

Rage Against the Machine: Media and Youth, Cultures of Violence

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Academic Setting

From television to blockbuster movies, from music to gaming entertainment, the media, focusing on our youth, showcases the glamour of segregated groups and subculture identification, and relays violence as being a legitimate avenue of expression for all youth groups. Be they "bangers" or "skaters," many clench their fists. These students need not only be aware of the stereotypical images being relayed to them, but also how they themselves embrace and internalize these images.

When educators speak of their careers and students, more often than not you hear people aghast about working at a middle school level, this being the age where adolescents are simply unmanageable because of hormones. Personally, and professionally, I feel this time is one of curiosity and wonder about themselves and the world, a time where young students are ripe and open to differing ideas and beliefs. Often these young people are unaware of this "developmental" stage and its immediate effects. My focus on media literacy will be to review the popular culture of my students and examine with them how profoundly they are indeed affected by it.

The cultural aspects of the media certainly impact upon the demographics of my school site. Citing information as provided by the administration of Truman Middle School, race, culture, and class, especially important in regards to the perceptions and presentations of the media. During the 1999-2000 school year, the Truman student ethnic population fell along these lines: Hispanic 79.8%, Anglo 11.2%, Black 4.9%, Indian 3.5%, Asian .5%. and "other" .1%. Comparative average results within Albuquerque middle schools show substantial discrepancies: Hispanic population at 49.1% and Anglo at 40.2%. The ethnic makeup of this site alone indicates characteristics, issues, and needs individual to Truman.

Socioeconomic status has long been a category for study in the social sciences. Ethnic and race issues correlate with this category. Criteria for free or reduced lunch programs consider income and family size. Free lunch is granted to a child from a family of four with an income of less than \$21,710, reduced cost lunch programs for those between \$21,710 and \$30,895. Truman Middle School has 78.8% of its total

population on free or reduced cost lunch. Poverty levels reflect similar data. Using the threshold income level of \$12,674 for a family of four, 23% of Truman's students are at poverty level compared to 17% as the overall Albuquerque middle school average.

Examination of student demographics presents the danger of casting a bad light upon the students themselves, or 'blaming the victim.' Yet, staff demographics shed an equally pale light upon the instructors. In terms of years of experience, APS overall enjoys higher percentage rates of long term teachers. As reflected in the words of my administrator, "We train them and then they leave."

These statistics address the need for media literacy, especially within the demographics of Truman Middle school. As argued by Barry Sanders,

...the disenfranchised and less affluent populace is losing its literacy skills, period, both academic and social. They turn to the media as an accessible and less challenging medium, a medium providing quick and easily referenced options to deal and act within reality (Sanders 137).

It has been found that in terms of self esteem and social attitudes, media portrayals may have a greater influence upon the development of minority children than on white children (Wilson and Gutierrez 56).

There are preconceived notions of the world both within and outside of the community of Truman Middle School. If criticism is of the media as our youths' primary educator, especially low to middle income groupings, our youth need to be educated about the media, not by it. Examining the media and its propagation of popular culture will allow my students, and the teachers themselves, to reflect inward about themselves and their respective cultures.

Background

This media literacy curriculum will involve close scrutiny and observations of American popular culture as it pertains to teens and their developing subcultures that revolve around, embrace, and glorify violence.

Although it would be nearly impossible to prove a causal relationship, this is more an exploration of the "mirror of the world" argument. Certainly there are other social factors contributing to both group affiliation and violence, but this is an examination of worlds being

literally and theatrically presented to our youth. Is art imitating life or vice-versa? We have then an evaluation of media influence not upon a person, but upon a culture (hence propagation of teen subcultures). This examines media, popular culture, and teens on a macro level. This acknowledges that our youth live in worlds different from our own, worlds with rules, mores, and systems all their own. How then is a youth "reared" or socialized into this world? Critical examination will show that this guardianship (media as primary instructors) has been neglectful and often destructive.

