MORPHIN'! TRANSFORMIN'! MUTATIN'!: THE

DYNAMIC INTERACTION BETWEEN MEDIA

CULTURE AND CHILDREN'S LIVES

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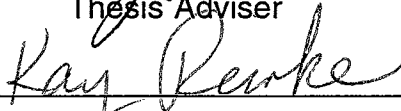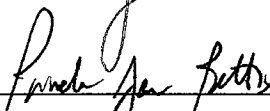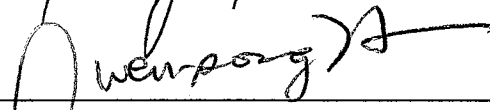
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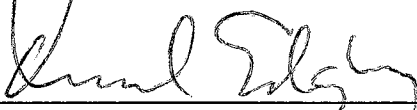_Sally Carter_
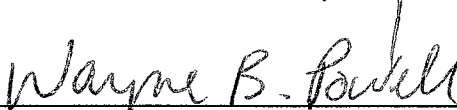
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background

My dissertation topic initially derived from my experiences as an elementary art teacher for fourth and fifth graders. I was surprised when I encountered endless media cultural symbols in their artwork, despite all my efforts to make them "go beyond" using these symbols. The notion that children were doing this mindlessly did not make sense to me. They were emotionally involved in the process and they valued their artwork. So that I could understand the meanings behind these symbols, and why children were engaged with them, I would have children talk to me about such things as their toys, favorite television shows, video games and cards. I began to watch children's television after-school lineup on the FOX network. I wanted to find out more about these symbols and children's use of them, but I felt very much at odds with my role as an educator and with my own personal interest in the mass media. I started to see an enormous division between children's everyday experiences and the school's objectives. The school was not deeply entrenched in the children's lived worlds. I sensed that this gap was more than just generational, and could not be so simply explained as a developmental division between children and adults.

I sought answers from scholars in art education. I became discouraged by the writings from both curriculum camps in art education, the prominent camp

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led by the Getty-funded Discipline-Based-Art-Education (DBAE) group, and the smaller camp that followed the teachings of Viktor Lowenfeld. DBAE was very much like my own college art training in its rigidity and traditionalism. I agreed with Lowenfeld and his proponents, but modernist assumptions about art and its relation to the self permeated his writings, and his assumptions seemed out-dated. Beelke (1997) commented on these major divisions within the field of art education, "Art education has also been taken to task for its over-emphasis on productive work and an exclusively psychological orientation on the one hand [Lowenfeld], and an emphasis of a purely intellectual nature on the other [DBAE]" (p. 11).

Although the National Art Education Association (NAEA) is attempting to envision a postmodern art curriculum, its direction still leans heavily on DBAE's tenets. I believe that this dissertation addresses the research questions raised by the NAEA's Commission on Research in Art Education (1994): "what definitions of art are being used in art education programs" (p. 34), "what art content is considered appropriate to be taught" (p. 35) and "how do students learn about art" (p. 36). Interestingly, NAEA (1994) recommends art teachers' using art in other contexts outside of school settings, such as museums and galleries (p. 40), but ignores popular art, media and commerce.

I feel it is important to discuss my experience as a college art student at this time because: 1) my art training was quite representative of traditional mod-ernistic art education; 2) "innovators" in art education have increasingly been using traditional college art curriculum for the reconstruction of art education in the public schools, especially at the elementary level (the DBAE model being a direct take-off from traditional college art training); and 3) the postmodern issues I struggled with as an art student relate directly with issues in post-modern art theory, issues that call for a re-evaluation of art curriculum theory:

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elitism through building art hierarchies, self-expression as an artist's prero-
gative, and originality as the yardstick for measuring artwork. I will discuss
these three art issues as they affected my experiences as an art student.

"What Authority?"

My own art training discouraged using media culture, or any pre-made
imagery, as a reference source, with the exception of emulating (copying) the
styles of a few select modern artists (Cezanne and Picasso being prime fav-
orites). I have never been interested until recently in including media symbols in
my own work, but I have been interested for some time in incorporating ancient
Greek symbols, especially those of ancient Mycenae. As an art student, I batted
heads with my art professors. They wanted me to rebel against that "awful
classical tradition" that I loved, and I resented having to adapt my work to fit
what seemed to me to be their own personal tastes in art. I thought it odd that I
was supposed to be so "free" as an artist living in modern times and yet
because of modern art's break with the past, I was supposed to never look back.
Yet that's where my interests lay. My studies in art history contradicted with
what I was learning about my role as an artist. As an artist, I could only remain
special and untainted if I stood outside of society. From my studies in art history,
I learned that art has always been intertwined with society, including the market,
and always will be. To me, art is fundamentally a social event. Specific art
trends go out of fashion when they no longer appear relevant to society.

"Which Self Do You Want Me to 'Express'?"

