

Joint Graduate Program in Communication and Culture
A Partnership of Ryerson and York Universities

Masters Project Paper

"Teaching the Educator: Studying the De:Commodifying Self"

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To center this discussion, I want to be clear about my spiral of action, reflection, and reaction or in popular education terms, the dynamic relationship between theory and practice, or praxis. For many years I focused my academic and activist life around critiques of consumer culture and advertising. For me, this cultural matrix and its voice-piece tore at the fabric of what I considered loving, sustainable, democratic, and just social relations. Up until this year, I was articulate yet fractured in this critique and was able to use my Masters to look for new directions. I began to focus on how consumerism connects with local and global political struggles for human rights and also on the construction and privileges of my perspective. This examination included many readings, but also educational workshops in media and cultural literacy and several creative projects. The mixture of this reflection and action has helped reconnect my interest in consumer culture and advertising in ways I never could have imagined or learned second-hand. Rather than just thinking my way into new ways of living, I've tried to design a Project that encouraged me to start living my way into new ways of thinking. Rather than using popular education pedagogy to change the way I study advertising, it has changed me. This new knowledge helps me validate the possibility for personal development and the hope for social transformation.

In all honesty, my Proposal's objectives were not clear or functional enough to focus my long-term interests and short term frustrations. Revisiting them throughout this Project has been difficult, since they are embedded with a lot of deep personal and academic tensions. Because I don't separate schoolwork from personal life, I've infused this Project with a wide variety of questions, perspectives, and purposes that were either unexamined or incomplete. This has led to a lot of experimentation, collaboration, personal justification and many choices following my heart and soul over those of my mind. Nonetheless, I'm ready and eager to share this Project and the context it comes out of and fits into.

A word on the video. I wanted to share what parts of my Project looked and sounded like, since it was a combination of workshops, creative

works, and readings in pedagogy, political struggles, and personal privilege. Rather than hand in multiple copies of my videos, workshop materials, photos, creative works, and various other Project aspects, a video format could organize them all for relatively easy viewing. The video partly documents my work, but is not meant to be an explanatory, analytical, or even coherent as unified body of work. This paper, together with the video, inform each other on the Project's development, implementation, and reflection. The central pieces of the video are the representations and narrations for each of my six workshops, interspersed with two short videos, creative works, and everyday parts of my life during the past eight months.

A word on popular education. Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire theorized and practiced a pedagogy of education and as it has been used in people's own context around the world, it has also been called "critical education for social change" (Arnold, 1991) and "transformative education" (Randell). Author Jack Mezirow describes transformative education as "a type of meta-learning really, a sort of secular conversion, it involves learning how we are caught in our own history and are reliving it and becoming aware of hitherto unquestioned cultural myths which we have internalized" (in Randell, 102). While global in its impact, Freire's work on political consciousness in Latin America shares similar pedagogical space with both Aboriginal (Graveline) and African-centered (Dei) pedagogies of education and social change.

Contrasting a "banking" or "transmission" model of education over those influenced by those above, Arnold et al. (1991) list the key premises. The banking model supports the status quo and suggests that: learning begins with the experts who are also our role models; teachers have the information consumers need to succeed; and success is measured by how well students conform to the model, which means becoming like the experts (37). Critical education for social change: "critically examines unequal power relations, not just differences (race, class, gender, disability, heterosexism, ageism); names and challenges ideas and practices that support inequality; anticipates and addresses conflict; encourages creative expression; uses the

mind, hands, and emotions; is a continuing process, not a single event; strengthens organization; encourages collective action for change; models democratic relations between learner and leader; includes both reflection and action; puts local issues into national and global contexts" (41). I want to make this distinction here, since this pedagogy deeply reflects my tensions with this MA program and most institutional schooling and affects how I approach new personal and academic directions.

I'm thankful that my interest in this Project has only grown since it first started taking shape fifteen months ago. This paper is my best attempt to synthesize the academic experience, while being more articulate on the Proposal's original questions and critically committed to start asking better questions. Not proportionate in depth, this paper aims to answer these three questions:

- Why have I been both passionate and frustrated about my interest and activism around consumer culture?
- How has this Project (designing and facilitating workshops and creating videos and images) and its associated readings helped me name, connect, and address this interest?
- With this Project's completion, what new directions am I open to?

Why have I been both passionate and frustrated about my interest and activism around consumer culture?

For the purposes of this paper and related to my own development as a student and activist around advertising and consumer culture critiques, I've chosen to focus on four works in these areas. As I review these critiques from academics, educators, and advocates on the subject of consumerism and advertising, I've started to look for patterns in the theories. I've been interested in these debates since 1992 when I first watched Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media and read my first issue of Adbusters. Looking at these theories ten years later and from a critical distance, I now see them as four interrelated ideals: personal autonomy, authentic or organic

living (a life not debased by elite or commercial control), democratic governance, and a new internationalism for political cooperation and environmental stewardship. My frustration with these debates is not their lack of research or personal and humanitarian appeal, but how they maintain their normalized cohesion at the expense of other ideals and practices. Reading, reflecting, and working with concepts like critical pedagogy, environmental racism, popular education, and anti-oppression for this project has helped me demystify these dominant and hegemonic ideals and parts of my own perspectives to a large degree, since I've identified with them for so long.

Several events starting in September 2001 started to turn things around for me. My ideas around consumerism were shaken by the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the racism, fundamentalism, militarism, conformism, reactionism, and jingoism it infused. Tony Blair and George W. Bush now framed shopping as counter-terrorism and our consumer society as the pinnacle of civilization itself. Meanwhile, I heard Ward Churchill speak about how North America's 500 years of colonialism was an ideology sanctifying Western rule through capital and military force. I also attended a Power and Privilege workshop that asked me to interrogate how my identity as a white man positioned my political perspective and tactics. Fortunately, I had this Project process to make sense of racialized terrorism, corporate power, and individual activism. I held tight to my interest in advertising, but it has never looked the same since.

I examined my ongoing frustration with common advertising critiques by engaging with them more collaboratively and creatively. I wanted to understand how Adbusters' Buy Nothing Day slogan "Buy Nothing for Peace" engaged with the various local and global political resistances and empowered me as an activist and academic. This tension has led me back to four perspectives on advertising and consumer culture that have shaped my long-term perspectives on the subject and stirred my understanding of popular education and anti-oppression analysis. These perspectives, from Douglas Kellner, Sut Jhally, Kalle Lasn, and Barry Duncan, cover academic,

educational, and advocacy debates and methods. In order for me to address my above condition and conditioning, I need to look at key sources I personally identify with and follow Bannerji's experience. She writes, "...once again I must begin from myself. From my body as a political signifier..." (61). I'll describe one of their works and comment on how it has informed my Project.

Douglas Kellner's article: "Toward a Critical Theory of Advertising", co-authored by John Harms

Kellner surveys the major themes within the study of advertising which form much of the basis for academic, activist, and educational frameworks. I list them here, rather than in discussion form, to illustrate the theoretical grounding tied to Kellners' thought:

semiological and ideological decoding (Judith Williamson, and Robert Goldman); *goods as communicators and satisfiers* (William Leiss, Stephen Kline, Sut Jhally); *image culture and the Spectacle* (Daniel Boorstin and Guy Debord); *commodity fetishism* (Sut Jhally); *political economy of the sign* (Jean Baudrillard); *commodity aesthetics* (Wolfgang Fritz Haug); *culture industry* (Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno); *manipulation techniques* (Vance Packard); *social differentiation* (Thorstein Veblen and Pierre Bourdieu); and *hegemony of style and desire* (Stuart Ewen).

