuring African Americans tend to have more violence. (47.8% agree / 52.2% disagree)
- Media do a good job of showing how celebrities really live. (32.1% agree / 67.9% disagree)
- Media do a good job of understanding the needs and issues of the poor. (22.6% agree / 77.4% disagree)

There was an even more direct correlation between the Cultivation Theory and Questions 3 and 4, which asked, "Overall, how truthful" are newspapers' and entertainment TV's portrayal of: teenage boys, teenage girls, parents, people who are religious, people with drinking or drug problems, foreigners or immigrants, African-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, high school students, the wealthy, the poor, Asian-Americans and the elderly. The majority of students answered most of the questions affirmatively – that the portrayals were "very truthful, truthful or somewhat truthful" (Appendix E). However, in each case, the majority selected "somewhat truthful," which reveals ambivalence on the students' part. Ambivalence gave way to total confusion when this question was compared with the statement in Question 10: Television tells you about the real world, where a majority (71.9%) disagreed (Appendix E). These and other examples of contradictions found in the research demand an in-depth qualitative research project.

This line of questioning also was evident during focus group discussions about media making the world smaller and more or less threatening. Again, in the majority of

cases, students agreed that media actually made the world seem smaller. For example, news is readily available about the votes for democracy in Iraq, the string of hurricanes threatening Florida coasts, and civil strife in portions of Africa. However, students appeared ambivalent about feeling safe in the world. They pointed to the near incessant coverage of 9/11, the Hurricane season, wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and other natural disasters and man-made turmoil. Hearing constantly about turmoil, strife and disasters can create some foreboding feelings.

Components of the “uses and gratification” (Katz 1974) theory predominated Questions 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7. Researchers Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch theorized that people use the media to their benefit, and are not mere passive viewers. For example, students acknowledged that media content is one way they derived gratification. When asked “how likely are you to see a movie, play or show reviewed on TV, reviewed in a magazine or in a newspaper?” 89.3% said very likely/ likely to TV, 70.3% said very likely/likely to magazines and 66.4% said very likely/ likely to newspapers (Appendix C). When asked “Do you use the Internet for news?” 41.6% of the students said “yes.” When asked “Do you use the Internet for fun and games?” 61.7% said “yes.”

Media Dependency (DeFleur 1976) tended to be exhibited more among minorities. As noted earlier, Asian-Americans, and maybe to a lesser extent Hispanic-Americans, seemed to rely more on media for information about language and culture. African-Americans relied on media for more materialistic things, which some researchers link to issues of self-esteem or self efficacy.

Researchers McCombs and Shaw (1995) theorized about media's agenda-setting role. They speculated that media did not have a direct influence on attitude formation but on what it is that people think is important to be thinking about. So, they said, mass media influence people not by telling them what to think but by telling them what to think about. In the survey, 53.3% of the students acknowledged that they were "very likely/ likely" to "use television to decide what issues to be concerned about," while 49.7% are very likely/ likely to use TV to decide "what's important in the world." As for newspapers, 52.3% of the students are "very likely/likely" to use this medium to decide what issues to be concerned about and 55% would use it to decide what's important in the world (Appendix C). The results underscore the importance of media literacy because these students do represent our future voters, government officials, policymakers and judicial leaders.

Theories outside the purview of journalism and communication could also be applicable. Researcher Leon Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance could be examined as it relates to students' denial of media influence as they obviously spend huge amounts of excess cash on products hyped by media. According to Festinger, there is a tendency for individuals to seek consistency among their beliefs and opinions, and attitudes and behaviors. The person will seek to adjust beliefs to match opinions or vice versa. The same is true in all other instances where there is a discrepancy. Other possible theories that lend themselves to analysis are: Culture theory and the ecological perspective. Numerous other theories in such fields as psychology, sociology,

anthropology and human (adolescent) development may add understanding to the results found in the study.

THE GUIDING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Here is a summary of the guiding research questions and the answers from the quantitative and qualitative portions of the project:

- 1. Are today's students aware of efforts of media to influence opinion, behavior, values and ideology?** The high school students participating in this research project appeared to have an elementary understanding of the power of the media. They appear to have a solid understanding of the fundamental operations of media but the majority "say" media do not influence their choice of clothing, movies, snacks and beverages or opinions about such things as what makes teens popular or cool, or what looks constitute beauty.
- 2. How much do the factors of class, gender, and ethnicity determine a students' ability to read and understand the media?** Factors such as gender and ethnicity do play a role in a student's understanding of the media but the project design lacked the sophistication to determine to what extent these factors played a role. Also, the UMD Institutional Review Board and USA TODAY attorneys limited the amount of information that could be obtained from the students so the issue of social class was not adequately addressed in the survey.
- 3. How well do students interpret symbols, grammar or word choice, connotative images, facial expressions, posture, gestures, use of space and other nonverbal communication behaviors?** Again, the high school students

had a basic understanding of the different ways media communicates. The majority understood about the use of facial expressions, the language used and gestures. Most, however, apparently did not understand that camera angle, the way a character walks, the colors used in pictures or TV scenes or in the character clothing also are important ways media communicate messages.

- 4. Is there a gap between intellectual maturity and emotional mature when it comes to interpreting media's messages? Whose responsibility is it to bridge the gap?** The answers are beyond the scope of this study. Further study of these issues should generate fascinating results.
- 5. Can newspapers be used to improve media literacy in America?** The survey and focus group discussions did not provide a clear cut answer. Newspapers, however, do apparently wield some power in a number of instances. This too can be further explored.
- 6. What is in the media that teens consume and what attitudes, ideals and aspirations are being represented?** Again, further study is needed.

LIMITATIONS OR A CANDID REVIEW OF THE WORK

This research project was the most challenging, yet exhilarating, this researcher has ever tackled. There are many things I would do differently if given a chance to start again. However, I will focus my critique mainly on survey design. First and foremost, I should have shortened the survey. It wasn't until I was setting up the SPSS study that I realized I had more than 100 variables. I needed a sharper, narrower focus; then, I would

have been able to offer more open-ended questions. However, the approach I did use helped in revealing some surprising things in the sea of data that was produced. I still have tons of unstudied data that may yield even more interesting results on close examination.

Some of the survey questions were ambiguous and possibly produced or led to unreliable answers. For example, Questions 3 and 4 asked about the “truthfulness” of newspapers and TV’s portrayal of certain groups of people or characters (Appendix A). While there is a shared meaning of truth in America, another word probably would have been more useful; there is some subjectivity and ambiguity to “truthfulness.” Some students may have wondered ‘what exactly is meant by this and how much truth is enough truth?’ I only did a brief analysis of the data because of these problems. A similar problem was found in Question 17: “How often do you see television entertainment that highlights or features: men, women, African-American men and women, Hispanic-American men and women, Asian-American men and women, teenagers, parents, unmarried couples, gay couples, disabled people, people from other countries and the elderly.” The answers may have more to do with access and choice of programs than anything media did or did not do.

Although mainly quantitative, the research project did have a qualitative component – several focus groups. In retrospect, however, the project could have used any number of qualitative designs, such as ethnographic, constructivism, or phenomenological research that seeks an emic understanding of the variable under examination.

The greatest limitation of the survey is the fact that, although the main research questions were answered, it was not possible to reach firm conclusions. The survey was not set up to deal with some of the more interesting findings, such as the possibility that African-Americans *view* media differently and Asian-Americans *use* media differently.

PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE

In this data, I see a mission. If media saturates society then today's youth need to understand and appreciate the ways they are impacted or influenced, cajoled or dismissed, challenged or disparaged, included or excluded. The importance of this information cannot be lost on school officials, teachers and parents, either. There is work that needs to be done here, whether on minority students or all school children. The various ways groups of students view media may offer clues to ways students learn in general. Media also can help people see the world through the eyes of other races and ethnic groups; this would require, however, a more diligent effort by media to diversify its staff from top to bottom. This mere effort on the part of media can help create a bridge between the races, just as media's airing of attacks against Civil Rights marchers in the 1960s helped propel the movement and melt opposition to desegregation. As noted in Chapter 5, media made mistakes in covering Hurricane Katrina but they also unmasked the nation's gargantuan problems with poverty and spotlighted a dual class system in America. In a lot of ways Americans were shamed into action, just as they were by "Bull" Connor's police dogs. When youth (and adults for that matter) read newspapers and magazines, listen to the radio or music, watch television news, entertainment shows

or movies, surf the Web, send e-mails or text messages, look at billboards, receive telemarketing phone messages or engage in CD-ROM simulations games, they must:

1. Know the messages, including their sources;
2. Recognize the purpose of the message;
3. Understand what they are being asked to do, believe or say.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

Areas of further research have been suggested throughout the Conclusion chapter.

To recap, here are questions to stimulate further research:

1. What are the views of media among the different racial and ethnic groups?
How do these different perspectives help or hinder media literacy?
2. What role does the socio-economic status of students play in their beliefs about media's influence? Would middle-class blacks' view of media parallel more closely those of whites? Does poverty play a role in students' view of media?
3. Besides economics, what are other sources that lead to media literacy: family structure, age, religion or faith (fundamentalism), education, media use, access and/or life experiences?
4. Why do teens deny influence?
5. How differently do various racial and ethnic groups use media?
6. What is in those media that are being consumed and what attitudes, what ideals, what aspirations are being represented by that?

7. Is there a gap between intellectual maturity and emotional maturity when it comes to interpreting media's messages? Whose responsibility is it to bridge the gap?
8. What role do parents play in the media literacy arena? What do media say? What do students say? What do parents say?
9. How does instruction in media literacy handle differing responses to media by different ethnic, racial or socio-economic groups?
10. How do students respond to messages from black media or ethnic specific media, and how do these reactions compare to the students' responses to mainstream media?
11. How does the fact that the high school students are "echo boomers" affect media's influence?
12. Can students differentiate between advertisements and other media content? What effect do ads have vs. other media content?