I believe that art always has an expressive quality that says something

about artists' experience/relation with the world, be it that of the outer world or that of their inner being. However, I have had a problem with self-expression of one's personal inner feelings being the primary focus for art's existence. I really do not see expression of one's innermost feelings as more progressive or more definitive of fine art than any other use for art (such as for decoration or for narration), only a viable and worthwhile route artists may choose to take if they wish. Art can serve many purposes in society, expression of one's emotions being only one facet. "Self-expression," as used by such movements as abstract expressionism, wasn't even an issue for artists until the late 1800s, with the inception of the field of psychology, and even then only in a few locations around the globe.

I smirk at "self-expression" in art, that is what Dewey (1980) refers to as "self exposure" where "the expression is a direct emission of an emotion complete in itself" and unconnected with "something objective, whether in fact or in idea" (p. 67). For me, this form of "self-expression" is self-indulgent, more befitting of a therapy session. It's also focused on the individual, very non-communal. Maybe my cynicism with this notion of self-expression is attributable to my generation, my ethnicity, my handling of life in a consumer society, or my shyness about tossing myself out into the glaring scrutiny of others. "Whatever," as my generation would say, but I do have an aversion to it. I agree with Marcel Duchamp, one of the fathers of postmodern art, who says:

> I was really trying to invent, instead of merely expressing myself. I was never interested in looking at myself in an aesthetic mirror. My intention was always to get away from myself, though I knew perfectly well that I was using myself. Call it a little game between 'I' and 'me' (quoted in Judovitz, 1995, p. 56).

Marcel Duchamp brings up this element of playfulness in art, an attitude which

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is usually met with disapproval by modern artists (many of whom could be accused of taking art and themselves too seriously).

"What's Authentic and Why Does It Matter?"

Even though my ethnic background is German and English, my ancestors, like many others, quickly tossed aside their Old World ways to fit in with "American" society. I never knew what it was like to be "German" or "English," instead my upbringing is that of a mainstream Caucasian Midwesterner, where sauerbraten and crumpets were replaced by Oscar Meyer and Wonder Bread, lederhosen swapped for Calvin Klein jeans. My "ethnicity" felt pointless, information only important for governmental surveys. Yet at the same time, I felt relieved that I had no real distinguishable background from most of the people I knew, both real and in TV Land, because at times one's heritage, and allegiance to it, appears stifling and static. My culture, my experience, was that of the masses, of television, advertising and movies, and these were always changing, seemingly plunging optimistically forward into an unknown future, whereas ethnic heritages seemed to fear change and hence seemed constantly pessimistic about the future. I also liked the universality of the media. The boundaries seemed more flexible and fluid, with the potential for changing one's identit(ies) when necessary, changes which commodities can assist. As Crawford (quoted in Nespor, 1997) suggests, commodities are strategic resources for shaping identities:

> As culture, leisure, sex, politics, and even death turn into commodities, consumption increasingly constructs the way we see the world...... Consumption hierarchies, in which commodities define life-styles, now furnish indications of status position more visible than the economic

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relationships of class positions...Moreover, for many, the very construction of the self involves the acquisition of commodities. If the world is understood through commodities, then personal identity depends on one's ability to compose a coherent self-image through the selection of a distinct personal set of commodities (p. 176).

The mass media and consumption of commodities form an ever larger portion of one's experience and perceptions of today's world. Are children's sense of self based in the mass media?

Purpose of This Study

I wanted to explore children's inclusion of media cultural references in their conversations and in their artwork within the elementary art classroom. When I was an elementary art teacher, I was intrigued when children included spontaneous media references in their artwork (i.e. I did not assign them to do artwork about the mass media) or would suddenly burst into singing popular music in my art room, but I was unable to study the children at that time. When I would talk with other art teachers about this phenomena, they would often tell me that the children were only mindlessly using these symbols and that we as art educators should discourage them. My goal for this study was to situate myself in an elementary art classroom very similar to my old classroom (i.e. where the children were free to interact socially) and to research how a particular group of children were using symbols from the mass media, and how they talked about the mass media within the art room.

I wanted to investigate how children's use of media symbols in their artwork and in their conversations might reflect the current questioning of a stable, fixed self and identity (one increasingly affected by consumerism), where concepts of identity and selfhood were being altered by a re-emergence of

communal means of establishing identity, through what some scholars have referred to as "neo-tribes." These "neo-tribes" are formed partly by the owner-ship of commodity items for leisure and play and in part from an emerging global-technological media culture (Baudrillard,1995; Featherstone, 1995; Gergen, 1991; Giddens, 1991; Jencks, 1989; Kellner, 1995; McLuhan, 1964).

Research Questions

From my previous and ongoing observations, I found that despite the plethora of children's television shows, movies, video games, toys and food products, children tend to choose from a limited range of symbols to portray in their artwork. It seemed to me that children's selectiveness of media symbols to portray challenges the notion that these depictions are mere mindless endea-vors. Why are certain symbols more powerful to children than any of the other media cultural symbols that are available to them? Does the use of media symbols differ by grade, gender, socioeconomic class and ethnicity? Are there any symbols that seem to be trans-gender and trans-class?

Why do female students tend not to select corporate symbols to place in their artwork (unlike the male students) but instead choose to use more univer-sal popular cultural symbols like smiley faces, peace signs, hearts, balloons and rainbows?