Kellner's critical summary of advertising is an excellent example of why advertising is worthy of study and is concise on the above themes. He writes:

Above all, a critical theory of advertising operates from a standpoint of *human emancipation* from unnecessary and unjust forms of domination. As the works examined here suggest, advertising's current role in society is exploitative, wasteful, and manipulative and represents a form of domination that perpetuates *capitalist hegemony* and that thwarts *participatory democracy* and the development of *individual autonomy*. Viewed from a historical, developmental perspective, advertising must be viewed against the erosion of *traditional social structures of meaning* which it replaces with ideals and images of privatized commodity consumption. Advertising undermines the psycho-cultural base for a public sphere and democratic participation in social life. While democracy requires

an active, inquiring public citizen/subject, advertising is part of a privatized consumer society which offer commodity spectacles as a *substitute* for participation in social life. Democracy requires that its citizens express concern about public life and actively participate in efforts to reform and improve society. Advertising attempts to assure and assuage its audience and to promote the belief that individual commodity solutions are present for all problems. [italic type added for later discussion]

Quoting Kellner at length illustrates his disconnected position to the interrelated struggles for human rights and ecological sustainability. For him, advertising is a capitalist hegemony weakening the autonomous individual, commercializing authentic culture, and marginalizing democratic space and participation. While the rise and perpetuation of capitalism is imbedded within racism, patriarchy, and ecological exploitation, Kellner's "critical" thesis for "human emancipation" is one-dimensional and begs the questions: Who is autonomous? Who names authenticity? And who is participating? Since advertising is the voice of capitalism and capitalism is infused with the practice of colonization and domestication of racialized and genderized "others," then advertising is also the story of white-man's domination over men of colour and men's domination over women.

For example, in her article "Soft-Soaping Empire: Commodity Racism and Imperial Advertising" Anne McClintock links Pears soap marketing to the maintenance of the British Empire. Soap advertising racialized hygiene in order to differentiate the colonizer and the colonized and rationalize the civilizing effect of Imperial progress. As her title suggests, the exchange system is inseparable from the maintenance of both capitalism and colonialism. Ward Churchill's Struggle For the Land: Indigenous Resistance to Genocide, Ecocide and Expropriation in Contemporary North America links the United State's political/economic hegemony as a global power (or Empire) to the genocide of Native people and the theft of their land. According to its own research, the U.S. government has no legal title to one-third of its land in the lower 48 States (Churchill, 415). Citing the 1948 Convention on Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, Churchill doesn't see a new world democracy, but a genocidal settler

crusade. Positioned within the above facts and the struggle for Indigenous rights, he is certain that the U.S. as we now know it as the economic model of capitalism, would cease to exist without its colonial heritage. AIM (American Indian Movement) leader Russell Means states the point as follows, "U.S. energy policy, especially as regards to uranium mining and milling, amounts to genocide, no more, no less" (in Churchill, 276). The book includes our Canadian heritage with a chapter on uranium mining in Saskatchewan and one on hydro-electric dams in Quebec. Looking back on Kellner, I'm convinced that his "traditional social structures of meaning" don't include his colonial heritage and in a contradictory and unethical manner, he works to exclude this heritage by focusing on the singularity of capitalist hegemony and the history and normalization of U.S. citizenship and democracy.

My Tenant video is an attempt to reflect on my many readings of indigenous rights as they intersect with my experience of downtown Toronto. From my readings in consumerism and environmentalism (Chin, Holt, UNEP) and environmental racism (Bullard, DiChiro), I knew advertising and consumer culture was an important topic of political activism beyond 'green' or ethical consumerism, teen branding, or public space. Unlike Kellner and the above theorists behind this thesis, I couldn't keep using terms like "democracy" or "citizenship" or "commodity" without thinking of the specific points raised by McClintock and Churchill. The fact that my workshops focused more on naming the experiences of the participants, rather than advertising, was out of an ongoing curiosity and interrogation of how we participate in hegemonic and one-dimensional ways of seeing.

Sut Jhally's article: "Advertising at the Edge of the Apocalypse"

Jhally continues with Kellner's Marxist framework, but is concerned with questions and definitions of happiness, society, and the future of humanity as a collective whole. He is interested in capitalist theory and more importantly, its unsustainable consumption of ecological resources and its inability to think through common problems. The article addresses

advertising as a capitalist hegemony that "colonized" culture, but was also an obstacle for protecting human rights and sustainability. At the top of his article, Jhally writes:

In this article I wish to make a simple claim: 20th century advertising is the most powerful and sustained system of propaganda in human history and its cumulative cultural effects, unless quickly checked, will be responsible for destroying the world as we know it. As it achieves this it will be responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of non-western peoples and will prevent the peoples of the world from achieving true happiness. **Simply stated, our survival as a species is dependent upon minimizing the threat from advertising and the commercial culture that has spawned it.** I am stating my claims boldly at the outset so there can be no doubt as to what is at stake in our debates about the media and culture as we enter the new millennium. [bold type in original]

Like Kellner's article, Jhally's arguments on how advertising "colonizes culture" rests on a normalized and unexamined concept of culture. Carrying over my response to Kellner's article here, and examining the intersecting histories of capitalism, racism, and sexism, advertising is still sanctifying Imperial progress and/or colonizing a culture that is itself *colonial*. Critical scholarship needs to ask what *kind* of past or present culture is Jhally so concerned about being colonized. I find the position from which Kellner and Jhally speak problematic because neither of them examines the context of their conceptual terms, such as democracy and culture, and because their analysis and advocacy for social change is now Orientalist (Said) and becomes another Western narrative essentializing White Euro-American supremacy (Churchill, 1998). Working in the different histories of Central America and Canada, Arnold et al. (1985) base their analytical and educational model on self-reflexive examination that addresses the problem of western, educated men making essentialized claims about social progress. They write:

"We can't focus on our educational work, the link between thought and action, without locating that work within the total social fabric. And that includes both what we've inherited as our social reality, and the new weave we are working to create" (2).

My second problem with Jhally's article, as it relates my Project's motivation and design, is its disempowering and demoralizing argument. I generally agree with Jhally's analysis and his urgent call for transformative action, but as I read, reread, and even watch the parallel video Advertising and the End of the World, I feel disconnected from these global realities and blind and silenced from any forms of resistance. This feeling is common in academic discourse and institutional education and the reason I turned to Paulo Freire's pedagogy with its emphasis on the experience, location, and needs of the student rather than the teacher within a vocal practice of progressive social change. The purpose of literacy and education, for Freire and many others influenced by his work, is to intervene in the making of history and learn how to disrupt the hegemonic practices that keep oppression alive. Our core course in communication and cultural theory ignores this branch of critical theory and prefers to interrogate theoretical Ideological State Apparatuses (Althusser), rather than more empowering and self-reflexive lessons in critical pedagogy. I always showed Jhally's video when organizing Buy Nothing Day events and also in my first workshop to give a more critical argument on the role of advertising in society. It's generally met with supportive concern, but even while I watch it for the tenth time I don't know how to practice its message. On empowerment, Arnold et al. (1991) write: "As educators our purpose is not only to help people critically assess their personal and social situations but also to help them develop their conviction that change is possible. We have to help them see that they have 'what it takes' to initiate and bring about change, not just as individuals but as a collective of people sharing similar goals and wishes" (153).