This research project is exploratory at best; what is needed is a carefully crafted explanatory project. What would be needed is a rigorous experimental or quasi-experimental design using a control group along with a randomly selected group of students. Perhaps this project would utilize multiple post tests. Also, the design would measure, in some fashion, the students' state of being first. Researchers would establish as much as possible, the students' perspective of the world, his or her own lifestyle and community before layering on students' ideas about media. This approach may result in a truer picture of students' perspective of media influence.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MEDIA LITERACY

Researchers Justin Lewis and Sut Jhally (1998) argue that the purpose of media literacy should be to help people become sophisticated *citizens* rather than sophisticated *consumers*. The exigent work of investigating various mediums to understand their techniques to sway thought and behavior, however, underscores the complexity of the effort. We are obligated, as a society, to educate our children not only to meet the challenges of traditional literacies - reading, writing, math, and critical thinking - but also to understand varied and complicated texts of media, including books, billboards, radio, television, movies, videos, the Internet and all others. However, high school students must learn to be skeptical but not cynical, to question media messages and do it in ways that minimize biases or preconceptions about the answers. And, with American society, in particular, and the world, as a whole, as culturally and racially diverse as they are, media must be required to reflect that diversity in its staff, copy, articles and features and random information that is spewed forth in any number of forms.

All the survey results suggest that most students could benefit from courses, seminars and workshops that teach them skills to make media content accessible and understandable. To learn ways to systematically analyze media content can ensure fresh insight and reiterate the fact that there is no one truth to media content. Media literacy can help students' understand how and why our society functions as it does and the ways in which they can make a difference in policy. British researcher David Buckingham (1993) said that the development of media education actually is part of a wider move

towards a democratization that merges students' technology-driven activities outside of school with the sacrosanct practices within the classroom.

The survey of high school students, although including only two states and a few schools, raises pivotal issues related to the use and view of media by certain groups that could complicate any media literacy instructions. For example, survey results suggest that the hegemonic nature of media may affect students' view or perspective that whites are least influenced by media because it merely reinforces the standards they already hold and therefore these students feel less pressure than other groups to acquiesce to enticements. The reverse may also be true: Minority students may feel more pressure to conform and to buy into media's messages. The superficial or cloudy understanding that some students and student groups have of media may be attributed to the students' socialization process at home and school, or even a clash of their place in society with media's perspective of what it could be or should be. Notwithstanding the challenges, this research project emphasized the influence of the media and its differential impact for certain groups of students. How does instruction in media literacy handle such differing responses to media? The research findings support the continued examination using diverse qualitative and quantitative methodologies of media literacy issues.

APPENDIX A

Buy a toy or game seen on a **TV** commercial.

1 2 3 4 5

See a movie, play or show reviewed on **TV**.

1 2 3 4 5

Attend a party or sporting event (basketball, hockey) advertised on **TV**.

1 2 3 4 5

Dress like someone in a teen or fashion **magazine**.

1 2 3 4 5

Buy a toy or game seen in a **magazine** of any kind.

1 2 3 4 5

See a movie, play or show reviewed in a **magazine**.

1 2 3 4 5

Attend a party or sporting event advertised in a **magazine**.

1 2 3 4 5

Dress like someone in a **newspaper** ad.

1 2 3 4 5

Buy a toy or game discussed/debuted in a **newspaper**.

1 2 3 4 5

See a movie, play or show reviewed in a **newspaper**.

1 2 3 4 5

Attend a party or sporting event advertised in a **newspaper**.

1 2 3 4 5

2

Have you ever done any of the following:

APPENDIX A

¹
YES
²
NO
³
DOES NOT APPLY TO ME (DNA)

Used an idea from a TV show or article you read.

1
2
3

Aspired to a career touted on TV (such as Crime Scene Investigator like on "CSI")

1
2
3

Tried to create a job seen in an Ad (selling lemonade on a street corner).

1
2
3

Applied for a job you saw on television or in the newspaper.

1
2
3



3

Overall, how truthful are **newspapers'** portrayals of:

¹
VERY
TRUTHFUL
²
TRUTHFUL
³
SOMEWHAT
TRUTHFUL
⁴
NOT TRUTHFUL
AT ALL
⁵
DOES NOT APPLY TO
ME (DNA)

Teenage boys

1
2
3
4
5

Teenage girls

1
2
3
4
5

Parents

1
2
3
4
5

People who are religious

1
2
3
4
5

People with drinking or drug problems

1
2
3
4
5

Foreigners or immigrants

APPENDIX A

1	2	3	4	5
<hr/>				
African-Americans				
1	2	3	4	5
<hr/>				
Hispanic-Americans				
1	2	3	4	5
<hr/>				
High school students				
1	2	3	4	5
<hr/>				
The wealthy				
1	2	3	4	5
<hr/>				
The poor				
1	2	3	4	5
<hr/>				
Asian-Americans				
1	2	3	4	5
<hr/>				
The elderly				
1	2	3	4	5

4

Overall, how truthful is entertainment TV's portrayal of:

1	2	3	4	5
VERY TRUTHFUL	TRUTHFUL	SOMEWHAT TRUTHFUL	NOT TRUTHFUL AT ALL	DOES NOT APPLY TO ME (DNA)

Teenage boys

1	2	3	4	5
----------	----------	----------	----------	----------

Teenage girls

1	2	3	4	5
----------	----------	----------	----------	----------

Parents

APPENDIX A

1 2 3 4 5

People who are religious

1 2 3 4 5

People with drinking or drug problems

1 2 3 4 5

Foreigners or immigrants

1 2 3 4 5

African-Americans

1 2 3 4 5

Hispanic-Americans

1 2 3 4 5

High school students

1 2 3 4 5

The wealthy

1 2 3 4 5

The poor

1 2 3 4 5

Asian-Americans

1 2 3 4 5

The elderly

1 2 3 4 5

5

How likely are you to use **magazines** – whether teen, news, etc. - to decide:

1 2 3 4 5
VERY LIKELY LIKELY UNLIKELY NOT LIKELY AT DOES NOT APPLY

APPENDIX A

ALL TO ME (DNA)

Which snacks to buy or eat

1 2 3 4 5

Which beverage to buy or drink

1 2 3 4 5

Whom to date

1 2 3 4 5

What to wear

1 2 3 4 5

What to do on a date

1 2 3 4 5

Where to go for recreation

1 2 3 4 5

What issues to be concerned about

1 2 3 4 5

A goal or career

1 2 3 4 5

If you are popular or cool

1 2 3 4 5

About other cultures and ethnic groups

1 2 3 4 5

Which cosmetics/shaving materials to buy-use

1 2 3 4 5

An answer to a problem

1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX A

If you are handsome/beautiful

1 2 3 4 5

What's important in the world

1 2 3 4 5

What you think about

1 2 3 4 5

6

How likely are you to use **television** to decide:

1 2 3 4 5
VERY LIKELY LIKELY UNLIKELY NOT LIKELY AT ALL DOES NOT APPLY TO ME (DNA)

Which snacks to buy or eat

1 2 3 4 5

Which beverage to buy or drink

1 2 3 4 5

Whom to date

1 2 3 4 5

What to wear

1 2 3 4 5

What to do on a date

1 2 3 4 5

Where to go for recreation

1 2 3 4 5

What issues to be concerned about

1 2 3 4 5

A goal or career

APPENDIX A

1 2 3 4 5

What to wear

1 2 3 4 5

What to do on a date

1 2 3 4 5

Where to go for recreation

1 2 3 4 5

What issues to be concerned about

1 2 3 4 5

A goal or career

1 2 3 4 5

If you are popular or cool

1 2 3 4 5

About other cultures and ethnic groups

1 2 3 4 5

Which cosmetics/shaving materials to buy-use

1 2 3 4 5

An answer to a problem

1 2 3 4 5

If you are handsome/beautiful

1 2 3 4 5

What's important in the world

1 2 3 4 5

What you think about

1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX A

8

Here are the different sections of the newspaper – news, sports, comic strips, entertainment/style/the arts, editorial, business, metro, health/science.

When you read the newspaper to which section are you likely to go:

First	<input type="text"/>
Second	<input type="text"/>
Last	<input type="text"/>

9

When watching any television show, can you tell the truth about a character by the:

	1 YES	2 NO	3 DOES NOT APPLY TO ME (DNA)
Facial expression	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Language used	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Angle of the camera	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Way he/she walks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Color of his/her clothing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gestures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10

APPENDIX A

List whether you agree with the following:

1 2 3 4
STRONGLY AGREE AGREE DISAGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

Media always tell the truth.

1 2 3 4

Media can make me do something I'd never done before.

1 2 3 4

Minorities are underrepresented in the media.

1 2 3 4

Media reflect that Americans are loved throughout the world.

1 2 3 4

My friends and I may get different messages from the same TV show.

1 2 3 4

Only a few people decide which articles are published in newspapers or magazines.

1 2 3 4

I learn a lot from television.

1 2 3 4

I learn more from reading newspapers than I do from watching television.

1 2 3 4

I learn more from watching television than I do from reading newspapers and magazines.

1 2 3 4

Television's mission is to educate and inform the public.

1 2 3 4

Newspapers' mission is to educate and inform the public.

1 2 3 4

APPENDIX A

Advertisements are only for entertainment.

1 2 3 4

Television tells you about the real world.

1 2 3 4

Media offer a lot of good ideas and advice.

1 2 3 4

Television shows starring women tend to have less violence.

1 2 3 4

Television shows featuring African Americans tend to have more violence.

1 2 3 4

Media do a good job of showing how celebrities really live.

1 2 3 4

Media do a good job of understanding the needs and issues of the poor.

1 2 3 4



11

Is it important to you to know who owns a television station?

YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	DOES NOT APPLY TO ME (DNA)
<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4



12

Why or why not?

APPENDIX A

13

Is it important to know who owns a newspaper or magazine?

YES	DON'T KNOW	NO	DOES NOT APPLY TO ME (DNA)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14

Why or why not?

15

Which of the following pays most of the costs for television: (choose one)

- Taxes
- Cable fees
- Advertising
- Contributions
- Other, such as

16

Which of the following pays most of the costs for newspapers and magazines: (choose one)

- Taxes
- Advertising
- Subscriptions
- Contributions

APPENDIX A

News stands and sales from vending machines or at grocery stores

Other, such as

17

How often do you see television entertainment that highlights or features:

1 2 3 4 5
VERY OFTEN OFTEN SELDOM NEVER DOES NOT APPLY TO
ME (DNA)

Men

1 2 3 4 5

Women

1 2 3 4 5

African-American men and women

1 2 3 4 5

Hispanic-American men and women

1 2 3 4 5

Asian-American men and women

1 2 3 4 5

Teenagers

1 2 3 4 5

Parents

1 2 3 4 5

Unmarried couples

1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX A

Gay couples

1

2

3

4

5

Disabled people

1

2

3

4

5

People from other countries

1

2

3

4

5

The elderly

1

2

3

4

5

18

When you watch television (mainly news shows and educational documentaries) how often do you notice mistakes in facts, data and in what is said?

- Very often
- Often
- Seldom
- Never

19

When you read a newspaper daily, Sunday or local weekly, how often do you notice mistakes in facts, data and in what is said or in the information that is given?

- Very often
- Often
- Seldom
- Never

APPENDIX A

20

Do you watch TV news shows in school?

- Yes
 - Sometimes
 - No
-

21

Which do you watch most at home?

- Entertainment TV
 - Television news
 - Other
-

22

In school, do you read newspapers?

- Yes
 - Sometimes
 - No
-

23

If you read newspapers in school, when:

- Morning
- Lunch period
- Afternoon

APPENDIX A

24

If you read newspapers in school, where:

- Classroom
 - Lunchroom/lounge
 - Elsewhere
-

25

If you read newspapers in school, how often:

- Everyday
 - Occasionally
 - Every now and then
-

26

Outside of school, do you read newspapers?

- Yes
 - Sometimes
 - No
-

27

If you read newspapers outside of school, when:

- Morning
- Afternoon
- Evening

APPENDIX A

28

If you read newspapers outside of school, where:

- Home
 - Library
 - Elsewhere
-

29

If you read newspapers outside of school, how often:

- Everyday
 - Occasionally
 - Every now and then
-

30

Do you use the Internet for news?

- Yes
 - Sometimes
 - No
-

31

If you do use the Internet for news, how much?

- A lot
- Sometimes
- Not much at all
- Does not apply to me

APPENDIX A

32

Do you use the Internet for fun and games?

- Yes
- Sometimes
- No

33

If you do use the Internet for fun and games, how much?

- A lot
- Sometimes
- Not much at all
- Does not apply to me

34

Your age (required by Children's Online Privacy Protection Act):

- Under 13 (if you are under 13 stop now)
- 13-18 (if you are 13 or older please answer the questions on the next page)

35

DO NOT RESPOND TO ANY OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IF YOU ARE UNDER 13 YEARS OF AGE

Age

- 13-15

APPENDIX A

16-18

19-21

36

Grade

9th

10th

11th

12th

37

School

38

Do you have brothers and/or sisters?

39

Gender

Male

Female

40

I am:

APPENDIX A

- African-American
- Hispanic-American
- Asian-American
- White
- Other

41

Did your mom graduate from college?

42

Did your dad graduate from college?

43

I live with my:

- Mom
- Dad
- Both
- Neither

44

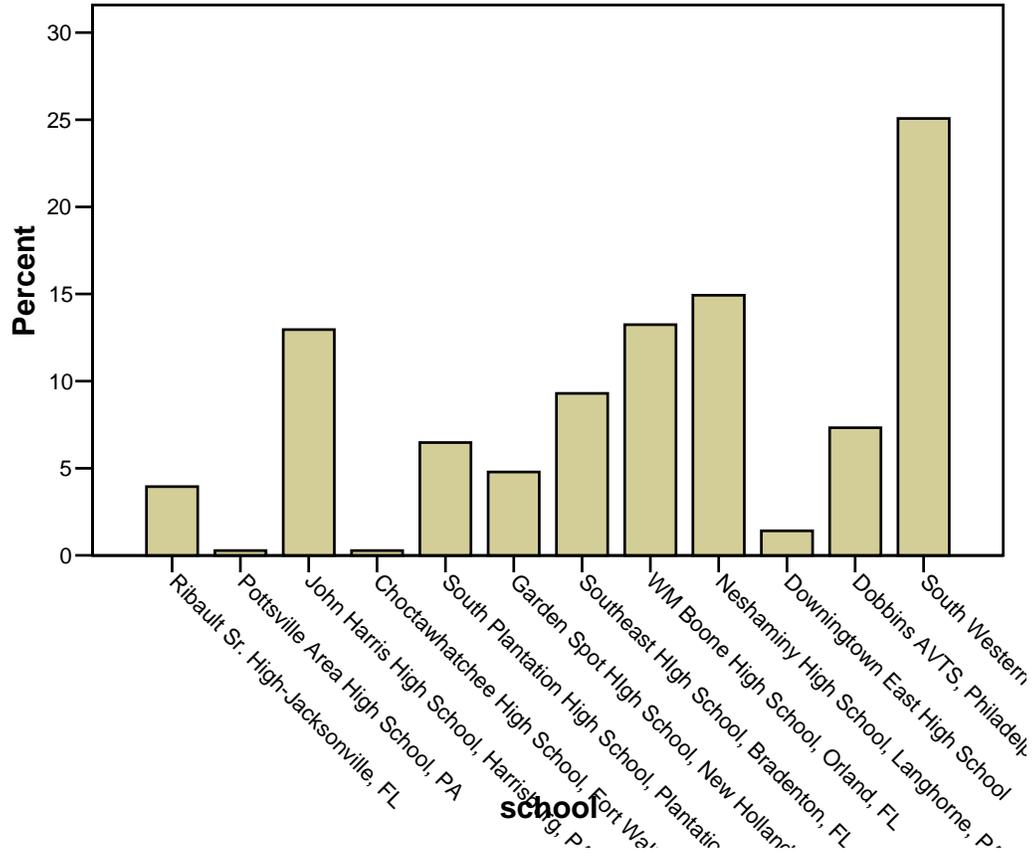
How many hours a week do you spend:

¹
0-5 HOURS ²
6-10 HOURS ³
11-15 HOURS ⁴
16-20 HOURS

APPENDIX A

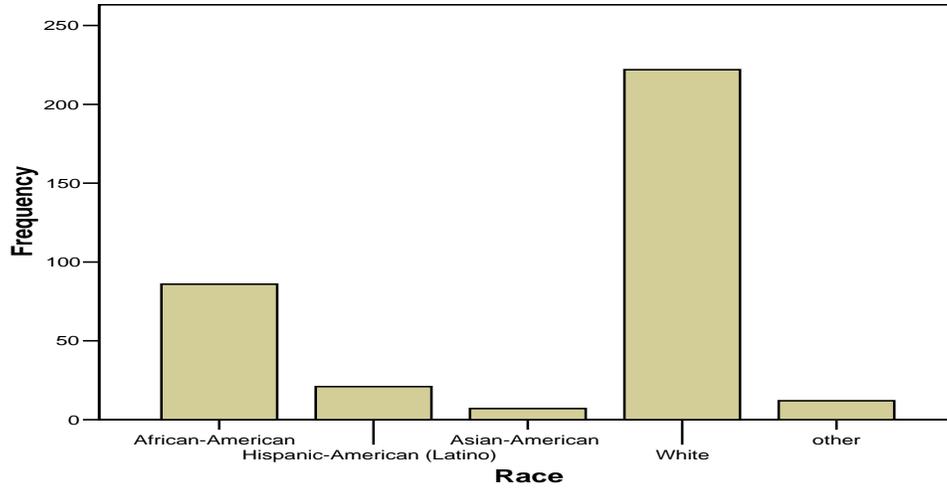
APPENDIX B

school

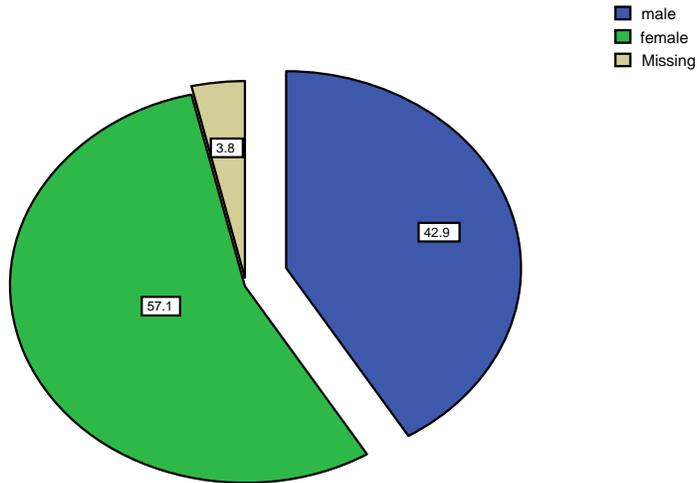


APPENDIX B

Race

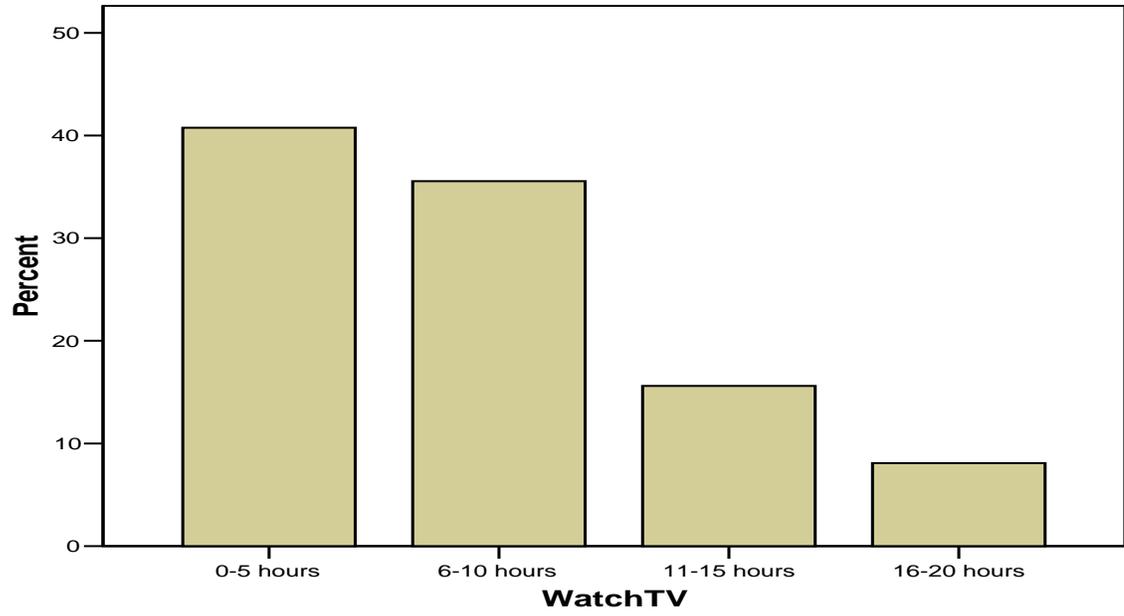


GENDER

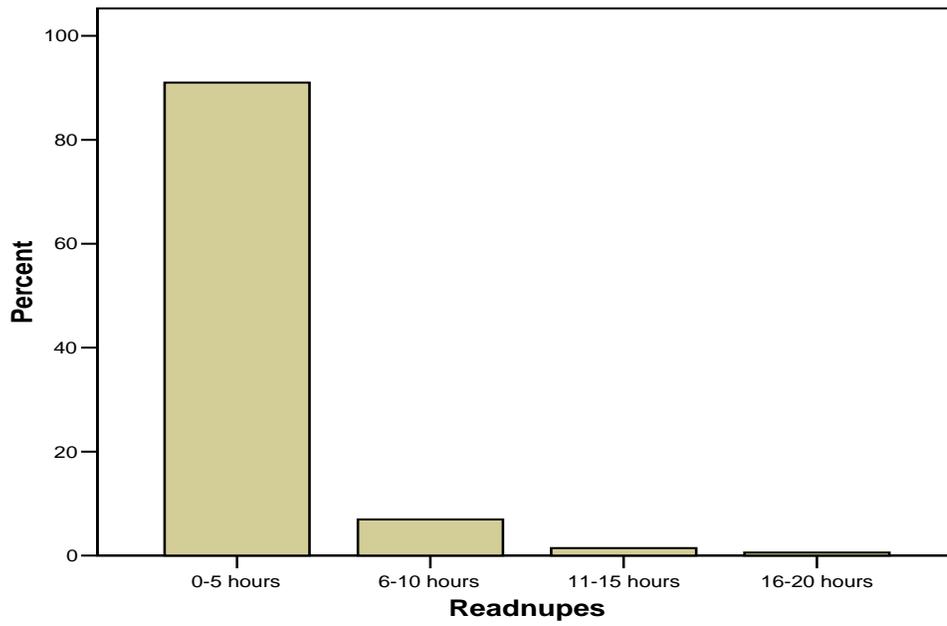


APPENDIX B

WatchTV

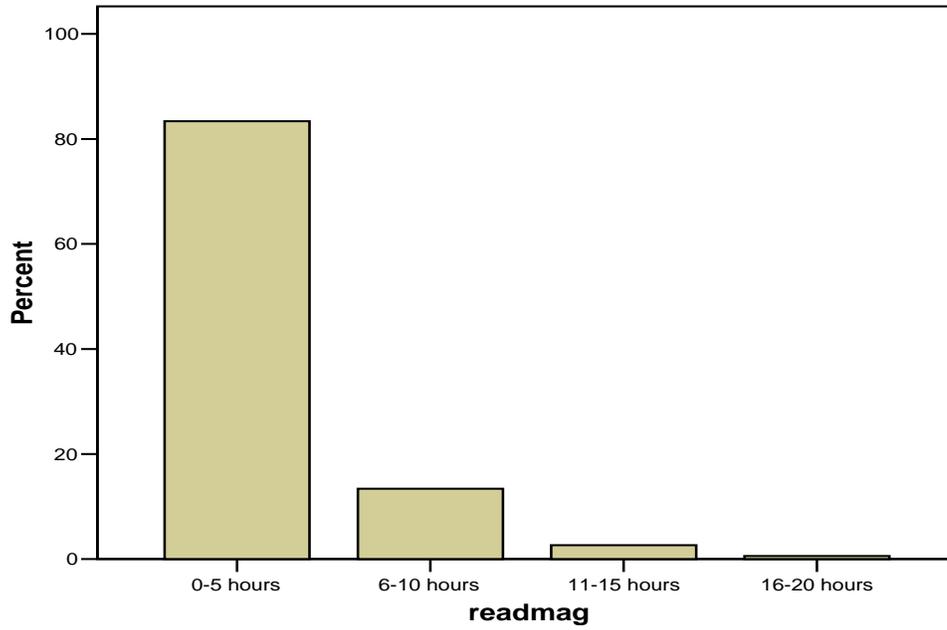


Readnupes

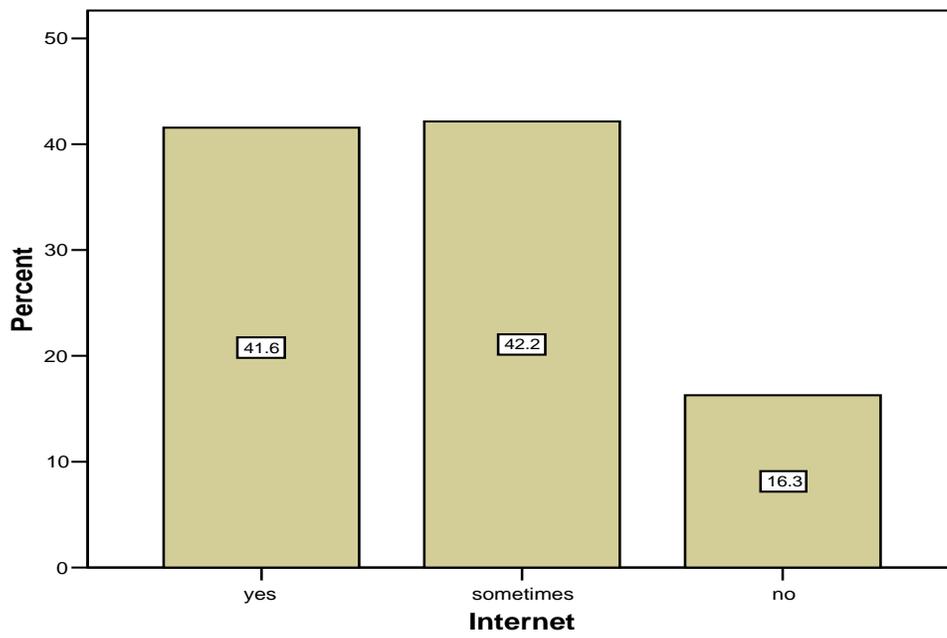


APPENDIX B

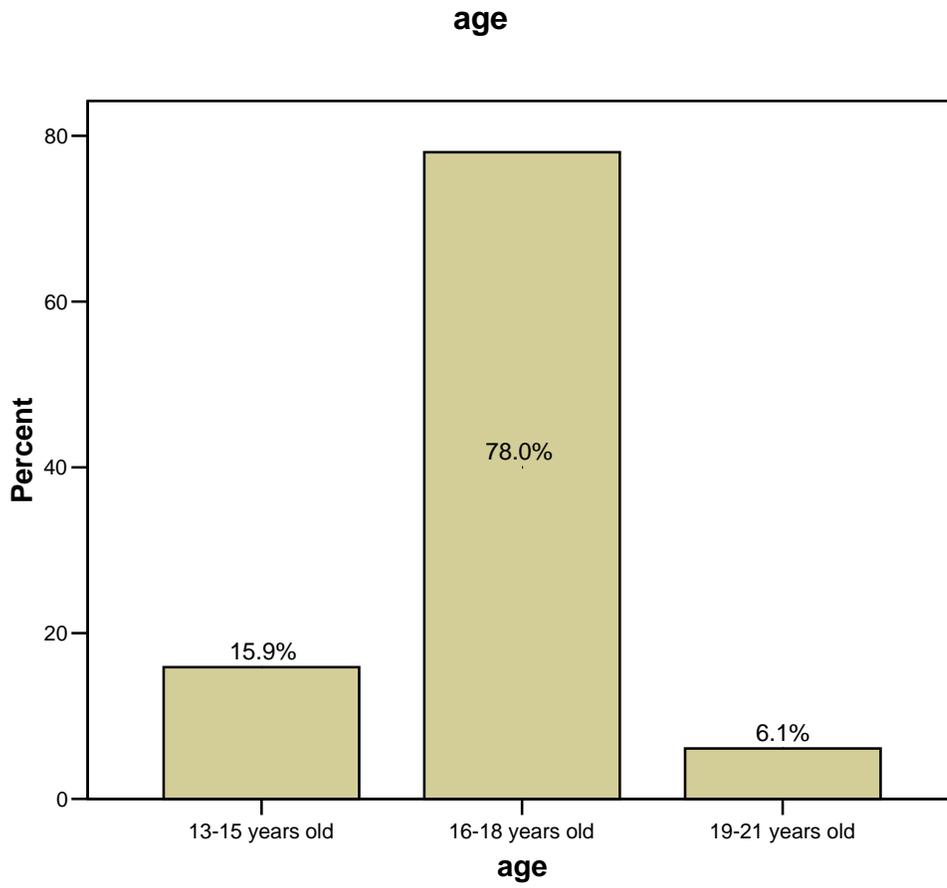
readmag



Internet



APPENDIX B



APPENDIX C

(Based on survey questions 1 and 2; mean is based on a 1-4 scale with 1 suggesting the greatest influence)