What is the relationship among the media producers, marketers and children? It is my hypothesis that they are engaged in a fervent interaction, and that these interactions are deeply embedded within postmodern society.

I considered this research topic from the perspective of an art educator and of a postmodern artist. Although I am not a marketer nor a media producer, I have included their views regarding children. The reasoning for approaching this study from this framework of multiple perspectives is because I believe that all these are interrelated and each can contribute to critical thinking about various facets of this study. However, the literature that informs the perspectives of art education and of marketing/media emanate from a psychological viewpoint and must be critically examined. Postmodern art could provide direction not only for art education, but could provide help in understanding children's involvement with the media.

I re-examine traditional art curriculum theory and marketing using Mead's theory of social interaction because I find both traditional fields of art education and marketing/media rely heavily on psychology for understanding, and I want my focus to be on the current social context. Also, I find current art pedagogy to still be deeply rooted in modernist thought, unaware or resistant to postmodern developments in art theory and postmodern society.

An art educator's traditional goal has been to nurture an appreciation of socially-sanctioned European masterpieces and to guide students in their own self-expression. A problem arises when students choose symbols from media culture as a means to express themselves. A pervasive concern by art educators (Freedman, 1997) and by critics of mass media in general (Kellner, 1995; Fiske, 1989; McLuhan, 1964) is that media culture is mindlessly absorbed after endless hours of inactive viewing of television. It is believed that television and other recent technologies which employ virtual reality, produce children incapable of authentic expression, because the majority of

their personal experiences are with the mass media, a world of commercialized images.

The concept of self-expression in art is based mostly on assumptions from a psychological perspective, instead of from a sociological one. A re-examination of two theorists in art education, Lowenfeld (1964) and Kellogg (1970), needs to include sociology to better explain the complexity of self-expression. Self-expression has a social component, and self-expression is intertwined with self-identification. Although Lowenfeld mentions that art education's task is to "help individuals in their identification with their own selves" (p. 11), he doesn't specify how this occurs. Mead's discussion about how a self is formed is intriguing, yet he focuses on language symbols and not visual ones. Concepts of self-expression and identity need to be elaborated to help explain children's dynamic interactions and identifications within a media-saturated culture, specifically in a socially-created media-produced "children's culture."

Postmodern art theory and the work and thoughts of postmodern artists have been sadly ignored in art pedagogy for the public schools. Instead current art education favors to perpetuate the modern art perspective. Postmodern art questions and deconstructs modern art's tenets. Most current art pedagogy still lags behind; it teaches outdated modernist assumptions that students see as irrelevant, whereas much media culture directed for children addresses postmodern concerns (Willis, 1990). Postmodern art rejects the notion of the lone individual expressing his/her self in isolation from society. Instead, the self is viewed as an actor within society. Coupland (1996) writes about this relationship between the artist and society:

> I think all the Pop artists loved the subjects they painted. Detachment, what there was of it, was a put-on...Pop artists loved the machine that formatted the diskette that was them. (Rosenquist's) *F-111* says to me

'Love the machine that formatted the diskette that is *you* '(p. 124).

Postmodern art replaces originality with that of representation, deconstructs art institutions, and dismisses elitist notions regarding the popular and the commercial, the very foundations of modern art (Sandler, 1996; Gottlieb, 1976). Certain schools of postmodern art, especially those based in America (Sandler, 1996) accept the use of popular culture references in artwork, and while some of this artwork examines the mass media critically, quite a bit of this new art is ambivalent and even embraces mass media. The upheavals that have occurred in the artworld reflect the dramatic changes in postmodern society that affect us all.

Since media producers and marketers are frequently blamed for manipulating children by working jointly to create a media that ruthlessly bombards children with advertisements for commodities, I also wish to discuss what media producers and marketers have to say about their perceptions about children as consumers. Like art education, marketing has been primarily researched from a psychological stance, instead of from that of sociology. McNeal (1987) writes:

> The fact that children desire commercial products at all cannot be adequately explained then on the basis of needs theory alone, but is better understood by combining need theory with a cultural or social perspective. Children quickly learn in our society that it is not only correct to satisfy most needs by going to the marketplace, it is a cultural requirement. Sometimes in their disgust with child-oriented advertising, parents tend to think that marketers started this system of need satisfaction rather than it being a part of the cultural fabric (p. 91-92).

In general, marketers are finding younger generations to be more jaded consumers (Myers, 1994; Kellner, 1995). Children may be more jaded towards

advertisements because they have a different relationship with the mass media than prior generations. Rushkoff (1996 b, p. 181) remarks how the rapid changes in technology, e.g. VCRs and the cut and paste of word processing, have impacted children's perceptions of media:

> (Parents) bemoan the fact that their kids don't have attention spans long enough...The kids, on the other hand, rather than simply receiving media, are actively changing the image on the screen. Their TV picture is not piped down into the home from some higher authority-it is an image that can be changed.