Kalle Lasn's, Culture Jam: How to Reverse America's Suicidal Consumer Binge – and Why We Must

My problem with Kellner was his lack of connection to political realities. My problem with Kellner and Jhally was their weak interrogations on how their positions are woven into historical and subjective privileges of race, sex,

education, and citizenship. Jhally's position also silenced strategies for change at a time when both motivation and encouragement are most needed. Joining the group, Lasn also doesn't reflect on the constructed positioning of his privileged position, but he is more politically connected and more inspiring for action. Lasn is an advocate for the uncooling of America and committed to signing up as many culture jammers as possible. Lasn follows the academic argument laid out by Kellner and Jhally, but turns them into a political campaign. The Culture Jammer's Manifesto:

We will take on the archetypal mind polluters and beat them at their own game.

We will uncool their billion-dollar brands with uncommercials on TV, subvertisements in magazines and anti-ads right next to theirs in the urban landscape.

We will seize control of the roles and functions that corporations play in our lives and set new agendas in their industries.

We will jam the pop-culture marketeers and bring their image factory to a sudden, shuddering halt.

On the rubble of the old culture, we will build a new one with a non-commercial heart and soul. (128)

I thought revisiting Lasn would be challenging since I've spent the last ten years supporting the magazine, its campaigns, and general political philosophy, but I was surprised how angry and unoriginal it is. There's a small photo of Lasn on the back cover of the book charging the camera lens with a rolled up copy of Adbusters. Several months ago it struck me that almost all the critiques I've read on advertising and consumer culture are done by white men. This called into question not only the breadth and safety of my own education (also being a white man) but what I've now started naming "angry white man's politics". The movie Fight Club best illustrates this label, where disenchanted young men (mostly white) start a counter-cultural underground network for consumer-capital sabotage. The aggressiveness of the film follows the tone set by Lasn's Manifesto and verges on common definitions of terrorism (using terror for political ends). And it makes sense. What other kind of political activism can wealthy or even middle-class white men rally around? I think of Lee Maracle's comment on this search for meaning. In I Am Woman: A Native Perspective on

Sociology and Feminism she writes, "It is just a little pathetic that I have to teach you now. I am less concerned about your distortion of my history than your inability to hang on to your own" (76). Only now, as the capitalist, racist, and sexist Empire starts to show signs of limiting the ideals of autonomy, authenticity, democracy, and visions of international solidarity for the world's most powerful and privileged, does Fight Club and Lasn's Manifesto have any appeal to this same group. What's problematic is how this appeal tries to center itself as *the* political battle of our time as it continues the hegemonic Imperial process of problem definition and solution. Bannerji writes, "Marx speaks how it benefits a particular class to speak of itself/its interests, etc. as the universal class/interest. It is a way to gaining power and keeping power" (51).

Worst of all, Lasn's project is not even original with appeals for autonomy, authenticity, democracy, and ecological stewardship. He opens the book with six "insights" that mirror and sensationalize all of the above discourse, while helping the United States of America steal the history and identity of all the "other" Americas. Lasn writes:

America is no longer a country. It's a multitrillion-dollar brand.

American culture is no longer created by the people.

A free, authentic life is no longer possible in America today.

Our mass media dispense a kind of Huxleyan "soma".

American cool is a global pandemic.

The Earth can no longer support the lifestyle of the coolhunting

American-style consumer.

For my Project, I wanted to talk to young people who didn't share or even think about my perspectives around advertising and consumer culture. Beyond a subtle strategic interest in learning how to better frame and organize Buy Nothing Day events in Toronto, I wasn't recruiting for a plan of action. I was open to fitting into other people's projects, conferences, festivals, and groups and designing workshops out of the participants' context, while experimenting with different learning methods. Open to new ideas, I looked for anti-consumerism strategies in writings about lovelessness (hooks, 2000), gift-giving (Hyde), Guaranteed Annual Income (Sharagge)

and building circles of community (Maracle). While trying to design workshops on advertising and consumer culture, the dominant framings didn't fit into my search for political engagement and personal empowerment and awareness. Only now I can see why.

Barry Duncan et al. Mass Media and Popular Culture. co-edited by Janine D'Ippolito, Cam Macpherson, and Carolyn Wilson

The final source for the context of my Project is the above text in media and cultural literacy and fills the range of academic, activist, and educational discourses and pedagogies in advertising and consumer culture. This last text is appropriate because its High School audience demographic parallels my workshop participants and also because I've known Barry Duncan since my first content analysis video project back in 1993 and we continue to meet about media literacy events and ideas. I hope this paper becomes one of those ideas in a cycle of ongoing critical reflection and action with practice and theory. Like the sources above, the text's appropriateness only serves to inform my Project by what it *is not* doing.

In Chapter One, Duncan et al. describe the mass media as an important site of educational experience because the "fastest-growing areas of the work force are the information, education, and knowledge sectors." To this they add, "*Perhaps* [italics mine for later discussion] of even greater significance is the fact that *our* society tells *its* stories through the media." In short, the media are important because they "supply information," "influence what we talk and think about," "expand our personal experience," "construct images of normality to persuade and entertain us. Authors are keen to point out the important role of media and Canadian content in the *development* of Canada because we are a narrow band of *settlements* close to the United States needing to express our *unique* identity. Much of this media content is brought to us by large conglomerates who continue to merge in order to "*succeed in today's global economy*." The opening chapter sets out the pedagogical direction becoming ever more popular in career-development public education. The media is a useful subject and structure

for understanding ourselves and the world; however, this knowledge is based in voices without histories, histories without contestation or multiplicity, influence without power relations, or education for success without ethics. Through the use of this text, education is unable to disrupt the hegemonic myth of a fixed, functional, and stable system of representation and consent.

In Chapter Two, the authors focus on media and representation. Here, concepts of difference are categorical rather than historical, cultural, or relational (Hall, Giroux, 1994) with the chapter's educational expectations limited to learning how images and stereotypes influence *our* self-image and perception of *others*. Throughout the text there is a firm belief in the progressiveness of positive stereotypes, rather than their arbitrariness. In the section "Portraits of the Other," authors have organized representational categories of the "other" to give students the literacy tools to evaluate the impacts of such categories. They write: "When *we* think about people who do not share *our* background, class, or ethnicity, *we* tend to look at how *they* are *different* from *us* rather than how *they* are *similar*". The authors give students the categories of "others" to support their theory. These categories are limited to: The Exotic (Aboriginal peoples in native "*costumes*"); The Dangerous (young black man); The Humorous (silly and poor black family); and The Pitied (hungry Africans). Rather than understanding the importance of representation as a system of re:presentation, a construction tied to and influencing a particular way of looking at the world (Said, Hall, Bannerji, Churchill, 1998, hooks, 1994), this chapter entrenches both the absoluteness and fear of "otherness" and of difference. It is written from an invisible white, anglo-saxon, Christian, Euro-American, heterosexual position of "we" and "our," while categorizing people of colour along their axis of "difference." Surprisingly, this text was written for and is used in Toronto, a city where these categories only make sense for racists (people who project their world orientation as an authority on all other possible orientations). Critical education for social change is a process for making these positions more explicit and transparent so we can see their construction and work for reconstructions.