	Television		Newspaper ad		Magazine ad	
1. How likely are you to:						
(items 1, 5, 9) Dress like someone on/in	4.6%	very likely	3.4%	very likely	8.3%	very likely
	39.2%	likely	7.5%	likely	33.1%	likely
	33.1%	unlikely	33.6%	unlikely	29.6%	unlikely
	23.1%	not likely at all	55.5%	not likely at all	29.0%	not likely at all
accumulative:						
	43.8%	{ very likely/ {likely	10.9%	{ very likely/ {likely	41.4%	{ very likely {likely
	56.2%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	89.1%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	58.6%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all
mean:	2.747		3.411		2.793	
Standard Deviation is < 1.00						
	Television		Newspaper ad		Magazine ad	
(items 2, 6, 10) Buy a toy or game seen on/in a	11.5%	very likely	3.9%	very likely	7.8%	very likely
	44.1%	likely	20.3%	likely	34.8%	likely
	28.7%	unlikely	40.3%	unlikely	36.6%	unlikely
	15.7%	not likely at all	35.5%	not likely at all	20.8%	not likely at all
accumulative:						
	55.6%	{ very likely/ {likely	24.2%	{ very likely/ {likely	42.6%	{ very likely/ {likely
	44.4%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	75.8%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	57.4%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all
mean:	2.485		3.074		2.705	
Standard Deviation is < 1.00						
	Television		Newspaper ad		Magazine ad	
(items 3, 7, 11) See a movie, play or show reviewed on	44.1%	very likely	22.7%	very likely	20.9%	very likely
	45.2%	likely	43.7%	likely	49.4%	likely
	7.2%	unlikely	19.2%	unlikely	20.3%	unlikely
	3.5%	not likely at all	14.5%	not likely at all	9.4%	not likely at all
accumulative:						
	89.3%	{ very likely/ {likely	66.4%	{ very likely/ {likely	70.3%	{ very likely/ {likely
	10.7%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	33.7%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	29.7%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all

APPENDIX C

	Television		Newspaper ad		Magazine ad	
<i>1. How likely are you to:</i>						
(items 3, 7, 11) See a movie, play or show reviewed on						
mean	1.701		2.253		2.18	
Standard Deviation is < 1.00						
<hr/>						
(items 4, 8, 12) Attend a party or sporting event (basketball, hockey) advertised on						
	14.5%	very likely	10.3%	very likely	7.4%	very likely
	32.8%	likely	29.3%	likely	24.5%	likely
	28.0%	unlikely	28.9%	unlikely	37.5%	unlikely
	24.7%	not likely at all	31.5%	not likely at all	30.7%	not likely at all
<hr/>						
accumulative:	47.3%	{ very likely/ {likely	39.6%	{ very likely/ {likely	31.9%	{ very likely/ {likely
	52.7%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	60.4%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	68.2%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all
mean	2.629		2.816		2.913	
Standard Deviation is 1.00						

2. Have you ever done any of the following:

	Yes	No	Mean
1) Used an idea from a TV show or article you read	78.1%	21.9%	1.218
2) Aspired to a career touted on TV (such as Crime Scene Investigator like on "CSI")	40.4%	59.6%	1.595
3) Tried to create a job seen in an AD (selling lemonade on a street corner)	26.3%	73.7%	1.737
4) Applied for a job you saw on television or in the newspaper	26.1%	73.9%	1.739
Standard Deviations were all < 1.00			

APPENDIX C

(Based on questions 5, 6 and 7)

<i>How likely are you to use to decide:</i>	Magazines		Television		Newspapers	
1) Which snacks to buy/eat	3.9%	very likely	12.2%	very likely	3.4%	very likely
	25.2%	likely	41.4%	likely	12.9%	likely
	38.3%	unlikely	32.4%	unlikely	39.8%	unlikely
	32.6%	not likely at all	14.0%	not likely at all	43.9%	not likely at all
accumulative:	29.1%	{ very likely/ {likely	53.6%	{ very likely/ {likely	16.3%	{ very likely/ {likely
	70.9%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	46.4%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	83.7%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all
mean Standard Deviation < 1.00		2.997		2.481		3.241
2) Which beverage to buy/drink	4.7%	very likely	12.3%	very likely	2.5%	very likely
	26.5%	likely	40.9%	likely	14.3%	likely
	37.2%	unlikely	31.3%	unlikely	39.1%	unlikely
	31.6%	not likely at all	15.5%	not likely at all	44.1%	not likely at all
accumulative	31.2%	{ very likely/ {likely	53.2%	{ very likely/ {likely	16.8%	{ very likely/ {likely
	68.8%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	46.8%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	83.2%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all
mean Standard Deviation < 1.00		2.955		2.500		3.248
3) Whom to date	3.6%	very likely	1.8%	very likely	1.6%	very likely
	10.9%	likely	10.7%	likely	7.1%	likely
	34.4%	unlikely	41.3%	unlikely	33.0%	unlikely
	51.1%	not likely at all	46.2%	not likely at all	58.3%	not likely at all
accumulative:	14.5%	{ very likely/ {likely	12.5%	{ very likely/ {likely	8.7%	{ very likely {likely
	85.5%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	87.5%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	91.3%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all
mean Standard Deviation is < 1.00		3.329		3.318		3.480

APPENDIX C

*How likely are you to use
to decide:*

	Magazines		Television		Newspapers	
4) What to wear	10.0%	very likely	10.6%	very likely	2.5%	very likely
	34.8%	likely	31.7%	likely	8.0%	likely
	27.1%	unlikely	33.5%	unlikely	33.4%	unlikely
	28.0%	not likely at all	24.2%	not likely at all	56.1%	not likely at all
accumulative:						
	44.8%	{ very likely/ {likely	42.3%	{ very likely/ {likely	10.5%	{ very likely/ {likely
	55.1%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	57.7%	{ unlikely/ not {likely at all	89.5%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all
mean	2.731		2.713		3.429	
Standard deviations were all < 1.00						
5) What to do on a date	6.7%	very likely	6.4%	very likely	1.0%	very likely
	33.4%	likely	22.1%	likely	13.3%	likely
	30.4%	unlikely	37.1%	unlikely	34.0%	unlikely
	29.5%	not likely at all	34.4%	not likely at all	51.7%	not likely at all
accumulative:						
	40.1%	{ very likely/ {likely	28.5%	{ very likely/ {likely	14.3%	{ very likely/ {likely
	59.9%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	71.5%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	85.7%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all
mean	2.826		2.993		3.365	
Standard Deviations are < 1.00						
6) Where to go for recreation	4.5%	very likely	7.0%	very likely	4.5%	very likely
	34.6%	likely	32.5%	likely	25.6%	likely
	37.0%	unlikely	33.4%	unlikely	35.6%	unlikely
	23.8%	not likely at all	27.1%	not likely at all	34.3%	not likely at all
accumulative:						
	39.1%	{ very likely/ {likely	39.5%	{ very likely/ {likely	30.1%	{ very likely/ {likely
	60.8%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	60.5%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	69.9%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all
mean	2.801		2.805		2.996	
Standard Deviation is < 1.00						

APPENDIX C

*How likely are you to use
to decide:*

	Magazines		Television		Newspapers	
7) What issues to be concerned about	6.2%	very likely	11.6%	very likely	17.8%	very likely
	38.1%	likely	41.7%	likely	34.5%	likely
	32.6%	unlikely	29.5%	unlikely	24.6%	unlikely
	23.2%	not likely at all	17.3%	not likely at all	23.1%	not likely at all
<hr/>						
accumulative:	44.3%	{ very likely/ {likely	53.3%	{ very likely/ {likely	52.3%	{ very likely/ {likely
	55.8%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	46.8%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	47.7%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all
mean		2.727		2.523		2.529
Standard Deviation < or = 1.00						
<hr/>						
8) A goal or career	8.8%	very likely	10.7%	very likely	10.2%	very likely
	34.2%	likely	31.3%	likely	27.8%	likely
	32.2%	unlikely	37.5%	unlikely	31.8%	unlikely
	24.9%	not likely at all	20.5%	not likely at all	30.2%	not likely at all
<hr/>						
accumulative:	43.0%	{ very likely/ {likely	42.0%	{ very likely/ {likely	38.0%	{ very likely/ {likely
	57.1%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	58.0%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	62.0%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all
mean		2.731		2.678		2.821
Standard Deviation is < 1.00						
<hr/>						
9) If you are popular or cool	4.8%	very likely	4.3%	very likely	1.9%	very likely
	13.6%	likely	14.4%	likely	6.1%	likely
	34.4%	unlikely	34.7%	unlikely	31.3%	unlikely
	47.1%	not likely at all	46.6%	not likely at all	60.7%	not likely at all
<hr/>						
accumulative:	18.4%	{ very likely/ {likely	18.7%	{ very likely/ {likely	8.0	{ very likely/ {likely
	81.5%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	81.3%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	92.0%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all
mean		3.238		3.236		3.508
Standard Deviation is < 1.00						