Significance of This Study

Any studies regarding children's use of media culture would not only benefit art pedagogy, but curriculum theory as well, especially if the research involves what children have to say about their own lives as they experience it. Nespor (1997) writes about a vacuum in scholarly research in education about children and their uses of media culture:

> Yet in spite of the recent surge of interest in integrating cultural and pedagogical studies....young kids' uses of pop culture remain little-researched. Instead attention is focused on critiques of production, analyses of producers, or studies of young adult or adult users (p. 174).

Like Nespor (1997), I have found few scholars who actively pursue understanding the child's viewpoint when thinking about curriculum, and even fewer who seem interested in exploring the recent phenomena of a socially-constructed children's culture. As Nespor reminds us "such an adult-centric view may fundamentally distort our view of kids' lives" (p. 173), and hence our teaching.

We are dealing with a paradigm shift in all fields and this includes art

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education. Regardless of the discipline, postmodern curriculum theory can no longer afford to turn a blind eye to the impact media culture and commercialism have on our students and how this in turn effects our schools and our shared futures. What do we as educators "do" in this postmodern society? What is our role in regards to the media? Should we ignore it, censor it, stop it, or interact with and become a part of media culture? We are the creators and consumers of this society. Farber (1994) comments that media culture "shapes the possibilities of what does and might take place in schools, by way of its impact on how we think about such things" (p. 15). Although media culture is powerful and pervasive, Giroux (1989), Willis (1990) and others see media culture as a tool for pedagogy and admonish educators who "refuse to acknowledge popular culture (in the form of mass media) as a significant basis of knowledge" (Giroux, p. 3).

Definition of Terms

Media Culture Kellner (1995) distinguishes between popular culture and media culture because popular culture can include culture not based in the mass media, such as folklore, mythology, et cetera. For this study, I am examining primarily media-based imagery, though some symbols that the children use emanate from popular culture (e.g., hearts, aliens, sports). Kellner defines media culture to be:

> (the) systems of radio and the reproduction of sound (albums, cassettes, CDs, and their instruments of dissemination such as radios, cassette recorders, and so on); of film and its modes of distribution (theatrical playing, video-cassette rental, TV showings); of print media ranging from newspapers to magazines; and to the system of television which stands

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at the center of media culture.... is a culture of the image....is an industrial culture, organized on the model of mass production and is produced for a mass audience according to types (genres), following conventional formulas, codes, and rules... (is a) commercial culture and its products are commodities... (is) highly topical...(is) a form of techno-culture... producing new types of societies in which media and technology become organizing principles" (pp. 1-2).

Postmodern A skepticism towards modernist metanarratives such as rationality, linearity, progress, control, authenticity, authority and a singular truth, with a concurrent feeling of multiple identities, fragmentation, information overload, pastiche, boundary blurring and a crisis of representation (Lather, 1991; Pinar et al. 1995).

Formal vs. Informal Artwork Formal artwork is art produced by the children for specific art assignments in the art classroom. Informal artwork is art produced by the children that is not part of any school assignment, that is produced during free time in the classroom or at another site in the school or at home. Informal artwork includes art drawn on book covers, classwork assignments, and even pen drawings on children's hands. All the artwork that is included in this study is children's spontaneous artwork, i.e. the art may be for an assignment, but the assignment was not specifically about the mass media, corporations or popular culture.

Assumptions

My main assumption for this study is that people have an interactional relationship with the media. I base this assumption on my own experiences with the media, from my discussions with other people of various backgrounds,

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and from the writings of a few media theorists. I also assume that younger generations might have a different relationship with the mass media than children from the past few decades because of changes in the mass media itself, as mentioned earlier.

Limitations

This study will focus on one specific group of children and their context. It is intended to offer the views of a specific group at a particular point in time at a particular locality, rather than provide generalizable results.

Organization of This Study

Chapter Two is a review of the literature, and it covers five main topics of concern, all relating to how consumerism meshes with postmodern society, children's culture, art and curriculum theory, and especially that of postmodern art curriculum theory.

Chapter Three will describe the methodology for the study, explaining procedures for implementing this five-month qualitative case study and data collection and analysis/interpretation procedures.

Chapter Four will explore the findings acquired while in the field, and will have an analysis of the data from several perspectives: that of postmodernist, feminist and critical theories.

Chapter Five will look at the implications of this study for educators.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Organization of the Review

This review of the literature will explore mass media's involvement in postmodern times in these five areas: the formation of a consumer society, children living in postmodern times, postmodern artists' response to the media, and curriculum theory discourses about the mass media, especially in art education. All five topics are relevant in forming a conceptual and theoretical framework for making meaning of observations in the field.

Postmodern Society

Introduction

This section on postmodern society will be comprised of these issues: the questioning of identity, self, and relation with others within postmodern society, the media culture's message advocating high-tech/bioculture, and the construction of consumer identity, particularly identification with corporate brand symbols. These issues all have a direct bearing on children's media culture.

The self in modern times has become increasingly separated from traditional routes for establishing identity, such as by clan, work or religious affiliation, an affiliation usually obtained through ritualized passages (Giddens, 1991, p. 148). Giddens finds that this separation resulted from science, technology and expertise, which helped to sequester "day-to-day social life.... from 'original' nature and from a variety of experiences bearing on existential questions and dilemmas" (p. 8). Self-identification in these times has to come from other sources for many people. Further, due to the ease and speed of travel and communication, Giddens believes "'self' and 'society' are interrelated in a global milieu" (p. 32).