The last chapter I'll describe is Chapter Three, "Selling Images and Values." Most of this chapter focuses on the craft of advertising, giving students the literacy tools to understand how ads get our attention, establish images, reassure old consumers, and persuade new ones. The craft is demystified by the authors and a real-world advertising executive, letting us in on the art and science of emotional appeals, positioning, branding, and market research. The goal of the chapter is to understand what makes ads effective, while respecting what *society* considers controversial and people's choice and *autonomy* to make up their own minds. Media literacy, as with communication and cultural studies, is often used to train the next generation of cultural industry workers rather than changing the status quo. For me, critical thought that is not grounded in and reflective on "human emancipation" needs no public funds in my kind of "democratic" society. Too much of education is learning how to make the current exploitive system work more efficiently, yet framed as a student-focused privilege in critical thinking and a career opportunity.

Placing advertising within the educational environment, Duncan et al. investigate the impact of ads and corporate sponsorships in public schools. To promote healthy and *positive* lifestyles, governments and non-governmental organizations approach schools with anti-smoking/drinking/drug messages and also anti-*racism/sexism* campaigns for more "*tolerance, understanding, and respect for people's differences.*" In an article taken from Marketing Magazine, authors note how Art Kelly, a Burlington school principal, uses the school's corporate sponsorship with Coca-Cola (with free concert tickets included) as a form of *discipline*. Kelly says, "There's little graffiti at our school and the flowerbeds aren't destroyed. If they were, it would be bye-bye to the Rolling Stones concert tickets." As more corporations move onto campus for new audiences, the administrative and educational debate is about balancing academic excellence with consumer autonomy. Can *under funded* schools import brought-to-you-by curriculum and reserve the freedom to drink Coke *and* Pepsi? Knowing

where to "draw the line" is a part of the students' development of critical thinking skills in order to *participate in democracy*.

Why can't this pedagogy examine who defines "positive" lifestyles or why "under funded" schools need corporate sponsorship? Again, there are invisible values associated with anti-racism, discipline, and democracy, but they remain without tension, without question, without opportunities to learn about ourselves and the world we live in. For instance, this pedagogy supports a frame of anti-racism that is a multicultural project of inclusion to Euro-American values and a personal, not systemic, challenge to be more accepting of difference, rather than challenging why differences exists, who defines this, and who benefits. This is a racist tradition because the educational system (among many others) fails to address how whites, not people of colour, remain ignorant, complicit and politically correct about their daily acceptance of white racism (Bannerji, hooks 1994, Dei, Giroux 1998, McIntosh, Maracle).

How has this Project and its associated readings helped me name, connect, and address this interest?

Four This Project Paper is neatly and dialectically structured, with experience leading to theory leading back to experience. However, the actual Project process was eight months of confusion and curiosity. While not always conscious of it, I was working on two levels during this Project: re:orientating academic and popular discourses on advertising and consumer culture and experimenting with popular education philosophy and tools. I am now starting to see that breakthroughs in the first came through the second and that my two interests mutually reinforce the need for each other. I've known for years that any work I do after school needs to involve personal and public education, creative production, political advocacy, and collaborative and creative research. However, academia and the job market rarely reward more than one of these. Revisiting my Proposal's objectives, I assumed I would use using popular education to study advertising, rather than me being used or changed by the pedagogy itself. Stemming from well

those three key instances last fall, I thought I would be doing a colonial or anti-racist reading of advertising and consumer culture. Because the pedagogy that I was using starts from the experience and location of student, in processes like naming, mapping, and telling (Barndt) and because I strongly identified with the above framings, this turned into a re:reading of myself. Like the four men above, my orientation was external, trying to change people's experiences through theory, rather than theory through experience.

Popular education also supports a more collaborative and creative approach to education and thus I designed this Project with both. There are thirteen distinct elements in my Project, six workshops and seven creative works and I see each as having multiple entry-points for discussion. Three of these elements were not done as part of this Project, but are included for greater personal context. Rather than discuss them in chronological order, they flow from an ongoing cycle of questions: "who am I?", "what am I doing?" and "how does this inform my experience with consumer culture and educational pedagogy?".

Four

This video was done in winter 2001 as part of a video activism class at York. I include it in the collage to help place my thinking in time. Except for the ending, this is not a personal piece, but a rendering of key advertising themes, several included in Kellner's article: spectacle, aura, harm. For McDonaldization, magic system, simulacrum, commodity aesthetics, social position, capitalist hegemony and other variations. I was trying to pull these themes together under the captions: *Happy Boredom, Dead Time, Hijacked Identity, Enchanted Simulation, and Rational Magic* with samples from contemporary commercials of the time. In my commercial selections, I focus on parts with just people to displace the embedded pitch with my own announcements. In a sense, I was trying to rewrite the context of ads, making the bodies a site of resistance rather than retail. The "I" in the *I want to leave and start again* was meant to double for my own needs as well

as all the commodified bodies standing in for the viewer. But in the end, there is no real resistance for me. After presenting my keen media awareness, I build my own exit of the situation and offer no other alternative. I avoid representing anything too personal and I hide behind catchy Adbusters' style analysis and the authorship of universality. Projecting my critique onto the commercialized bodies, I defer reflection on my own. Like the four men who influenced my thinking, the video helped represent and synthesize my position *about* advertising, without connecting this to political struggle or reflection on new forms of personal agency. The video's title never had any meaning for me beyond the final section of dancing blue men playing with the Intel 4 processor prop. Now when I see it, I'll think of Kellner, Jhally, Lasn, and Duncan.

Diaper Politics

This paper collage was a reflection piece on my experience in Seattle, during the 1999 World Trade Organization protests. Like "Four" it's meant to place my ideas in perspective but is more personal. It features a young white man like myself caught by fear, running from crazed bankers, bullet holes, gas triggers, and even time itself. The desert signifies the lifeless frontier on which this all takes place, while the man (himself an assembly of parts) runs in a diaper. The outline of the diaper is enlarged and rested on a sample of stock market values. It took an event like Seattle to remind me that I live in a world almost completely without fear of physical harm. For men in our society, darkness is only a sign for night and not for danger." (5). Even with thousands of riot cops with sticks, guns, and gas the danger was not completely real for me, knowing things couldn't get totally out of control: we live in a "civilized" society after all. How far could a mostly middle-class white mob go anyway? Most of us had comfortable homes, schools of "excellence," and decent jobs to return to. It wouldn't be wise to risk too much. The diaper is a barrier of financial privilege and protection from the full effects of consumer capitalism and all its interlocking forms of oppression and even our street-style resistance. We can feel comfortable in our

lifestyle, while making life for many others miserable. Here, I'm aware of my privilege but don't know how to use it constructively towards my political values. I have a keen analysis of how global economics and state security affect me, but not of how I affect them. My position and participation seem determined, reactionary, and natural. Part of this Project is about de-naturalizing and re:writing my participation.