APPENDIX C

*How likely are you to use
to decide:*

10) About other cultures and
ethnic groups

	Magazines		Television		Newspapers	
	5.1%	very likely	7.0%	very likely	6.9%	very likely
	29.5%	likely	30.0%	likely	27.0%	likely
	37.0%	unlikely	37.9%	unlikely	33.0%	unlikely
	28.3%	not likely at all	25.1%	not likely at all	33.0%	not likely at all
<hr/>						
accumulative:	34.6%	{ very likely/ {likely	37.0%	{ very likely/ {likely	33.9%	{ very likely {likely
	65.3%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	63.0%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	66.0%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all
mean		2.885		2.810		2.921
Standard Deviation is < 1.00						

11) Which cosmetics/shaving materials
to buy/use

	12.6%	very likely	13.2%	very likely	4.4%	very likely
	33.8%	likely	31.0%	likely	11.1%	likely
	29.3%	unlikely	34.4%	unlikely	33.3%	unlikely
	24.3%	not likely at all	21.5%	not likely at all	51.1%	not likely at all
<hr/>						
accumulative:	46.4%	{ very likely/ {likely	44.2%	{ very likely {likely	15.5%	{ very likely/ {likely
	53.6%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	55.9%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	84.4%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all
mean		2.652		2.641		3.311
Standard Deviation is <1.00						

12) An answer to a problem

	6.3%	very likely	5.1%	very likely	4.7%	very likely
	25.9%	likely	18.9%	likely	18.8%	likely
	38.4%	unlikely	39.6%	unlikely	37.9%	unlikely
	29.5%	not likely at all	36.3%	not likely at all	38.6%	not likely at all
<hr/>						
accumulative:	32.2%	{ very likely/ {likely	24.0%	{ very likely/ {likely	23.5%	{ very likely/ {likely
	67.9%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	75.9%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	76.5%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all
mean		2.910		3.072		3.103
Standard Deviation is < 1.00						

APPENDIX C

*How likely are you to use
to decide:*

	Magazines		Television		Newspapers	
13) If you are handsome/beautiful	7.9%	very likely	4.0%	very likely	2.5%	very likely
	13.6%	likely	14.3%	likely	5.7%	likely
	28.8%	unlikely	30.8%	unlikely	28.3%	unlikely
	49.7%	not likely at all	50.8%	not likely at all	63.5%	not likely at all
accumulative:						
	21.5%	{ very likely/ {likely	18.3%	{ very likely {likely	8.2%	{ very likely/ {likely
	78.5%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	81.6%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	91.8%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all
mean		3.203		3.283		3.527
Standard Deviation is < 1.00						
14) What's important in the world	10.3%	very likely	15.9%	very likely	21.8%	very likely
	22.6%	likely	33.8%	likely	33.2%	likely
	34.4%	unlikely	29.9%	unlikely	22.8%	unlikely
	32.6	not likely at all	20.4%	not likely at all	22.2%	not likely at all
accumulative:						
	32.9%	{ very likely/ {likely	49.7%	{ very likely/ {likely	55.0%	{ very likely/ {likely
	67.0%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	50.3%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	45.0%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all
mean		2.894		2.547		2.452
Standard Deviation is < or = 1.00						
15) What you think about	6.6%	very likely	9.0%	very likely	8.8%	very likely
	19.8%	likely	25.0%	likely	19.2%	likely
	33.2%	unlikely	32.7%	unlikely	32.2%	unlikely
	40.4%	not likely at all	33.3%	not likely at all	39.7%	not likely at all
accumulative:						
	26.4%	{ very likely/ {likely	34.0%	{ very likely/ {likely	28.0%	{ very likely/ {likely
	73.6%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	66.0%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all	71.9%	{ unlikely/not {likely at all
mean		3.074		2.904		3.028
Standard Deviation is < 1.00						

APPENDIX D

(Based on questions 1 and 2)

GENDER, RACE and Geography

1. How likely are you to:

		Television	Magazines ad	Newspaper ad
*Dress like someone on/in (item 1, 5, 9)	MALE	35.3% likely 64.7% unlikely	24.6% likely 75.4% unlikely	16.4% likely 83.6% unlikely
	FEMALE	50.3% likely 49.7% unlikely	52.7% likely 47.3% unlikely	7.5% likely 92.5% unlikely
African-American		60.5% likely 39.5% unlikely	~48.0% likely ~52.0% unlikely	13.6% likely 86.4% unlikely
Hispanic-American		63.2% likely 36.8% unlikely	~55.6% likely ~44.4% unlikely	7.1% likely 92.9% unlikely
**Asian-American		57.1% likely 42.9% unlikely	~33.3% likely ~66.7% unlikely	16.7% likely 83.3% unlikely
White		34.7% likely 65.3% unlikely	~36.6% likely ~63.4% unlikely	8.8% likely 91.2% unlikely
Urban		52.1% likely 47.9% unlikely	~46.4% likely ~53.6% unlikely	*** 8.6% likely ***91.4% unlikely
Suburban		36.2% likely 63.8% unlikely	~37.7% likely ~62.3% unlikely	***20.0% likely ***80.0% unlikely
Rural		34.3% likely 65.7% unlikely	~34.7% likely ~65.3% unlikely	*** 9.9% likely ***90.1% unlikely

		Television	Magazines ad	Newspaper ad
*Buy a toy or game seen on/in a (item 2, 6, 10)	MALE	67.9% likely 32.1% unlikely	~47.0% likely ~53.0% unlikely	32.0% likely 68.0% unlikely
	FEMALE	47.8% likely 52.2% unlikely	~39.5% likely ~60.5% unlikely	17.8% likely 82.2% unlikely
African-American		75.0% likely 25.0% unlikely	~52.0% likely ~48.0% unlikely	32.8% likely 67.2% unlikely
Hispanic-American		47.4% likely 52.6% unlikely	~22.2% likely ~77.8% unlikely	6.3% likely 93.8% unlikely
**Asian-American		57.1% likely 42.9% unlikely	~57.1% likely ~42.9% unlikely	33.3% likely 66.7% unlikely
White		50.9% likely 49.1% unlikely	~41.5% likely ~58.5% unlikely	21.4% likely 78.6% unlikely
Urban		~ 57.6% likely ~ 42.4% unlikely	~40.2% likely ~59.8% unlikely	~27.2% likely ~72.8% unlikely
Suburban		~ 44.8% likely ~ 55.2% unlikely	~43.6% likely ~56.4% unlikely	~24.1% likely ~75.9% unlikely
Rural		~ 58.3% likely ~ 41.7% unlikely	~45.9% likely ~54.1% unlikely	~19.4% likely ~80.6% unlikely

APPENDIX D

GENDER, RACE and Geography

1. How likely are you to:

*See a movie, play or show reviewed on (item 3, 7, 11)

	Television	Magazines ad	Newspaper ad
MALE	~88.3% likely ~11.7% unlikely	~67.4% likely ~32.6% unlikely	~63.9% likely ~37.1% unlikely
FEMALE	~91.5% likely ~ 8.5% unlikely	~73.0% likely ~27.0% unlikely	~69.1% likely ~30.9% unlikely
African-American	~90.4% likely ~ 9.6% unlikely	~72.0% likely ~28.0% unlikely	~72.2% likely ~27.8% unlikely
Hispanic-American	~100.0% likely ~ 0.0% unlikely	~55.0% likely ~45.0% unlikely	~61.9% likely ~38.1% unlikely
Asian-American	~85.7% likely ~14.3% unlikely	~57.1% likely ~42.9% unlikely	~57.1% likely ~42.9% unlikely
White	~88.2% likely ~11.8% unlikely	~71.6% likely ~28.4% unlikely	~64.1% likely ~35.9% unlikely
Urban	~ 90.6% likely ~ 9.4% unlikely	76.7% likely 23.3% unlikely	73.9% likely 26.1% unlikely
Suburban	~ 89.5% likely ~ 10.5% unlikely	70.2% likely 29.8% unlikely	57.1% likely 42.9% unlikely
Rural	~ 86.9% likely ~ 13.1% unlikely	59.2% likely 40.8% unlikely	58.3% likely 41.7% unlikely

	Television	Magazines ad	Newspaper ad
MALE	57.2% likely 42.8% unlikely	~33.6% likely ~66.4% unlikely	***44.8% likely ***55.2% unlikely
FEMALE	39.7% likely 60.3% unlikely	~29.1% likely ~70.9% unlikely	***35.2% likely ***64.8% unlikely
African-American	~ 58.0% likely ~ 42.0% unlikely	44.6% likely 55.4% unlikely	~47.2% likely ~52.8% unlikely
Hispanic-American	~ 50.0% likely ~ 50.0% unlikely	11.8% likely 88.2% unlikely	~25.0% likely ~75.0% unlikely
Asian-American	~ 57.1% likely ~ 42.9% unlikely	28.6% likely 71.4% unlikely	~50.0% likely ~50.0% unlikely
White	~ 41.3% likely ~ 58.7% unlikely	26.8% likely 73.2% unlikely	~35.5% likely ~64.5% unlikely
Urban	~ 50.8% likely ~ 49.2% unlikely	36.7% likely 63.3% unlikely	44.8% likely 55.2% unlikely
Suburban	~ 50.0% likely ~ 50.0% unlikely	35.1% likely 64.9% unlikely	41.5% likely 58.5% unlikely
Rural	~ 39.2% likely ~ 60.8% unlikely	21.6% likely 78.4% unlikely	29.5% likely 70.5% unlikely

APPENDIX D

*Pearson Chi-Square and Fisher's Exact Test register a statistically significant difference in every category except those noted.