Kellner (1995) writes that there now exists a "rebellion against producing identity solely as an individual achievement in the contemporary era," and that this new postmodern identity requires an "increased emphasis on tribal, national, group, and other forms of collective identity" (p. 258). Both Kellner (1995) and McLuhan (1970) see a return to what they term as "tribalism." Although some of these social groupings are not new or peculiar to postmodern society, such as social grouping based on national, religious, or ethnic similarities, or through "identity politics" (i.e. identity through membership in groups seeking equal rights, like women or gays), what is different is the extent of these social groups to extend to the global level. This resurgence of self identity through these particular group allegiances may have been catapulted by television (McLuhan, 1970, p, 124).

In the contemporary social activities of the youth (such as the rave, the mosh pit and fantasy role playing games), Rushkoff (1996 b) views these groups to be distinctly different from prior group identifications in that these new

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social activities share a closer resemblance to the symbiotic relationships found within a colonial organism, such as in a coral reef (p. 157). Rushkoff further adds that older generations, who were more apt to seek self-identification through their separation from social groups, find these social activities of the youth to be disturbing and even threatening "because they [the adults] fear the accompanying loss of individual freedom" (p. 157).

Kellner (1995) sees a distinctive difference between the modern and postmodern self. Where modern self-identity "was a serious affair involving fundamental choices that defined who one was (profession, family, political identifications)," the postmodern identity is instead more "a function of leisure and is grounded in play, in gamesmanship, (and) in producing an image" (p. 242). Both Kellner (1995) and Gergen (1991) find this postmodern identity to be more fluid because of its playful nature, and therefore alarming. Kellner notes that this new postmodern identity can become no more than a constant game, a game with a price, that of anxiety, for "when one changes one's images and style frequently, there is always anxiety concerning whether others will accept one's changes and validate through positive recognition of one's new identity" (p. 245). Unlike Gergen, Kellner does see the postmodern self's "emancipatory possibilities" because postmodern identities "constructed in media culture and society usually goes *against* dominant conventions and morality," in that these postmodern selves tend to be ambivalent, fluid, multiple and defy traditional classifications of "goodness" and "badness" (p. 245).

If we look at the postmodern self as tied to group allegiances, then the absence of an individual identity may be unnecessary, for to belong to a "tribe requires no private identity and seeks none" (McLuhan, 1970, p. 72). What could be more frightening for some is self-identification being constructed from mass media messages and commercial products, an identification in a social

group headed by corporations (McLuhan, p. 54), whose interests in the
individual are questionable at best.

Media Culture Becomes the Dominant Culture

Media culture has become the cultural materials and resources for many
not only because of its accessibility and affordability, but, as Rushkoff (1996 b)
says "The reason certain images and totems (in mass media) become
pancultural symbols is that they resonant strongly with many different people"
(p. 149).

Postmodern media culture differs from that of just two decades ago in its
advocation of merging high-tech with biology, its permeation into mainstream
culture, and its incessant packaging of purchasable "selves."

High-Techno/Bioculture

One reason postmodern media culture may be distasteful to some
people is because one idea it proposes is the notion that technology can
express rather than stifle the course of nature, and that technology and nature
should no longer be viewed as separate and at odds (Rushkoff, 1996 b, p. 81).
An example of this, according to Rushkoff, is the current fashion of tattoos and
body piercing, which not only has a "tribal" appearance to it, but also physically
displays technology's coevolution with the human body. Rushkoff further spec-
ulates that young people who have adorned their body in this manner may be
more prepared to incorporate such technological implements such as elec-
trodes (p. 141).

Besides the resurgence of tattooing and body piercing in American
youth, Rushkoff (1996 b) notes a strong interest in Japanese film-making and

animation has newly sprung up in young American media culture. In particular, a prominent subject in Japanese animation is this seemingly unnatural marriage of humans with technology, which Rushkoff found utterly amazing because "it was the Japanese, more victimized by technology than any other culture in history, who in their sci-fi media came up with a coevolutionary model of human beings and technology" (p. 81). This merging, though, can be deadly mix without "an accompanying development in human interaction" (p. 94).

Manufactured Culture

Another "unnatural" union is that between culture and commerce. The two have long been connected, but not to the extent that they have become in recent times. Mainstream culture, as experienced by many, has become increasingly the products of media producers and marketers, a mainstream culture that is purchasable instead of socialized through traditional institutions and avenues, such as schools, churches and the family. Most of the criticisms that I have come upon about the media culture stem from this hate/fear relationship with the market, where marketers assumedly control the puppet strings of both the media producers, who feel constrained by what the advertisers will endorse, and the "masses," who have only a lifetime of manipulative deception to endure. One criticism from the 1960s reads:

> (the talented person working for the media) has become a serf. He is no longer manipulating a medium for his own expressive purposes and freely exploratory thoughts about life. Instead, the medium is manipulating him. Behind it stands the marketplace campaign, dictating what particular illusion he is to instill in the public's mind, and he obediently does this by playing upon the public's yearnings and anxieties...That many talented people do this gladly and willingly does not in any way

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alter the enslavement...Euripides, Marlowe and Balzac were free men compared to the writer preparing a program for a TV network (Finkelstein, 1968, p.72).