BluePrint: Designing for the Future (November 2001)

A friend of mine is an environmental resource staff person at the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) and invited me to do a workshop for their "BluePrint: Designing for the Future" conference, co-sponsored by the Student Environmental Network (SEN). My workshop, "Born to Shop: Consumerism and Political Awareness" was one of the most popular in pre-registration and had to be offered twice, each time with twenty high school students interested in environmentalism. I talked about how I was confused and curious about my interest in consumerism in a time of war and at an environmental conference. As referred to earlier, September 11th scrambled my interest in consumer culture and by November I needed to talk with others to start learning what was going on inside of me. Kellner's ideals of autonomy, authenticity, and democracy were of no use to the kind of "conjunctural" analysis I needed. In Arnold et al. (1985), they define conjunctural analysis as "a critical analysis of the current situation, the interplay of economic, political, and ideological forces at a given moment, and how one country, sector, or organization fits into the global process" (5).

I introduced several sources and theses that were reflective of my above tension. There was an article called "The Greatest Danger: Apatheia, The Deadening of Mind & Heart" by Joanne Macy and Molly Young Brown about fear and pain and how we can use these feelings to understand and addresses our political (dis)engagement with the problems we see around us. I showed a short clip from Who's Counting? Marilyn Waring on Sex, Lies, and Global Economics (Marilyn Waring, feminist economist) and Advertising and the End of the World (Sut Jhally, media educator) and gave out handbills I

created for Adbusters' annual Buy Nothing Day campaign. I tried to problematize the logic being criticised within the clips and the range of fears expressed in the room. How can modern economics and advertising lead us any closer to solving our individual and collective fears? Are they not in fact part of the root of the problem itself? How can we both validate these fears of personal and social issues and the current realities of everyday life such as needing money, going shopping, and looking for love?

My pedagogical goal was to have a dialogue about our tensions and connections around the Buy Nothing Day slogan "Buy Nothing for Peace". Duncan's textbook was designed to keep such discussions out of educational curriculum, because the teacher (with the aid of the text) already has the concepts and explanations, so dialogue becomes a clarification exercise, rather than trying to create new knowledge. The workshop named fears, introduced new information, returned to fears and responses, and then talked about personal and collective action strategies for change. Through this process, I as the facilitator and the participants revisited the issues of war and advertising as both a global system of exploitation and as personal sites of hope, fear, and empowerment. I didn't have a set of ideas for the participants to take home or any answers that were more correct than theirs. We were trying to create new knowledge, applicable to naming and addressing our shared interest and individual needs.

TDSB Speaker Series (January 2002)

After positive participant feedback about my above workshop to the conference organizers, I was asked to start the TDSB/SEN new year speaker series on a related topic. One of the coordinators suggested that I show the same video clips, since they were well received, but I wanted to try something completely different, such as Augusto Boal's form of political imagination and analysis: popular theatre. I spent most of my Christmas break reading up on a lot of 9-11 related politics and got excited about sharing it with others. My love of learning and sharing new ideas aided me to gather five pages of notes, organized into themes such as immigration,

work, war, homelessness, free speech, democracy, and security. I didn't want to be in front of room full of people like my first workshop and instead sat on the floor with everyone around me with the themes or generative words written on flipchart paper. I briefly talked about the philosophy and methods of popular theatre and asked participants to pair up and prepare a frozen or static image that best illustrates one of the themes. My aim was to use their images and my quotations to generate a discussion on each theme and how they were connected. Everyone was enthusiastic about the exercise and for the first few images I tried to facilitate a discussion. A group would go up and perform their image, I would take a photograph, the group at large would try and guess which theme they chose, and then I would insert some related information. I also had a one-page hand out with the sources of my research and a long list of websites for related groups and resources.

I was told that the workshop was a great success since everyone was having a good time and this would help insure ample attendance at subsequent events. Afterwards I felt disconnected and realized my information didn't develop the quality of the discussion or kinds of connections made. My five pages of quotes and research couldn't help problematize any of the images we made together (such as homelessness or war). I needed to synthesize this data into questions that helped re:present our insights into problems, such as "why don't we look homeless people in the face when we give them our money?" or "does war always have two parties directly engaging through visible and obvious aggressions?". A few thoughtful and insightful questions such as these would have focused everyone's participation and woven the two workshop elements (action and reflection) together. Duncan's text passed up the opportunity to examine "why public schools are under funded?" or "what kind of global economy are we building with only a handful of giant media conglomerates?" or "why can a modern educational text call traditional Native clothing 'costumes'?" Even though the text had questions after every section, their purpose was to confirm or limit alternatives to what had already been presented. After about four or so images (out of close to 20 since there were over 40 people

working in pairs) I abandoned the notes, allowing each group to facilitate themselves – through their creativity, guessing, and quick comments. My needs for sharing information, experimenting with popular theatre, and not wanting to take complete control of workshop resulted in a poor (yet well received) workshop. I didn't have a clear objective. I remember Freire's passage, if you want to teach, get ready to learn (Freire, 1998a, 222). Often the methods or tools of education distract from the learning objective. Because popular education integrates more experiential and creative methods into its pedagogy, exciting tools sometimes substitute a critical process of naming, reflecting, and action planning.

But I Never Said a Word

This video image of men's shirts was done in the winter of 2002 as part of my Project and is about the privileges of being silent for someone like me. Many of my friends, peers, co-workers and even younger extended family members now live as "young professionals" with very comfortable material lives. They never have to feel uncomfortable at public or family events with the question "What do you do for a living?" or have to justify their obsessive preoccupation with 'stuff.' As I hit 30 this summer, my slow and minor rejections of the work-and-spend system are more stark than ever, since a man of my race, age, and education should "be doing very well for himself" and maybe even for his family. Because I hold a lot of privileges, I see giving these up as a form of political resistance, but even this is not entirely accurate. While I may seem to be "giving up" a more "professional" lifestyle, I'm also embracing another one based on a different set of values, priorities, and positions. I can't say that I've lost anything and in reality, I'm extra privileged to be able to choose differently from what is expected. This is how I want to use my privilege. So the image holds two important aspects for me: it's crafted within an advertising aesthetic and it speaks to my ongoing tension with paid work. I purposefully chose to use sharp looking shirts, as a site of both desire and denial. I wanted to acknowledge my attraction to how advertising works with its pared down and

focused interpellation. This format appeals to me, over longer and more crowded formats. The affirmation of fashion is met with a confession written over the very labels of identity.

Making this image was a good way for me to start naming myself within my work on advertising, since I'm able to respond to and re:name a text and subtext I see all around me everyday. Unlike "Diaper Politics," I'm keenly aware of my inner tensions and the subtle, yet powerful, ways resistance can be framed. Rather than escape, the position I hold here is admission and acceptance. Realizing that the political is personal and that the oppressive systems we wish to dismantle are disguised within each of us (some people more than others) this image ends the innocence of political neutrality and re:signifies the 'shirt off my back'.