**Please note the cell count is less than 5.

***approaching significant

~ not significant at .05

GEOGRAPHY (Based on questions 5,6 and 7)

How likely are you to use to decide:

		Magazines	TV	Newspapers
*Which snacks to buy or eat (item 1)	URBAN	~ 33% likely 67% unlikely	~58% likely ~42% unlikely	~ 20% likely ~ 80% unlikely
	SUBURBAN	~ 24% likely ~ 76% unlikely	~47% likely ~53% unlikely	~ 9% likely ~ 91% unlikely
	RURAL	~ 26% likely ~ 74% unlikely	~51% likely ~49.5% unlikely	~ 13% likely ~ 87% unlikely
*Which beverage to buy or drink (item 2)	URBAN	39% likely 61% unlikely	~58% likely ~42% unlikely	22.5% likely 77.5% unlikely
	SUBURBAN	21% likely 79% unlikely	~44% likely ~56% unlikely	7% likely 93% unlikely
	RURAL	24% likely 76% unlikely	~49.5% likely ~50.5% unlikely	12% likely 83% unlikely
*What to wear (item 4)	URBAN	52% likely 48% unlikely	50% likely 50% unlikely	*** 14% likely *** 86% unlikely
	SUBURBAN	40% likely 60% unlikely	35% likely 65% unlikely	*** 6% likely *** 94% unlikely
	RURAL	36% likely 93% unlikely	33% likely 67% unlikely	*** 7% likely *** 93% unlikely
*What issues to be concerned about (item 7)	URBAN	*** 48% likely *** 52% unlikely	~53% likely ~47% unlikely	~ 55% likely ~ 45% unlikely
	SUBURBAN	*** 30.5% likely *** 69.5% unlikely	~44% likely ~56% unlikely	~ 44% likely ~ 56% unlikely
	RURAL	*** 46% likely *** 54% unlikely	~37% likely ~63% unlikely	~ 52% likely ~ 48% unlikely
*A goal or career (item 8)	URBAN	50.5% likely 49.5% unlikely	~47% likely ~53% unlikely	44% likely 56% unlikely
	SUBURBAN	28% likely 72% unlikely	~42% likely ~58% unlikely	38% likely 62% unlikely
	RURAL	38% likely 62% unlikely	~34% likely ~66% unlikely	28% likely 72% unlikely
*Which cosmetics/shaving materials to buy (item 11)	URBAN	53% likely 47% unlikely	50% likely 50% unlikely	23.5% likely 76.5% unlikely
	SUBURBAN	38% likely 62% unlikely	30% likely 70% unlikely	4% likely 96% unlikely
	RURAL	40% likely 60% unlikely	42% likely 58% unlikely	9% likely 91% unlikely

**APPENDIX D
GEOGRAPHY**

*How likely are you to use
to decide:*

		Magazines	TV	Newspapers
*What's important in the World (item 14)	URBAN	40% likely	~53% likely	62% likely
		60% unlikely	~47% unlikely	38% unlikely
	SUBURBAN	31% likely	~49% likely	48% likely
		69% unlikely	~51% unlikely	52% unlikely
	RURAL	22% likely	~45% likely	48% likely
		78% unlikely	~55% unlikely	53% unlikely

GENDER and RACE

*How likely are you to use
to decide:*

		Magazines	TV	Newspapers
*Which snacks to buy/eat (item 1)	MALE	24% likely	~53.5% likely	17% likely
		76% unlikely	~46.5% unlikely	83% unlikely
	FEMALE	32% likely	~53% likely	16% likely
		68% unlikely	~47% unlikely	84% unlikely
	African-Americans	46% likely	71% likely	32% likely
		54% unlikely	29% unlikely	68% unlikely
	Hispanic-Americans	25% likely	57% likely	11% likely
		75% unlikely	43% unlikely	89% unlikely
	Asian-Americans	0% likely	57% likely	0% likely
		100% unlikely	43% unlikely	100% unlikely
	White	23.5% likely	47% likely	11% likely
		76.5% unlikely	53% unlikely	89% unlikely
*Which beverage to buy/drink (Item 2)	MALE	~ 30% likely	~56% likely	19.5% likely
		~ 70% unlikely	~44% unlikely	80.5% unlikely
	FEMALE	~ 31% likely	~50% likely	15% likely
		~ 69% unlikely	~50% unlikely	85% unlikely
	African-Americans	51% likely	70% likely	32% likely
		49% unlikely	30% unlikely	68% unlikely
	Hispanic-Americans	30% likely	48% likely	16% likely
		70% unlikely	52% unlikely	84% unlikely
	Asian-Americans	0% likely	57% likely	14% likely
		100% unlikely	43% unlikely	86% unlikely
	White	24% likely	47% likely	11% likely
		76% unlikely	53% unlikely	89% unlikely

APPENDIX D

GENDER and RACE

*How likely are you to use
to decide:*

			Magazines	TV	Newspapers
*What to wear (item 4)	MALE		29% likely 71% unlikely	35.5% likely 64.5% unlikely	9% likely 91% unlikely
	FEMALE		55% likely 45% unlikely	47.5% likely 52.5% unlikely	12% likely 88% unlikely
	African-American	~ ~	53% likely 47% unlikely	55% likely 45% unlikely	24% likely 76% unlikely
	Hispanic American	~ ~	62% likely 38% unlikely	57% likely 43% unlikely	10.5% likely 89.5% unlikely
	Asian-American	~ ~	43% likely 57% unlikely	57% likely 43% unlikely	0% likely 100% unlikely
	White	~ ~	40% likely 60% unlikely	35% likely 65% unlikely	5% likely 95% unlikely
<hr/>					
*What issues to be concerned about (item 7)	MALE	*** ***	39% likely 61% unlikely	~54% likely ~46% unlikely	48% likely 52% unlikely
	FEMALE	*** ***	48% likely 52% unlikely	~52% likely ~48% unlikely	56.5% likely 43.5% unlikely
	African-American	*** ***	53% likely 47% unlikely	~56% likely ~44% unlikely	56% likely 44% unlikely
	Hispanic-American	*** ***	40% likely 60% unlikely	~60% likely ~40% unlikely	35% likely 65% unlikely
	Asian-American	*** ***	29% likely 71% unlikely	~86% likely ~14% unlikely	86% likely 14% unlikely
	White	*** ***	43% likely 57% unlikely	~51% likely ~49% unlikely	52% likely 48% unlikely
<hr/>					
*A goal or career (item 8)	MALE	~ ~	43% likely 57% unlikely	~41% likely ~59% unlikely	39% likely 61% unlikely
	FEMALE	~ ~	43% likely 57% unlikely	~42% likely ~58% unlikely	38% likely 62% unlikely
	African-American		55% likely 45% unlikely	54% likely 46% unlikely	43% likely 57% unlikely
	Hispanic-American		50% likely 50% unlikely	47% likely 53% unlikely	39% likely 61% unlikely
	Asian-American		71% likely 29% unlikely	57% likely 43% unlikely	57% likely 43% unlikely

APPENDIX D
GENDER and RACE

*How likely are you to use
to decide:*

		Magazines	TV	Newspapers
	White	37% likely 62.5% unlikely	37% likely 63% unlikely	37% likely 63% unlikely
*Which cosmetics/shaving materials to buy/use (item 11)	MALE	23.5% likely 76.5% unlikely	33% likely 67% unlikely	14% likely 86% unlikely
	FEMALE	62.4% likely 38% unlikely	51% likely 49% unlikely	17% likely 84% unlikely
	African- American	~ 48% likely ~ 52% unlikely	~52% likely ~48% unlikely	36% likely 64% unlikely
	Hispanic-American	~ 45% likely ~ 55% unlikely	~48% likely ~52% unlikely	26% likely 74% unlikely
	Asian-American	~ 43% likely ~ 57% unlikely	~71% likely ~29% unlikely	0% likely 100% unlikely
	White	~ 45% likely ~ 55% unlikely	~40% likely ~60% unlikely	7% likely 93% unlikely
What's important in the World (item 14)	MALE	~ 30% likely ~ 70% unlikely	~52% likely ~48% unlikely	53% likely 47% unlikely
	FEMALE	~ 34% likely ~ 66% unlikely	~46% likely ~54% unlikely	57% likely 43% unlikely
	African-American	*** 40.5% likely *** 59.5% unlikely	~57% likely ~43% unlikely	59.5% likely 40.5% unlikely
	Hispanic-American	*** 45% likely *** 55% unlikely	~42% likely ~58% unlikely	50% likely 50% unlikely
	Asian-American	*** 14% likely *** 86% unlikely	~57% likely ~43% unlikely	57% likely 43% unlikely
	White	*** 30% likely *** 70% unlikely	~47% likely ~53% unlikely	55% likely 45% unlikely

Is it important to know who owns a

(Based on questions 12-14)	TV station	Newspaper/magazine
	18.7% yes 67.5% no 13.9% don't know	26.7% yes 17.3% no 55.9% don't know
mean	1.952	2.292
(1 suggests greatest awareness) Standard Deviation is < 1.00		
	WHY	
"It doesn't matter"	27.1%	25.2%
"I don't care"	34.2%	29.5%
"Get a particular/perspective /agenda/point of view"	22.0	27.0%
"Content is more important"	15.3%	16.5%

APPENDIX D

Which of the following pays most of the costs for

(Based on questions 15 and 16)	Television	Newspapers/magazines
Taxes	15.7%	11.3%
Cable fees	20.9%	
Advertising	58.8%	47.1%
Contributions	1.4%	2.0%
Subscriptions		29.4%
News stands and sales from vending machines or at grocery stores		7.8%

RACE

Which of the following pays most of the costs for newspapers and magazines:

	African-American	Hispanic-American	Asian-American	White
Taxes	15.5%	10%	0%	10%
Ads	39.3%	40%	57.1%	48.4%
Subscriptions	27.4%	20%	0%	33.3%
Contributions	3.6%	0%	0%	1.8%
News stands//vending	9.5%	20%	28.6%	5.9%
Others	4.8%	10%	14.3%	.5%

GEOGRAPHY:	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Taxes	13.7%	10.5%	7.6%
Ads	48.4%	42.1%	47.6%
Subscriptions	24.7%	36.8%	33.3%
Contributions	1.6%	1.8%	2.9%
News stands/Vending	8.2%	7.0%	7.6%
Others	3.3%	1.8%	1.0%

APPENDIX D

*Pearson Chi-Square and Fisher's Exact Test register a statistically significant difference in every category except those noted.