The hope is that behind the glitz and glitter an "authentic" culture resides. One critic found that despite the "mass advertising campaigns, the thick streams of manufactured novels, the tawdry songs, and the vacant-minded motion pictures," occasionally a purer, truer form of culture persists, works of "independence, imagination and a sense of reality and humanity appear, which the people welcome" (p. 120).

The Construction of Consumer Identity

I find the whole notion of an identity based on consumerism very intriguing. At first glance, the idea that what T-shirt you wear, or what brand of macaroni and cheese you consume would be a preposterous and trivial approach to discussing something as deep and abstract as an identity or a self. Something so inconsequential as a Coca-Cola becomes connected to feelings of stability, community, and friendliness. In the past, one would associate these qualities with a church, a neighborhood or a family. Arnold (1992) writes:

> Today's great brands are personalities, as intrusive in our culture as film stars, sports heroes, or fictional characters. Clint Eastwood, Coca-Cola, Boris Becker, Kodak, Madonna, IBM and Donald Duck are equally well known....Brands are recognized and 'understood' on an emotional level, in a way that most of their founders would find astonishing (p. 2).

Some theorists are particularly alarmed at the prospect of the consumer identity and its potentiality of multiple selfhood, a concoction embodying the "dark side" of postmodern society, an identity which when applied to children

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can be a very disturbing thought. However, our present conception of consumer identity could not exist without several other preexisting conditions. First is the general acceptance of the belief that we can change who we "are" to fit a certain context, thereby offering the possibility of multiple selves. Views about self-presentation were already changing by the late 19th century. Kasson (as quoted in Featherstone, 1995) notices a shift in etiquette books:

> ...from proclaiming the virtues of moral character to acting as guides for individuals who must learn to read and portray techniques of self-presentation in a complex urban environment with the ever present possibility of deception. The perception of the self as a series of dramatic effects, of learned techniques as opposed to inherent good moral characteristics, leads to a problematization and fragmentation of self (p. 69).

The idea of multiple selves, although not a new concept, seems to have escalated exponentially in the postmodern era, an era characterized by a "disorienting melee of signs and images, stylistic eclecticism, sign-play, the mixing of codes, depthlessness, pastiche, simulations, hyperreality, immediacy, (and) a melange of fiction and strange values" (Featherstone, 1995, p. 76). Featherstone further comments that "these experiences are generally held to take place within the context of consumer culture leisure" (p. 76). Featherstone (1995), Gergen (1991), Baudrillard (1995) and Jameson (1995), all notable doomsayers of postmodern society, predict a meaningless, hopeless pastiche society where superficial people play deceptive mindgames. They are all concerned with "fragmentation," where people jump helter-skelter from reality to virtual reality with utter abandonment. Baudrillard, particularly pessimistic, states that this new "'as if' world is of course heightened by the experience of television and the ways in which it can collapse time and space" (as quoted in

Featherstone, 1995, p. 76). They all blame the technological advances in the media monster, an archetypal Godzilla, which enable it to barrage helpless, powerless people with signs and images (Featherstone, p. 77). Fredric Jameson views the identity or self to be solid until it has the unfortunate mind-blowing experience of viewing television. He sees a "breakdown of (an) individual's sense of identity through the bombardment of fragmented signs and images which erode all sense of continuity between past, present and future, all teleological belief that life is a meaningful project" (as quoted in Featherstone, 1995, p. 43). Baudrillard cheerily adds to Jameson's observation when he writes "we live in a depthless culture of floating signs and images in which 'TV is the world', and all we can do is watch the endless flow of images with an aestheticized fascination and without possible recourse to moral judgements" (Featherstone, p. 43).

Attaching Identity to a Brand Symbol

Despite this attack on commercialized signs (partly provoked by a fear of contamination by a purchased symbol of identification), and the proliferation of these signs, I really do not think there is that much differentiation of selves resulting from the market because a dull sameness of messages and state-ments exists in the choices for consumer products. Businesses, struggling to compete in a saturated and global market, are unwilling to put forth such a risky venture as creating new brands (new identities), and are instead resorting to extending their brands. According to Sir Allen Sheppard, the Chairman and Group Chief Executive of Grand Metropolitan PLC, "Brands are the core of our business. We could, if we so wished, subcontract all the production, distribution, sales and service functions and, provided that we retained ownership of our brands, we could continue to be successful and profitable" (Stobart, 1994, p.

85). These brand extensions need to appear as offshoots of the original so that they will sell. Marketers rely on "harmonization," that is the "systematic and consistent application of designs, features and graphics", with the most important of these being "the standardisation of the graphic form of the brand name" (p. 53).