OM Festival (June 2002)

For purely recreational purposes, I meant to attend OM summer solstice festival in years past and when a friend/OM volunteer asked me about doing a workshop, I felt it would fit into my ongoing workshop designs on consumerism. OM organizers describe the event on their webpage as: "Organized to honour community and interconnection, the goal of OM is to foster awareness, and to encourage personal growth through immersion in creativity. Along with nurturing a creative space, the festival is also directly focused on encouraging environmental and political awareness and sustainable living." My original idea was to talk about advertising and Buy Nothing Day as it related to our form and forums of resistance to consumer culture. After hearing a lot a politically-minded friends talk about OM as both an excuse to party (while appropriating Eastern culture) and an experiment in political resistance, I knew the festival could be both and changed my mind. My goal was to look at OM as a site of struggle between these two positions, by naming the multiple forms of investment participants were making by attending. I thought if we use our common interest in OM as way of participating in social movements, we could learn how to take personal responsibility for our involvement. I asked the fifteen or so participants to

name what forms of privilege they bring to OM or social movements in general and also what types of marginality. By naming, representing, and reflecting on these positions, we could start to see our subjectivity and agency more clearly. I read three quotes during my introduction; one by Audre Lorde influenced me the most in the workshop design:

As Paulo Freire shows so well in the Pedagogy of the Oppressed, the true focus of revolutionary change is never merely the oppressive situations which we wish to escape, but that piece of the oppression which is planted deep within each of us, and which knows only the oppressors' tactics, the oppressors relationships (in Anderson, 539).

I set out a large piece of paper with a circle outline in the middle and asked people to take at least two post-it notes. They named their privileges on the inside of the circle and their marginalizations outside of the circle. This assembly of notes was then used as the basis for Boal's image theatre. I split the group into four to illustrate these identities as a relationship, rather than as just static categories. The groups were to illustrate one of the following scenarios with time left for group discussion:

- how their privileges challenge the consumer/dominant society
- how their privileges support and maintain the consumer/dominant society
- how their marginalizations challenge the consumer/dominant society
- how their marginalizations support and maintain the consumer/dominant society

The strength of this workshop was its ability to engage in naming power within a counter-cultural forum like OM which attracts many white, sub-urban, Christian, heterosexual, affluent youth. Because OM promotes itself as corporate-free with a communal kitchen and environmental ethic, I believe many attendees believe themselves to be 'progressive'. After making "But I Never Said a Word", I found naming our position within political forces essential for 'progressive' social change and I also knew from experience and my reading of Peggy McIntosh's article "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" how easy it is for whiteness to be overlooked, especially by white people. Action in a popular education context is about disrupting

hegemonic ways of keeping some groups dominant over others, based out of a social and historical context and our experiences of privilege or oppression . Looking at social identity as a form of power, Arnold et al. (1991) write: "When we examine the social and cultural identities that characterize the dominant group, we get a sense of where power lies within the Canadian social structure. We cannot ignore the extent to which power is socially constructed. By this we mean that regardless of our personal or political choices, our membership in particular social groups either endows us with or denies us privilege" (159).

When naming consumerism and anti-consumerism values and tactics (like Jhally and Lasn) to myself or groups, I wasn't clear about the historical and socially constructed position from which I spoke. If issues such as "oppression" are always framed in ways that only affect the "other" (always different from the "us" in Duncan's lesson on representation), the sources of domination remain invisible. For instance, our heritage of colonization is commonly expressed as a condition affecting Indigenous people, not that of the white settler society. Rather than compounding the amount of privilege at OM and the practices and politics of rejection and escape I showed in "Four" and "Diaper Politics", I wanted this workshop to re:frame activism as a more personal project, building resistance in almost any pleasurable or creative space like the one we were in. OM was also a "free space" (Arnold, 1991, 163) with political inconsistencies or tensions and opportunities to could be used for anti-oppression activism.

Central Tech High School (CTHS) (May 2002)

I started to attend Anti-Racist Media Education (ARMEd) meetings in February, since I was interested in their work, had participated in one of their workshops as a member of TVAC (Toronto Video Activist Collective) and met two members through organizing Media Democracy Day. While the group is focused more on anti-racism than on media, they were a group of wise and wonderful people operating as a working group of University of Toronto's Ontario Public Interest Research Group (OPIRG). One of the members was a

student at CTHS and had scheduled ARMEd for a 100+ student workshop. All the facilitators met in advance and worked out a general framework for the workshops, since we were to facilitate 10- 15 students in pairs. I worked closely with a woman named Jasleen and the two of us agreed to let the students make a collage on the theme of anti-racism, using a variety of people images cut out from popular magazines and mounting them on a rough outline of a school on a large piece of newsprint. Our goals were to let students invest themselves early in the workshop process by using one or more of the images and to generate discussion about anti-racist strategies and visions of change. We thought it would be better to do an image of anti-racism rather than racism, because we wanted to be constructive and use the group's experience of racism and their imagination for change. Defining and challenging racism otherwise didn't seem to move us closer to addressing the issue. We needed to build some alternative or solutions we could work toward. Barndt calls this stage Dreaming and connects it to the ongoing critical work of action and reflection. She writes: Unfortunately, I Dreaming is about moving into the future, while being fully grounded in the present. It is about allowing ourselves to let go of the "I can'ts" and "we have no moneys" to saying "I can" and "We can" and "We will" and "I will". Dreaming gives us glimpses of what we're working for in the way that we are working together now. Dreaming is about vision, letting go of what has been so we can create what is to be (27).

It was a tense hour with one of the few white males trying to dominate the process, several of the women of colour silent and not participating, and students from all races dismissing the concept and experience of systemic racism. Jasleen and I struggled to be both sensitive to people's anxiety and over-simplification of the issue and critical of the quality of the group's participation. Compared to participation levels reported from other ARMEd groups, the collage did spur more discussion on the issue as we did a go-around of what people added and why. However, it was difficult encouraging people to talk about systemic issues, themselves personally, or examples of white power over people of colour. The students had learned to talk about

racism in politically correct discourses of 'diversity' and 'acceptance' much like the framing of Duncan's chapter. In their own words, anti-racism was about: "tolerance, mixed relationships and friendships, being open to different people, peace, sharing music across different groups, equal opportunity, and understanding where people are from". We talked about how dealing with racism was about asking better questions and for the final part of the workshop and for the larger report back, we asked them to generate a list of questions they would pose if they were running a workshop for their peers. Questions included:

What do we do when we see racism or racists?

Are all white people racist?

Is racism ignorance, hate or both?

Are racist jokes always racist?

What keeps racism alive?

These were excellent questions and show that our workshop process didn't draw out the students' level of analysis or interest. Unfortunately, I can think of many reasons why the students didn't participate as much as we had hoped or in a way that fed off their experiences. Remembering back to my high school years and reviewing Duncan's text, reminded me of the entrenched roles students and teachers play. Popular education stresses the importance of building relationships before and after class time, since the naming, reflecting, and action model takes time and trust. Students intuitively know this and so do teachers. Class time (or special guest workshops) make minor educational gains without greater investments in connecting school with *what* is important and *how* do we learn about it. It was difficult being a special guest for less than an hour to facilitate a workshop on anti-racism. Because of our role as special one-day guests, our curriculum and pedagogy could not overcome the entrenched roles; we could only try and disturb them for as long as we could.