Links between the media and violence have often been sought to redirect blame or responsibility. Blockbuster movies, with ever-increasing body counts, certainly are the most visible factor. Television, from reality based T.V. to animation, constantly bombards our youth with its notions of what the world looks like. Music, specifically the suicide lyrics of heavy metal, has been under constant criticism for its appeal to teens. The promotion of both teen subcultures and violence has been coming from many different sources. Even as they align themselves against each other, these "cliques" embrace similar doctrines of anger and violence. How then did they become differentiated? How does each see their respective culture or world as unique?

Rationale

There are substantial theories and findings to support the argument of media influence. The notion that has anchored this focus is the existence of a social definition of reality. What we believe to be true must be; "seeing is believing." While the media are not the sole contractors to building a reality, their true impact and influence needs attention. The media as the great storyteller has now become our means of relaying history, legend, myth, and our culture (Massey 23). The myth building evolution of the media is discussed by Barry Sanders not as a creative component but rather as having a "dumbing" down effect upon individuals, culture, imagination, and literacy (Sanders 185-186). While indeed media are powerful, there may not be a direct effect on an individual; however, there may be a collective impact on a culture on a macro level (Baran 16). This implications of this type of "molding" of a world, or a culture has often been debated. The social ramifications in terms of teen cliques and subcultures will be addressed later. The marketing practices of media themselves lends to the making of a consumer audience, arguably a subculture.

Successful marketing means profit. Better organization of any system ensures higher profit. These "oligopolies" streamlined larger media and communication companies, ensure limited consumer options and

choices with said companies having greater power and control of the media (Baran 25). Exemplified in the infrastructure reorganization of media giants and their consequential marketing of product (Steven Spielberg's DreamWorks to Time/Warner Communications), interrelated media and communication systems insure massive influence upon society. The acquisition of ABC television by The Walt Disney Company constituted a \$19 billion transaction, the second largest corporate merger in United States history (Massey 101). The economic and social ramifications are astounding. Saturday morning cartoons now veer further into business ventures than nostalgia. Ellen A. Wartella discusses in length the media industries use of a loophole in FCC regulations of children's programming to establish "program length cartoon commercials" such as GI Joe and *He-Man* during the 1980s. These most popular examples were also the most violent (Ettama and Whitney 38- 56). *The Little Mermaid*, *Aladdin*, *Hercules*, *Timon and Pumba*, have all enjoyed Saturday morning cartoon incarnations. The power of the mass media, television and movies, directed by the product marketing of Disney, constitutes a coup. At a young age, our youth are targeted and taught.

Early theories of the influence of media upon culture claimed that such an effect characterizes culture as a homogenized unit, with a uniform belief and reaction system. This is very reflective of the idea of America as a great American melting pot, a model of assimilation (Wilson and Gutierrez 6). Yet, with the advent of mass communication through radio and television, what once may have been a homogenized unit developed into distinct groupings or market audiences. It may be argued that the media is only mirroring the cultural diversity around it; yet, what is often "reflected" are stereotypical images that insure group stratification. With business and industry focusing on target audiences for product consumption, the media is a contributing factor in the creation of subcultures, cliques, and fragmented audiences. It has already been stated that culture categorizes and classifies our experiences, defining us and our world. providing and limiting options and guidelines for social behavior (Baran 71). Media provide us with a social reality - a reality more easily accessible and manipulated by our youth (Sanders 37). The cultural environment in which we live becomes the by product of marketing (Massey 13.) Media have their greatest influence when reinforcing and channeling attitudes and opinions that are consistent with the psychological makeup of the targeted person and the social structure of the group that person identifies with (Wilson and Gutierrez 44).

This shift from a mass audience to newly burgeoning "audience

fragmentation" also dominates the magazine industry (from *Golf Digest* to *Ebony*) the radio market (from "urban" stations to "country" stations), and is growing with the expansion of cable television (from the SCI-FI channel to the *Home Shopping Network*). This diversified and specified interest marketing is known as narrow casting, niche marketing, or targeting (Baran). The media, rather than simply answering a demand, are providing an abundant supply - creating a market. These socialization factors affect susceptible youth. Since the beginning of time, in all societies, adolescents have learned to become adults by observing, imitating, and interacting with adults (Hersch 20). That interaction with adults has declined, and has been replaced with interaction with the media (the t.v. as "babysitter"). This creates "fragmented audiences," or subculture groups, that our youth identify with.