These brand extensions give an illusion of catering to the multiple self, but the differences are too subtle (e.g., unscented, no caffeine, with long sleeves) to make any significant statements about one's identity. The brand extensions imply customization to fit the individual consumer, but these extensions are only tailored to fit a larger target market. John Murphy, Chairman of Interbrand Group PLC, remarks about this apparent paradox of the standardization and the customization of brands:

> ...international brands take advantage of market overlaps, cross-border advertising, increased travel and the benefits afforded by increased scale; they also afford major companies a coherence and focus to their international affairs which would be impossible with a proliferation of more focused brands...local brands can be closely adapted to particular needs, take advantage of niche opportunities and can be flexible and highly adaptable. We therefore see two apparently contradictory tendencies continuing to operate together and we anticipate, as a result, a constant enrichment of the branding landscape (as quoted in Stobart, 1994, p. 253).

What are the perceptions of the marketers who have been a driving force behind this new consumer society? Are they really running the show? According to them, the consumer is behind the wheel, driving pellmell, and the best that marketers can do is guess where the consumer is heading. They realize that their relationship with the consumer is tenuous at best. Donald Keough,

former President and Chief Operating Officer of the Coca-Cola Company, says "it is difficult to imagine a more difficult and fragile relationship than that which exists between consumer and manufacturer" (as quoted in Stobart, 1994, p. 29).

Although marketers are often charged with covert deception through their advertising techniques, and are seen as the primary force behind the accelerating "McDonaldization" of society, marketers are just as perplexed at the changes in society. I found their perspective about the consumer to be very interesting because they do not seem to believe in their ability to persuade and manipulate people. Marketers are the first to say how much the consumer controls the situation. Some marketers compared their relationship of their product to the consumer as a sacred pact:

> A brand represents a pact between brand owner and consumer. Branding therefore is not a cynical activity imposed on the unsuspecting consumer against his or her will. Brands allow consumers to shop with confidence in what is an increasingly complex world. The brand offers the consumer a guarantee of quality, value and product satisfaction. As long as the brand keeps its part of the bargain the consumer will continue to support it (Stobart, 1994, p. 10).

In general, marketers are finding younger generations to be more jaded consumers (Myers,1994, p. 27). Pagano (in Myers, p. 56) summarizes the changes in the marketing environment from the 1950's to the 1990's. Advertising moved from a rational role with the customer to "inform and convince," to a more emotional relationship, where the customer wants the advertisement to "seduce and understand me." The age of the jaded consumer began in the 1960s, and the advertisers changed their tactics to include using " ironies, parodies, ads on ads, puns, and juxtaposition of competing discourses, in the

text and the images" (p. 28).

Today's children, caught up in this often confusing melange of corporate signs and symbols, of fluid selfhood, have greater access to the adult world than children in past decades "via the electronic media of hyperreality" which "has subverted contemporary children's consciousness of themselves as incompetent and dependent entities" (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1996, p. 17). Instead, Kincheloe and Steinberg argue, this new corporate construction of childhood does "not mix well with institutions such as the traditional family or the authoritarian school, institutions both grounded on a view of children as incapable of making decisions for themselves" (Kincheloe and Steinberg,1996, p. 17).

Postmodern Children

Introduction

This section on postmodern children will focus on these three areas: the historical formation of a separate children's culture fueled by the mass media, the child as a consumer, and possible characteristics of postmodern children, as evidenced in their choices of toys and other objects of media culture. Related topics included in this section are marketers' perceptions of the child consumer, the school as an emerging site for advertising, recent changes in toy manufacturing and its impact on children's playthings, and class and gender differences in children's perceptions and appropriations of media culture as observed by Dyson (1996) and Nespor (1997) in their research.

Formation of a Separate Children's Culture

The construct of "childhood" and the parents' role has been changing recently from being a time in which a child needs nurturing and protecting to that of a "parental surrendering of the child to the modern media, and the fragmenting of family life" which recalls "the 'abandonment' mode of the fourth to thirteenth centuries in which children were left to get on with it as best they could" (Fleming, 1996, p. 78). Concurrently, children have also been further separated from the life of adults, with more of children's meaningful and daily interactions being with that of their peers and with that of the mass media. Giddens (1991) comments that the elementary school contributes to children's sequestration from the adults' world, and that this division "forms an area of concealment within which private experiences are structured" (p. 152). Nespor (1997) also notes:

> Finally, in a time when kids' spheres of activity are more and more segre-
> gated from those of adults, popular culture is open to appropriation and
> use by kids interacting with peers, while school-based representations
> still often presume interactional systems containing both kids and adults
> (pp. 163-164).

Media culture has helped fill a vacuum that busy adults and an often indifferent public school system have helped to create through their neglect of addressing children's concerns. Media culture, besides being readily available for most children, is tied "more directly to kids' core concerns, issues such as gender, sexuality, race, violence, and power" (Fleming, 1996, p. 164), topics that are frequently ignored in the public schools because of their controversial nature. Whether or not media culture addresses these issues critically, or with mess-ages with which we agree, is another question altogether.

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One may dismiss children's media-constructed culture as too fad-bound to be worthy of any serious considerations, but "it is worth reminding ourselves of the sheer imaginative energy which children invest in the playthings of their mass culture; and it is very much *their* culture....children are playing a necessarily complex game with these objects" (Fleming, 1996, p. 37).