The Look (June 2002)

This paper collage was influenced by workshops I did at CTHS with ARMEd and at Regent Park Focus, a youth media arts project. The concept was initiated after a game called "Power" I did with Focus. I was a spectator during the exercise, in which participants arranged four chairs, one table, and a video camera into a staging of "having power over". They would do this in silence, one at a time, until people stopped going up. We would then use the different stagings to talk about what made the differences and why. I wanted to try this exercise myself, but focusing on a school environment. I didn't really stick with the chairs (creative limits of collage when you can't find any) but I arranged four characters and a camera. The types of facial expressions of the three students in the collage is one I remembered from the ARMEd workshop suggesting a mild form of coercion and abuse. I think of that Burlington principal using Rolling Stones concert tickets as a disciplinary tool. I placed the camera in the hand of the white male student (remembering the ARMEd facilitation). I felt as if we (the facilitators) were performers and they were the audience ("we are watching you") and producer ("you are here for us") of the relationship because of their expectations and previous experience with drop-in 'do-gooder' community leaders. The teacher is on the other side of the wooden desk, represented only by a silhouette (mine actually, just after a close hair cut) cut from the employment pages of a Toronto Star. I wanted to make the scene of a "power over" dynamic with both sides (although not equal) playing a hegemonic educational role of coercion and consent. The size, anonymity, and position of the teacher plays a complimentary role for the student with a head full of rights and passages to the world of work. The teacher also fulfills the students' and society's need for a leader, one to hold themselves in position in order to hold others in position. The authority of the teacher comes from these inner and outer expectations, while the students monitor and receive information like a video camera and perhaps like a spectator at a Rolling Stones concert (with free tickets from their Burlington high school.)

Focus #1 (June 2002)

I was first introduced to the Regent Park Focus media arts program while organizing for Media Democracy Day (MDD) in September 2001. As an example of a community/critical/creative media project, it was an excellent addition to our guests from media literacy and advocacy and alternative media. Adonis Huggins, the project's coordinator, spoke at the MDD event, and was open to me doing some workshops in media literacy this past summer. We both agreed that media projects like his have enough problems just training, producing, and showing the works they create (newspaper, videos, films, radio program, photography), but that facilitated reflections on the media itself usually got left behind. I told Adonis of my interest in advertising, consumer culture, and activism and started to familiarize myself more with the project. The opportunity arose to help the photography group prepare their work for an exhibition and Adonis and I agreed it would be great chance to introduce some critical media literacy discussion.

To plan and focus the workshop I used the "Learning Loom" as developed by Arnold et al. and described as: "a systematic framework for designing and implementing educational activities". It includes: 1) a vertical dimension that guides the planning group in designing a process that starts with the experiences of the participants, moves them step by step through a process of analyzing them to develop a more theoretical understanding of their practice, leading them back to applying that new and more critical understanding to changing or improving their practice. 2) a horizontal dimension that helps the planning group clearly articulate the objectives, themes, activities, techniques, resources, persons responsible, and time involved in the particular learning activity" (5).

I combined the use of this Loom with the importance of presenting, re:reading, and re:presenting as a critical media literacy technique (Denski). Lastly, I used "story" as a metaphor for talking about the photos, influenced by my reading of William Lowell Randell's Stories We Are: An Essay on Self-Creation. I had three objectives:

- re-visit the process and meaning of photo making through naming and re:naming
- link photo making to awareness of self and the world through use of new concepts
- find active ways of communicating identity and ideas with photos

We first did a go-around talking about the motivations and issues behind the photo and the selected topic of advertising. I talked to them about thinking of their photos as a story, one with authors, plots, myths, issues, and characters. Using post-it notes, I asked participants to give their photo a name (something which crystallized the meaning), a caption (something describing what's going on), and an author (the identity or position or relationship of the creator to the work). Once done, I also asked them to arrange the photos in a way that made the most sense. After talking about the choices made, I then asked them to generate three lists of people: who would see the photos, who wouldn't, and who should. From this list I asked them to do the same naming exercise but from the perspective of one of these people.

I tried to facilitate a reflection on the photos by asking the following questions: how does the process of re:naming change the meaning of the original naming? How does the organization of the collective work affect the overall and individual meanings? Is there a main or dominant meaning and also an alternative or contested meaning? And how does this photo speak to issues that are important to you? We then returned to the question of how they wanted to present their work.

I ended up doing this workshop twice, since their photos were not delivered for the first and we ended up using past Focus photos instead, while trying to approach the exercise as if the photos were their own. I went back the following week and we used the photos as described above and the practice from the week before was not entirely lost. We didn't finish the mounting while I was there and when I attended the event they were to be part of, I was casually told by Adonis that the photos weren't ready and

would be displayed at another upcoming event. I never did see the final arrangement, nor get much feedback on the process. While I was trying my best to integrate my ideas into their work, it nonetheless needed extra time and commitment.

This was a well-planned workshop for the time committed and introduced new concepts and methods for reflecting on their photos or other creative work. It would have been more successful if I was more aware of Focus' organizational culture. Arnold et al. (1991) note the importance of naming and working in different organizational cultures as a way for popular education facilitators/educators to accurately design activities. Knowing these cultures and knowing if you are more of an "insider" or "outsider" can help complement everyone's resources and expectations. It was important to me work collaboratively with groups outside my past experience. I wanted to "cross borders" and move away from my intellectual and educational "home" as described by Giroux when discussing Freire as a "Border Crosser" (Giroux, 1994). Even though I grew up in Rexdale (a working-class, new Canadian, suburb), I had more in common with the TDSB, SEN, and OM (with predominately white participants) than Focus or CTHS (with predominately participants of colour) because of my race. I hope my Project demonstrates that I wasn't challenging myself for simple challenges without consequence, an act of political and educational tourism, but interrogating what "home" I was coming from and leaving to work on this Project.

Focus #2&3 (July 2002)

Several weeks after the photo workshop, I planned to do two more workshops around the theme of advertising as part of Focus' summer project. In this project, about ten volunteer youth (aged between 13-16, working class, and mostly black (African ethnicity) and male) were aided by Adonis and several other part-time youth coordinators to produce print, video, film, photo, web, and radio works. Before coming in with a workshop already planned and with getting feedback from Adonis on my proposal, I

decided to meet with the group the day beforehand to get a feel for who was participating and what the summer plans were for the group. During this visit I realized that almost all of the participants were young men and that I still had no exact plan around how to talk about advertising. One of my ideas was to talk about Buy Nothing Day and how they saw this Adbusters' campaign aligned with their ideas and strategies for addressing poverty, racism, work, drug use, violence, or other issues they considered important.

Because they were mostly teenage boys and I had just watched the video, Tough Guise: Violence, Media, And The Crisis In Masculinity, I thought the tough "Guise" was a perfect metaphor for talking about both media issues and how this meets up with the participants' personal experiences. By learning about the Guise, we could demystify the ahistorical, essentialist, normalized, and almost biological aspects of manhood. Similar to the OM workshop format, I drew a box and I asked participants to write down or draw an example, description or image of what being a 'real' man was and put the post-it note inside the box. I also asked them to do the same for what wasn't a 'real' man and put this note outside of the box. This was our very first exercise and so after this, I asked each of them to introduce themselves, tell the group which notes were theirs, and what they wanted to get out of the summer media camp. I then asked them to divide into three groups of three with one group performing a frozen image or skit based on the notes for what is a 'real' man, one group performing what isn't a 'real' man and one group doing both. With a bit of extra encouragement, everyone participated in both exercises with fun and consideration. Everyone shared their performances and their images were easily recognizable to the rest of the group.