It becomes necessary to discuss ethnicity, race, and culture as we discuss the propagation of "fragmented audiences" as teen subcultures. The issue of race both exemplifies and contradicts the notion of a homogenized culture. The early days of rock music were grounded in the Southern Black sounds of jazz and rhythm and blues. Yet, there was no mass media call or drive for black artist at the time. Even today, history's jazz and blues geniuses are relegated to "alternative" styles of music. The accolades are there but not the media notoriety (Redhead 49). Yet, a distinct sound eventually gets "assimilated" into the mainstream some arguing it loses its "vitality"- (from Pat Boone's *Tooty Fruity* rendition to Puff Daddy's version of *Roxanne*). The radio and music industry do not seek out true artistic innovation but patterned forms to feed their mass audience (Massey 111). This mass audience can be readily seen as subculture groups respective of their musical tastes of rock, easy listening, rap, or heavy metal (oldies and rap for the "gang bangers," alternative and rock for the "skaters," and country for the "scooters"). The decline of college radio stations which met these individual group needs reflects this audience fragmentation. Music magazines, from *Vibe* to *Rolling Stone*, also reflect this segmented audience appeal.

The record industry is no different as it reflects the segregation, assimilation trend. As relayed by Richard A. Peterson, early recordings were indeed geared towards an "immigrant and ethnic" market in the urban North (Ettema, Whitney 176-177). From the '20s to the '60s, record producers even coached their artists to make music appropriate to their race. The commercial success of these artists is still evident today as carbon copies of teen pop artists are rampant, from Brittany Spears and Christina Aguilera to The Backstreet Boys and N-Sync. It is the sheer grit and innovation of such artists as Ray

Charles, Charlie Pride, and yes, even Elvis Presley that enabled them to cross such musical/cultural divides. Arguably music artists such as Eminem are seen as money making oddities, a "wannabe gangster, or a means of a musical genre (rap) gaining legitimacy and acceptance in suburbia because of its 'thrill' value or its "cultural voyeurism" (Hersch). The once raunchy and offensive expressionism of an "other" or fringe group becomes adopted by the mainstream, pushing the fringe group to more outrageous outlets to reclaim its identity (Stanley 19). From rhythm and blues to rock and roll, from rap to heavy metal, this has been a continuing trend. Even as these lyrics evoke imagery associated with select groups (getting stoned, fighting, sex, partying, cruising, etc...), all are activities associated with youth in general. The film industry also reflects this market targeting of race and youth.

It is with a great deal of irony that the the film most lauded for its innovation happens to be one of the most racially derisive themes in print or film. 1915 saw the release of the first full length silent film. *The Birth of a Nation* employed camera and production techniques well ahead of its time. It also relied heavily on its original source material for overt racist images of the "boy," the "noble" plantation owner, and the "crusading clansmen." While indeed there were protests at its showing, the initial run was a strong commercial success. Reinforcing this notion of a "fragmented audience," the black community responded with film portrayals of positive models. They were not successful, however, beyond black theaters (Baran). Early films reflecting Latinos or Hispanics were stereotypical, from the Latin lover or street thug, to *Tony the Greaser* (1911) and *The Greaser's Revenge* (1914). In dealing with minority cultures, from Native Americans to Blacks and to Hispanics to Chinese, the early golden age of Hollywood suffered from a pervasive "racialism," reflecting White's negative prejudicial attitudes about other groups that existed prior to manifesting themselves in the Hollywood media. This media vehicle has become so ingrained in our American culture as to affect it, not just reflect it. Ironically, the 1960s created a backlash to the stereotypical portrayal of the street thug. From the "noble savage" images of the "new" Native American to the militant activist or the "nice" assimilated Black man, all Hollywood did was shift the stereotype while ignoring more well rounded, realistic portrayals of minority groups. This is a social reality, a projection of what a person thinks reality is. As noted earlier, minority children were prone to be more influenced by media representations than their white counterparts (Wilson and Gutierrez 56, 73, 75).

Not much has changed as you see contemporary films using similar formulas to market adventure, gang life, and ethnic oriented films.