**Please note the cell count is less than 5.

***Approaching significant

~not significant at .05

APPENDIX E

(Based on questions 3 and 4)

<i>Overall, how truthful are</i>	Newspapers'	Entertainment TV's <i>portrayals of:</i>
(Std. Deviation for all < 1.0)		
Teenage boys (mean 2.799)	25.2% very truthful/truthful 67.2% somewhat 7.6% not at all	(mean: 2.782) 33.6% very truthful/truthful 47.7% somewhat 18.7% not at all
Teenage girls (mean 2.795)	25.7% very truthful/truthful 66.2% somewhat 8.2% not at all	(mean: 2.830) 30.8% very truthful/truthful 48.7% somewhat 20.5% not at all
Parents (mean: 2.682)	35.1% very truthful/truthful 55.8% somewhat 9.1% not at all	(mean: 2.794) 31.5% very truthful/truthful 51.1% somewhat 17.4% not at all
People who are religious (mean 2.821)	28.1% very truthful/truthful 56.2% somewhat 15.7% not at all	(mean: 2.946) 23.3% very truthful/truthful 54.0% somewhat 22.7% not at all
People with drinking or drug problems (mean:2.519)	46.2% very truthful/truthful 43.2% somewhat 10.6% not at all	(mean: 2.622) 41.6% very truthful/truthful 42.7% somewhat 15.7% not at all
Foreigner or immigrants (mean: 2.828)	29.7% very truthful/truthful 53.8% somewhat 16.6% not at all	(mean: 2.895) 24.3% very truthful/truthful 57.5% somewhat 18.2% not at all
African-Americans (mean:2/812)	27.7% very truthful/truthful 56.9% somewhat 15.4% not at all	(mean: 2.797) 29.6% very truthful/truthful 56.1% somewhat 14.3% not at all
Hispanic-Americans (mean: 2.833)	25.6% very truthful/truthful 62.2% somewhat 12.3% not at all	(mean: 2.851) 27.0% very truthful/truthful 57.4% somewhat 15.5% not at all
High school students (mean: 2.762)	33.7% very truthful/truthful 50.6% somewhat 15.8% not at all	(mean: 2.789) 36.0% very truthful/truthful 42.9% somewhat 21.1% not at all
The wealthy (mean: 2.640)	37.5% very truthful/truthful 49.7% somewhat 12.8% not at all	(mean: 2.669) 38.3% very truthful/truthful 45.1% somewhat 16.6% not at all
The poor (mean: 2.841)	29.0% very truthful/truthful 52.6% somewhat 18.4% not at all	(mean: 2.860) 26.4% very truthful/truthful 53.5% somewhat 20.1% not at all
Asian-Americans (mean: 2.831)	26.0% very truthful/truthful 60.3% somewhat 13.7% not at all	(mean: 2.926) 23.4% very truthful/truthful 58.2% somewhat 18.5% not at all
The elderly (mean: 2.587)	42.8% very truthful/truthful 48.8% somewhat 8.4% not at all	(mean: 2.706) 35.9% very truthful/truthful 50.4% somewhat 13.6% not at all

APPENDIX E

(Based on question 10)

13. *Television tells you about the real world.

African-Americans	Hispanic-Americans	Asian-Americans	Whites
40.0% agree	57.1% agree	71.4% agree	20.9% agree
60.0% disagree	42.9% disagree	28.6% disagree	79.1% disagree

11. ***Newspapers' mission is to educate and inform the public.

African-Americans	Hispanic-Americans	Asian-Americans	Whites
71.8% agree	76.2% agree	100% agree	84.5% agree
28.2% disagree	23.8% disagree	0% disagree	15.5% disagree

7. ~I learn a lot from television

Urban	Suburban	Rural
52.4% agree	43.9% agree	47.6% agree
47.6% disagree	56.1% disagree	52.4% disagree

African-Americans	Hispanic-Americans	Asian-Americans	Whites
53.6% agree	52.4% agree	71.4% agree	47.2% agree
46.4% disagree	47.6% disagree	28.6% disagree	52.8% disagree

8. ~I learn more from reading newspapers than I do from watching television

Urban	Suburban	Rural
49.2% agree	49.1% agree	47.6% agree
50.8% disagree	50.9% disagree	52.4% disagree

African-Americans	Hispanic-Americans	Asian-Americans	Whites
48.8% agree	47.6% agree	57.1% agree	48.2% agree
51.2% disagree	52.4% disagree	42.9% disagree	51.8% disagree

2. ~Media can make me do something I'd never done before.

African-Americans	Hispanic-Americans	Asian-Americans	Whites
32.1% agree	28.6% agree	71.4% agree	31.1% agree
67.9% disagree	71.4% disagree	28.6% disagree	68.9% disagree

14. ~Media offer a lot of good ideas and advice.

African-Americans	Hispanic-Americans	Asian-Americans	Whites
45.9% agree	40.0% agree	71.4% agree	42.7% agree
54.1% disagree	60.0% disagree	28.6% disagree	57.3% disagree

Urban	Suburban	Rural
45.9% agree	42.1% agree	42.5% agree
54.1% disagree	57.9% disagree	57.5% disagree

APPENDIX E

(Based on question 10)

17. **Media do a good job of showing how celebrities really live.*

African-Americans	Hispanic-Americans	Asian-Americans	Whites
54.2% agree	21.1% agree	28.6% agree	24.8% agree
45.8% disagree	78.9% disagree	71.4% disagree	75.2% disagree

15. *** *Television shows starring women tend to have less violence*

African-Americans	Hispanic-Americans	Asian-Americans	Whites
42.2% agree	25.0% agree	71.4% agree	42.2% agree
57.8% disagree	75.0% disagree	28.6% disagree	57.8% disagree

Urban	Suburban	Rural
39.6% agree	52.6% agree	38.1% agree
60.4% disagree	47.4% disagree	61.9% disagree

*Pearson Chi-Square registers a statistically significant difference in every category except those noted.

***Approaching significance.

~not significant at .05

APPENDIX F

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Parents,

I am a doctoral student at the University of Maryland at College Park. I have developed a survey for high school students that seeks to determine how savvy today's youth are in analyzing media and their messages. The 15-minute, online survey asks students such questions as how newspapers, television shows and magazines influence their purchases, ideas about different products, other people and events. It also seeks to understand how often and how long students read newspapers and magazines and watch television.

I am asking your permission to allow your child to complete the survey. Please indicate below:

Yes, I (parent's name)_____ give my permission for my child _____ to complete the online media literacy survey. I understand that all the information will be kept confidential and used only for research pertaining to the doctoral dissertation of University of Maryland student Tamara Henry. The data also may be used for follow up studies by USA TODAY, which has graciously offered this in-kind service for Mrs. Henry's research, but again all the information will be confidential. Today's date is:_____. Student's teacher is _____.

If you have questions about your child's rights as a research subject or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:

Institutional Review Board Office
University of Maryland
College Park, Maryland 20742
irb@deans.umd.edu; (telephone) 301-405-0678.

If there are any questions or comments for the researcher, please don't hesitate to contact me:

Tamara Henry
University of Maryland
Philip Merrill College of Journalism
Room 1117, Journalism Bldg.
College Park, MD 20742-7111
(school) 301-405-6567 (home) 301-249-9191
(cell) 301-801-2616
thenry@jmail.umd.edu or james.a.henry@verizon.net

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Tamara Henry
researcher

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ASSENT FORM

I, (student's name) _____ agree to complete a media literacy survey for high school students that seeks to determine how savvy today's youth are in analyzing media and their messages. I understand that all the information will be kept confidential and used only for research pertaining to the doctoral dissertation of University of Maryland student Tamara Henry. The data also may be used for follow-up studies by USA TODAY. I understand this and have been assured that all the information will be confidential.

Today's date is: _____

APPENDIX G

GLOSSARY

Here are the researcher's definitions of key terms used throughout the dissertation. These definitions should assist in understanding the interpretations applied to the research data.

MEDIA – news organizations that reach very large audiences, including mass-circulation newspapers and magazines, national and global radio stations and television and cable networks. Also, media describe books, billboards, flyers, the Internet and equipment that is a communication conduit such as digital cameras, camcorders and boom boxes, only to name a few.

The survey did not single out advertisements in most instances. Instead, individual questions sought to differentiate between TV commercials, newspaper ads, entertainment TV, teen magazines, news magazines, TV programs and TV news shows.

MEDIA LITERACY – the ability to comprehend and explore media's messages through the use of all communication tools, including words, pictures, graphics, art, movements, behaviors, voices, colors, spacing, background sounds, settings, music, gender, race, age and props. Media's role must be appreciated, their ownership understood and their function of utilizing the technologies of communication acknowledged.

LANGUAGE – viewing the “grammar” of each medium as how the production variables produce or interact with the content. Print media uses typeface, paragraph breaks, punctuation, blank space, size of type and shape of pages to communicate a particular perception of message content. However, television and film use pans, cuts, dissolves, camera angles and juxtapositions of sound and image to convey a certain

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message. A language particularly effective for radio would be background noises, while cropping is a unique language for still photography.

PROFICIENT – knowing that media have myriad ways to communicate and being able to identify and critique many of the techniques and strategies employed for a particular message.

INFLUENCE – being motivated to consider, and possibly adopt, specific thoughts, actions, beliefs, etc. that are suggested by an outside source to a general or particular audience.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS – students in grades 9-12, the ages tend to range between 14- to 19-years-old.

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