I continued that session two days afterward with more exercises in imaging with props (game of "Power" described earlier) and bodies. Adonis and the group believed the topic, video, and exercises were important to the group and the Focus program in general, but Adonis and I had a difficult time connecting this dialogue to their summer work. Being an outsider (not fully aware of what was planned for the summer camp and how things were done)

and inexperienced in media literacy workshops, I wasn't prepared to move reflection into action. Most of my previous workshops focused on naming and reflecting exercises and my objectives were never clear enough for this one to integrate the workshops into the coming months of media production. All my work was met with interest in the topics and full participation in discussions and activities, but participants were never a part of the workshop designs and I only asked for feedback at the end of each session. These last two points show my inexperience with popular education and working with young people. Not being a self-reflective educator stems from my lack of critical reflection on all this Project's topics, but hopefully this can change.

Tenant

VACANCY, FOR SALE, SETTLEMENT UNSETTLING, USED AND FORGOTTEN, PRICES VARY, VALUE BASED, BUILT FOR BUILDING, COMPLETE PACKAGES, ALL UNITS WITH VIEWS, NO NEIGHBOURS, SECURITY EXTRA, A STEAL, ALMOST INVISIBLE

This video was hard to conceptualize without lots of writing before hand. It comes out of my many readings on Indigenous rights and consumer living. I was trying to work from a feeling rather than a thesis, taking in what I was seeing with a loose amount of judgement. While usually about 10,000 words cycle through my head every time I walk around downtown, I chose to write an advertisement for my politically informed version of urban residency. Taking language such as "for sale", "all units", and "prices vary" in contrast with word plays such as "settlements unsettling", "privacy extra", and "almost invisible" I tried to merge salesmanship with testimony. Like "But I Never Said A Word", this video was an exercise in finding my words and using them to simplify and focus my wondering attention and futile attempts to connect everything with everything else. In her article, "Cultural Work: Reclaiming the Power to Create", Deborah Barndt describes this process as Mapping and Telling. She writes, "Cultural work is about mapping, becoming conscious of the ground on which we stand, of our sense

of place, both physical and spiritual, social and psychological". She continues, "Telling is our process of relating stories, of making sense of who we are in our daily lives. It affirms our power to tell and write our own histories in many different forms; telling and making history are closely connected" (25). I find video useful for finding my story and this originally led me to get involved in, advocating for, and researching community television. I had a lot of fun planning, making, and showing this video (screened at Eco Art Media Festival) and it helped use critical and creative analytical methods.

Two Texts

Suiting the topic at hand, I thought my video collage should have some ads. It's hard for me to watch television and remain passive or uncritical. I'm constantly talking back and picking up ingredients so I can help dismember the enterprise. A couple of months ago, I was watching Hot Type on CBC Newsworld with Evan Solomon. As he was interviewing Peter Edwards, the author of One Dead Indian, I became extremely engaged in the story at hand, wanting to read the book, wanting to talk to friends who had read the book, and curious to know how it was received by Dudley George's family. But then the show cut to commercials for hair mousse ("so healthy, you'll love your hair"), erectile dysfunction (a touching story with a help-line), and take-out pizza ("taste like take-out but it's frozen"). During the 'break', I was also reminded that Fashion File would follow the show I was watching. At this point I remembered the same feeling when I'm watching CounterSpin when it goes to commercials. I'm never watching one show, but two, the one I choose and the ads. But these texts can't be separated by time as their values and forms crossover and re-contextualize each other. Freedom in the middle east, freedom on the open road with your new SUV. Tragic murder of native man, bad hair day. This is my Spectacle, my panopticon of commercial curiosity and confusion.

My split-screen advertisements are more than about Spectacle or even cute plays at irony – they're media as a composite of madness. How does

one teach media literacy with a subject so mad? Not just to deconstruct it or create cute juxtapositions, but teach how insurance companies have wisdom to teach, how rings and rugs needs euphoric consulting, how pancake making needs to be as easy as turning a door knob, while the markets plunge and your meatballs fall from cheap paper plates. These new inter-textual meanings add up to madness in which the only response needed is found in lessons by the weather channel: unpredictable, fluid, detached, benign, reassuring, passive, and the feeling as if you were almost really there. I'm curious about ending my Project discussion with this element. After all, my reading, reflecting, and action, the process of engaged self-awareness with the world at large is still a fractured one. I see madness creeping more and more into my daily life with education and activism of all pedagogies trying to change the tide.

This project could not have been finished without a constant affirmation in the potential for human freedom by those I worked with and even by the small changes I've seen within myself. While I'm more articulate about my position within critical discourses in advertising, consumer culture, and media literacy and the valuable role popular education played, I know that my political/personal tensions will remain. Starting to answer my opening questions has lead to new questions as the opening spiral continues with moments like this for evaluation. "Two Texts", like the other elements in this Project, is an ongoing dialogue with myself and others.

With this Project's completion, what new directions am I open to?

The formal part of this Project is drawing to a close, with this paper and an oral exam, but there is an ongoing project which I've led myself toward. I can never go "home" again and pretend things were different. I can't agree with the four above discourses and because of my privilege and experience in those areas, must constantly challenge them in a constructive manner. I can never accept the role of workshop facilitator without knowing what mutual expectations and resources exist, without starting from the experiences of the participants, or without designing a process that not only

has critical content, but critical pedagogy (Giroux, 1998). But the "home" I've adopted is harder to describe. My biggest challenge for this paper was being self-reflective on my own work, rather than that done by others. Even while I self-identified with Kellner, Jhally, Lasn, and Duncan, I was more comfortable being critical of their work as it related to mine than I was toward mine. I was learning a new pedagogy, while unlearning an old one, with too much research and workshop experience in between to make as much synthesis as I would have liked. I need more time and a clearer mind.

To be honest, I'm in poor intellectual and emotional shape right now as I prepare an early exit from Cape Breton to support my parent's current marriage crisis. Not helping is the fact that I too am engaged in a draining and deteriorating personal relationship, without enough time or love to help it work. Ironically, it's the strength of personal relationships that have made this Project both possible for the past eight months and impossible right now. I'll finish with these questions for further reflection before the oral exam:

- Since only two of my original five objectives were feasible for this Project (second and third) and I didn't have time to read, design, and facilitate all six workshop with enough time for reflection and synthesis, how can I keep my expectations of future work in line with my abilities?
- I'm attending the founding summit of the Action Coalition for Media Education (ACME) in late October. Many media literacy professionals and activists who consider themselves to be too critical for the existing media literacy movement are meeting here (Sut Jhally, Robert McChesney, Mark Crispin Miller, Jean Killbourne, not Giroux or hooks as far as I know) to forge a new path of media literacy and activism. What do I bring to the summit as an academic and activist?
- What was it (either with groups I was working with or with me) that kept me from doing workshops around the politicization of advertising and how does this re:orientate my approach to media literacy as opposed to personal and political literacy? In other words, why do I choose to study the media and advertising rather than other entry points into political

W consciousness (such as trade agreements, labour rights, electoral politics, and fighting poverty)?

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