Certain films choose release locations specific to the theme. *Colors*, a major studio gang life film, was released early in predominately inner city neighborhoods. In numerous cities, including Albuquerque, numbers of juveniles claiming gang affiliation jumped in the following months. In Albuquerque, the Hispano Chamber of Commerce in two progressive years highlighted two premier films at The Century Rio: the first, *The Wonderful Ice Cream Suit* based on a short story by Ray Bradbury; the second, *The Price of Glory* based upon a boxing family; Both enjoyed "mainstream" family and community themes but were more recognized as ethnic oriented films. In numerous cities, *Mi Familia*, the multi generational story of a Mexican American family was not solicited in many suburban theaters for fear of gang violence, even though that was a minuscule theme. From *Boys in the Hood* to *Mi Vida Loca*, mainstream hollywood accepts subgroup themes only when dealing with stereotypical gang life, drugs, or violence.

Major films continue to have a revolving homogeneous cast or a stereotypical "the Italian is next to die" cast (examine any Arnold Schwarzenegger film). Stars of minority status are often coupled with a "counter star" who is more accessible to a mainstream market (Wesley Snipes and Sean Connery in *Rising Sun* addressing Japanese issues), or the oddity of the pairing itself highlights humorous culture clashes, as in *Rush Hour* with Jackie Chan and Chris Tucker. Again, the commercial success of the film is the important thing, not artistic vision.

The situation does not improve when television is reviewed. In a survey of the television network producers, it was found that the majority of those respondents had either very high visions or stereotypical views of their audiences. Most also had a very low opinion of said audiences intelligence and taste (Ettema and Whitney 160). Yet again the portrayal of a televised reality may affect a social reality and cause more audience fragmentation. As noted earlier, minority children are prone to be more influenced by media representations than their white counterparts. While minority representation in positive roles is negligible, roles portraying criminals were 50% more likely to played by Hispanics than Whites. It is arguable whether or not this was a contributing factor to growing political rhetoric and legislation within California concerning the relationship between economic problems, crime, and the ever increasing Hispanic population (Massey 130). This is indeed a sad example of stereotyping. It was found that a steady exposure to television programming that either ignored Blacks entirely or relegated them to low status roles could lead to low self-esteem

among Black viewers. Yet, at the same time, Black audiences were more able to name and identify programs with positive Black roles and attitudes than White audiences (Wilson and Gutierrez 55). Contemporary television programming bears this out as the "big three" mainstream television networks do not currently carry one minority/ethnic based program. In syndication and in alternate networks such as UPN and WB, "Black" shows like *Moesha* and *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, enjoy an audience, if not ratings success. The underlying factor in all of this is that the media may segment such groups along these "label" categories, but the media also gives them the power of expression through violence.

The link between violence and the media has hit a fevered pitch since the Columbine shootings. It is not my intent to prove a direct causal relationship. But we must ask, are the kids reflecting the shows or are the shows reflecting kids? An interesting definition of subcultures focuses on the alternative or differing rules of the "fringe" group outside the mainstream. Most definitions of subcultures and juvenile delinquents address this notion of deviant behaviors and mores as compared to "normal" codes in the established system. One deviant norm is the notion of "risk taking" to establish an identity within the subgroup (Lightfoot 138). Certainly, risk taking is typified in the teen years period, regardless of fringe identification or not. The degree of risk taking and its manifestation as anger and violence is the issue. The notion of risk taking and violence as a mark of "subculture" criteria is now arguable, especially if the media itself may perpetuate this notion of social reality and violence as a norm. Culture is a learned and social construct. Research indicates that violence does not emerge from a lack of values, but rather from well-established values from which young people learn that violence is not only justified but necessary in a wide range of situations (Hoffman and Summer 185).

Again various criticisms note that the media provide approval of violence. This a perceived reality. Certainly other factors contribute to this but media certainly can be evaluated as condoning this on a larger macro cultural level. Again, cases of violence among our youth fall along fragmented lines of race and class, from urban drive- bys to school shootings in suburbia. But here is an ominous trend - schools are primary settings for juvenile violence. One could argue, of course, that it is because of the immediacy of the institutional setting. Yet, there is no place with which to compare where the crimes against adults are equally concentrated. That includes prison.

