

Media Diary/Analysis

Due: Tuesday, October 17

Length: 2-3 single-spaced pages

For this paper, you will record your media usage for one day. You will then describe and analyze the messages (especially concerning gender, sexuality, and power) that are communicated (either overall, or in some subset of the images/products you were exposed to). This is similar in concept to what Kilbourne did in her book chapter and video, and to what Sut Jhally did in the Dreamworlds video, but smaller in scope.

Structure

Part I: Media Diary (probably 1 page or less)

Pick one day to record your total media usage -- how much and what kind of media you consume in one day. In order to do this accurately, you will need to carry around paper and pencil, or a PDA or other electronic device, in order to write down your media usage immediately as it is happening. Otherwise, because we are bombarded by images, you are likely to forget much of what you see. The process of writing things down as they are happening (or immediately afterward) also helps keep you aware of what you are seeing, rather than consuming in a more unconscious fashion.

This section is probably best structured as a list. For example:

- Listened to morning news on NPR for 20 minutes. Stories included Mark Foley scandal; pending Korean nuclear test

- Listened to iPod on the way to school for 15 minutes. Songs included . . .

- Saw advertisements on side of bus for Comcast cable.

At the same time as you are noting how much and what media you are being exposed to, you should also take notes about images or content that communicates messages about gender, sexuality, power, or aggression. You will use these notes in Part II of your paper

Part II: Description/Analysis

In this section, you will analyze the content of the media that you were exposed to. If you choose, you can do an overall analysis (covering everything that you've seen), but in most cases it will be easier and more illuminating to focus on a subset of what you've seen -- maybe one genre (music) or a particular television show or magazine.

First, describe what the images, characters, lyrics, or other aspects of the media content are communicating about women, men, masculinity, femininity, or sexuality. In the Dreamworlds video, they analyzed a variety of categories, including the activities of the women in music videos, their clothing, their role (e.g., backup singer or dancer), the values and desires they seemed to have. You can use similar categories in your analysis, if they seem appropriate. For some media, other categories might be relevant (for example, how much time women are speaking; what kinds of things women say as opposed to what men say). In this section, you will likely make some general statements about what you are seeing (e.g., most advertisements portrayed thin attractive women dressed in revealing clothing) but you may want to also describe a few examples in more detail (similar to what Kilbourne does in her chapter). For an analysis of music, you could quote some of the lyrics.

Then, describe how these media messages might relate to sexual aggression. If you found that columnists in Glamour magazine advise women to "play hard to get" and say "no" even when they mean "yes", how might that contribute to acquaintance rape? If women's body parts are shown in ads more often than images of the entire person (and more often than images of men's body parts), might that contribute to the objectification of women? If so, how (or would) that objectification tie in with sexual aggression?