Young people are indoctrinated into the media culture very early on. Saturday morning cartoons were once the bastion of Norman Rockwell images; now, they are the door through which we expose

children to violence. The fantastic antics of Bugs Bunny dropping an anvil on Elmer Fudd has given way to testosterone brawls and automatic weapons fired into a crowd. On an average Saturday morning, there are incidents of violence 20 to 25 times per hour (Massey 15). *The Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers* resort to hand weapons on a regular basis. Action screen stars have even been translated into cartoon form; *Rambo* and *The Men in Black* are but two examples.

There is an ever growing body count in films and their sequels. This includes *Rambo* and the continuous run of *Die Hard* films (Massey 15), and B-films such as *Death Wish* (and its subsequent sequels), the *Friday the 13th* films, and newly revitalized slasher films as *Scream*, a favorite amongst teens. This ever increasing youth market has not gone unnoticed. While comprising less than 20% of the population, young teens and "twenty somethings" account for 30% of movie ticket sales (Baran 164). Where once violence was seen as a delinquent and deviant act initiated by "stereotypically" portrayed fringe individuals or groups, now even quiet, shy kids are a time bomb. Tragic and horrible school shootings like Columbine are linked to such video games as *Doom* and films such as the *Basketball Diaries*, which also perpetuate school cliques. *The Matrix*, raises the question, can our children differentiate reality from a reality they perceive?

The music of young people has always been derided by an older generation. But it is naive to just blame it on a generation gap. In this day and age of mass marketing, the music industry certainly bears closer scrutiny. Rock and roll music has always been noted for its rebellious nature. Rebellion is its calling card. So how does this fit in with criticisms of a cookie-cutter system of pop music like the Backstreet Boys and N-Sync? Again this is fragmentation of an audience. The rebels of yesterday are now easing themselves into rocking chairs, as was expressed by Eric Clapton (Redhead 48). The "bad boy" images of such groups as The Rolling Stones and Aerosmith are now stories of days of old. Consequently, conformity and marketing of musical styles and the retirement of the "golden oldies," has left a huge demand for music with more emotional content and immediacy (Ettema and Whitney, 174).

Again, this cannot be dismissed as a generation gap, not with the profiteering and coin pocketing of the music industries' captains. The words for the day are angst, apathy, and anger. Where once there was a playful call for flirting and fun, there is now a call to rape and pillage. This is not a new argument and the oft mentioned cases of kids committing suicide to the lyrics of Judas Priest and other heavy metal lyrics have become both a sad cliché and a tired rallying cry.

Seen and heard in the music, videos, and lifestyles of such performers as Nirvana, Tupac, Marilyn Manson, and a host of others, there is an ever growing trend not to innovative in music but to push the envelope, cross the line, and piss somebody off.

The introduction to *RAP: the Lyrics* , celebrates such artists as Tupac and Biggy Smalls. Smalls, know for for being genuine people and "keeping it real," never fully explained that "keeping it real" also means claiming gang membership. Both Tupac and Smalls died violently because of these memberships. The call to violence, violence against others, against an oppressive system, and against the self beckons many of these youth. The beat may differ but the lyrics are morbidly similar be it rock, grunge, rap, or country music.

It is difficult to fully explore, much less understand, the worlds of our young people. Even they themselves are not totally aware of the subtle nuances and profound components of their lives. This then is an examination of their lives in terms they may readily understand. The social sphere of the media of youth music, television, and movies impacts upon their very socialization and education in both profound and deceptive fashions. The division of our youth cultures into cliques may be media influenced and, more predominately, the use of violence as expression by all youth groups is most definitely promoted by media. This research and focus is not meant to target or persecute our youth - quite the opposite. In a cautionary tone, America's young may not be the danger so often portrayed. It is only adult hypocrisy and an "age oriented" social structure that manufactures this fear (Males, intro).

As they have so often expressed, our teens "rage against the machine." What they do not understand is that that very machine manipulates and doles out that rage.

Curriculum Objectives

This unit is not meant simply to criticize media but to forewarn students and to teach them the notions being reinforced, even by themselves. Within my Humanities class, cultural and historical bias is quite often evaluated. Discussions of gender bias and indoctrination are held. Societal roles and stereotypes are also addressed. Media, as reflected in documentaries, movies, Web resources, art, and visual aids have always been used in my class. This media literacy class will enable me to better filter and adapt the best resources for my students' needs. I will be able to fine - tune a better running engine.

Performance Standards Met:

Language Arts:

- Critical Thinking: compare/ contrast writing and charting, group discussions, problem solving, and conflict resolution
- Oral Presentations: reading and singing aloud, theme debates, essay presentations, and videos
- Writing: grammar, language mechanics, creative writing, essays, scripts, and research papers
- Vocabulary: media, sociological, and psychological terms and concepts
- Reading: research and resource material, song lyrics, web sites, newspaper and magazine articles
- Research: literary, library, and internet source materials, organizational skills, and reference skills.
- Computer Skills: research, search engines and web sites, word processing, slide shows and power point.
- Art: commercial advertisements, video, and album cover projects,

Social Studies:

- History: The historical and social development of "American" music, from jazz and blues to rock and grunge, contemporary issues of censorship and freedom of expression
- Sociology: group dynamics, social issues as role modeling and social responsibility, developmental concepts and terms as looking glass theory, social definition of reality, stereotyping, and gender bias
- Vocabulary: media, Sociological, and psychological key terms and concepts
- Ethnic/Multicultural Studies: cultural identification with certain genres of music from blues to corridos
- Economics: research into product development, marketing, and consumerism
- Statistics: charts, graphs, and information relayed in a demographic format.
- Art: charts, graphs, time lines, advertisements, anti-censorship posters, album covers
- Computer Skills: research, search engines, and web sites, word processing, slide shows, and power point
- Research Skills: literary, library and internet source materials, organizational skills, and reference skills

Implementation

Week One

This will be a brief overview of already discussed concepts, but will entail a more media oriented focus on such social concepts as stereotyping, gender roles and bias, the Looking Glass theory, social

definition of reality, typecasting, mass marketing, target audiences, and consumerism. The original Marlboro Man dying of cancer is the classic vehicle to initiate this component. The media in and of themselves may appear innocuous to students, but with this beginning focus on advertisements and commercials, the students will have a foundation to build upon a deeper critiquing of the media.

(Of course, the projected time frame should be modified to the instructor's or students' needs. The use of various themes such as music and television allows the unit to be used in part throughout the year not just as a complete unit.)

Activities:

1. Side show presentation of a purse snatching. Initial slide will be shown of a "shady" man running towards a woman with an exposed purse. Students will be asked to continue the scene in a short story. Discussion of the possible scenarios will follow. A pull-away of the same slide will reveal a falling chair from an apartment above the woman as the man rushes to push her away. The overall idea of camera focus, angle and perspective, in media and society, will be discussed.
2. Students will be divided into segregated groups of boys and girls. Each group will receive magazine advertisements conveying images of the opposite sex. Each group must list what images are being presented and what is being said about the other gender. The instructor may assign such group roles as secretary and presenter, etc.. After the presentations, discussion will follow .
3. Journal entry writing, creative writing, or art project (student choice) will be assigned on selected slides that portray actual people in natural settings alternated with advertisements, pictorials, slogans, and advertisements of stereotypical images. The students may use their journal and/or creative writing as a reaction to or narrative of those select slides, or as a catalyst for a story or poem. The writing may also be replaced by an alternative poster, advertisement or disclaimer art project.

Week Two and Three

This section of the unit will focus on television, with greater development and concentration on social issues and themes such as stereotyping and social definition of reality. Both positive and negative influences of television will be addressed focusing on the power of images in various historical media clips, ranging from news footage to sitcoms.

1. Compare/ contrast sheets will be filled out and used in discussion. News clips from the Kennedy assassination to the Apollo moon landings will be reviewed with clips from tabloid talk shows such as *Jenny Jones* and *Oprah Winfrey*. What are the implications and ramifications of such differing coverage? A historical perspective on growing television coverage would be ideal here. The evolution of media coverage from the Vietnam War to the Gulf War is a prime example of the power and manipulative nature of media.
2. Using the idea of news media as a jump off point, reality based television such as *COPS* (in their Albuquerque based episodes), and any other "real" perspective show clips will be shown and evaluated. The focus of a following questionnaire will reflect "the five W's and H:" Do these shows convey stereotypical people, locales, and/or misconceptions?
3. Taking a presented problem from within these "real" police shows, were there any instances of unnecessary actions or violence on anyone's part? The students will outline possible options that would have de-escalated or prevented said occurrences. Skits or role playing will allow the students to act out these scenes.
4. The student will pick a favorite television program outlining such concepts as characters, character development and personality, setting(s), and various show themes. The student will then script his/her favorite episode. The student must cast friends in the roles and explain why they chose said person for the role. This will open up discussion on themes and typecasting. Again, the scripts could be acted out.
5. Cartoon animation will be critiqued regarding product endorsements, such as in *Pokeman*, and/or hailed as social satire itself, as in *The Simpsons*. Working in groups, the students will storyboard their own cartoons of a social or family situation and present it in power point, or other visual format.

Weeks Four and Five

Motion pictures and television have become the literary texts for this age (Sadler), and is the most readily appealing and accessible resource to my students. While violent films per se may not be allowed in the schools, violence in films is very typical. Students will be able to pick a film and list any instances of violence they can remember from it. These cases would then be examined as "gratuitous" or "story driven," and the difference between both will be discussed.

1. Stereotypical roles would be identified and discussed. Students

would script their own films. What constitutes a good movie? These understandings will allow greater group discussion on "good films," special effects vs. story, etc...

2. The prospective audience of the film would be addressed. The students would examine news reports coinciding with film release dates. Is there a correlation? How? Why? Can students examine their theatrical world with a critical eye?

3. Top ten movies and video listings will be examined for theme. Which include scenes of violence? Which revolve around violence? Which are using stereotypes?

4. News reports, telecasts, and interviews of youth violence will be examined.

5. Choosing their favorite novel or short story, the students will script or narrate their favorite scene, choosing real actors or friends for the role (personalities must match). The students will create "movie posters" for their individual project.

Week Six to Conclusion

A major component of this curriculum will revolve around music. This segment will examine the lyrical development and history of rock and roll. Its rise from "Black" music, to one of the first fronts for desegregation, and back to the increasing prevalent segregation will be the focus.

1. Students will pick the titles of twenty of their favorite songs and incorporate those titles into a running narrative. For example: "John ran into a *Funky Town* and was *Breathless* from *Dancing in the Streets*."

2. The suggestive, illicit, and often coded messages of early Black music will be examined for its sensuality and sexuality. The student will then contrast that with the explicit, outrageous, and often violent nature of contemporary music, from playful to hurtful, (from "dancing in the streets" to the ever developing "rage against the machine"). Writing the lyrics from their favorite songs, the students will then "black out" all violent and sexual references. The darkest paper will receive the "censorship" award and the most pristine will receive the "antiseptic" award." This will address numerous styles of music and is not simply restricted to such scapegoats as heavy metal or rap music.

3. The connection between violence and music would be further examined through VH1's *100 Most Shocking Moments in Music* Web site. The number and side reports of the acts of violence will be

documented. Contemporary examples such as Shawn "Puff Daddy" Combs' and Jennifer Lopez' incident with the law will be discussed. The growing pervasive "suicide songs" affecting teens in contemporary times will also be addressed.

4.. This activity will range from compare/contrast charting to student lyrical writing . Rap, with its "bad boy" image, will be compared and contrasted to the Southwestern/Mexican concept of the "corrido," a ballad celebrating an establishment's outlaw but a people's hero. The students will then write lyrics to their own personal corrido, celebrating something they did wrong for all the right reasons. An accompanying CD case or album cover will be its art component.

5. Top ten albums and songs will be examined for content and themes. Album covers will be evaluated under certain criteria for intended and hidden messages. Does it relay stereotypes? Does it relay violence? What are the predominate images?

6. How does music reinforce, propagate, or promote subculture identification or fragmentation? Issues of free speech and censorship will be debated. An organized debate will take place as a final evaluation

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