The Child as Consumer

Numerous reports warn about television programming and advertising aimed at children. None of these reports will be discussed for this study because most of these studies presume that children are passive recipients of television programming and advertising. Thorne (as quoted in Nespor, 1997) writes:

> [S]ocial scientists grant adults the status of full social actors, but define children as incomplete, as adults-in-the-making...[But] there is much to be gained by seeing children not as the next generation's adults, but as social actors in a range of institutions...Children, like adults, live in present, historical, and openended time....Children's interactions are not preparation for life; they are life itself (p. 173).

Kline criticizes academic and journalistic commentaries on childhood because they "seldom acknowledge the marketplace as a part of the matrix of contemporary socialization or devote serious attention to how children learn those roles, attitudes and sentiments that reinforce the consumer culture" (as quoted in Fleming, 1996, p. 28).

Only since World War II have children been perceived by marketers as consumers in their own right (McNeal, 1987, p. 28). Before the war, children were considered by marketers to be important in influencing parents in pur-

chases and as future adult consumers, but the child as consumer was not even a concern (McNeal, p. 4). Even as early as 1953, sociologists at the University of Chicago found that "American middle class children have allowances of their own at (ages) 4 or 5, and that 'these allowances are expected to be spent, whereas in an earlier era they were often used as cudgels of thrift " (from Riesman et al., as quoted in McNeal, p. 28).

Marketer's Perceptions of the New Child Consumer

The child consumer is big business, with children in the United States spending an annual four billion dollars a year out of their own spending money (McNeal, 1987, p. 62). In fact, marketers see no real difference between the adult and the child consumer after ages seven to eight (McNeal, p.8). McNeal lists several defining characteristics of the consumer which he sees as applicable to children: spends his own money, with some of the purchases being for himself, saves some money for future purchases, has brand knowledge and preference, has store knowledge and knowledge of prices, is bargain conscious, makes price comparisons, is aware of consumer role responsibility and shows awareness of other consumers like him (pp. 11-2). Little is known though about the process in which the child becomes socialized to be a consumer (p. 14). What is known is that the child often initiates this socialization process (e.g., helping parents decide what products to purchase while on a shopping trip) a learning experience where the child is "not just a passive learner, as he might be in a classroom" (p. 13).

What marketers can only speculate is that "at some point....material goods acquire social meaning...and children begin to see goods as being instrumental in achieving social goals rather than as simply filling a functional need" (from Ward, as quoted by McNeal, 1987, p. 96). Social uses for products

are tied with a child's interactions with his/her peers. The child accepts the influence of other children in order to satisfy a variety of needs (McNeal, p. 17). These needs would be that of affiliation (e.g. child's friends all play the *Sonic Hedgehog* game), for infavoidance ("infavoidance" meaning to avoid humiliation and embarrassment) and for achievement (e.g., Nikes will help the child run faster) (p. 18).

School Site as Market

A distressing trend arriving in the public schools is school time being used for commercial ventures such as Channel One, corporate sponsored curriculum packages, and commercial bulletin boards' placement in the school hallways (Molnar, 1995). Businesses and schools have shared an often dubious relationship since public schools' inception, but lately it appears that business has the upper hand in this tango. A main imperative of some large corporations has been "to commercialize the classroom (and other school locations), (and) to establish schools as legitimate sites for profit and saving" (Kenway et al., 1993, p. 327). Kenway refers to businesses disguising their advertising as educational material as "edverts" and calls them a "postmodern form of education" for they "implicitly acknowledge that youthful identities are formed, in part, at the intersection of the commodity and their image and that, given this, education may well be most effective if it recognizes that this is so" (1993, p. 328).

Postmodern Children's Culture

Changes in Toy Manufacturing
Both the separation of children from the adult world, and parents'

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financial support and maintenance of children's role as consumers helped open up children's lives to the media and the market. In addition, contemporary children's culture became steeped in media references in part because of the site change in children's toy manufacturing. Fleming (1996) extensively details the switch in the locations of toy manufacturing from Germany to Asia. Prior to this site transfer of production, there were technical innovations in the toy manufacturing in Germany that allowed for the quick production of cheaper toys, allowing greater access of toys to poorer populations. However the toys' imagery remained basically the same from earlier hand-carved wooden toys, with simple "playskool" stylization of people, animals and buildings. When the manufacturing shifted to Southeast Asia, the toys changed to depict Western popular culture (Fleming, 1996). Southeast Asia's toy market is truly a global market, constituting approximately 80% of the world's trade in toys (excluding computer games), and like other products made for the global market, its common frame of reference is that of popular culture (pp. 111-113). Further changes in the toy industry include the domination of the business by multinational companies, a change that started for the first time in the 1980s (p. 111).

Being now propelled by media culture, desired toys come and go at a fast pace. Fleming (1996) observed a cyclical pattern in this process:

Most toy ranges now have a 2-3 year lifespan. 70% of sales tend to be in the three months prior to Christmas. Comics, television series (usually animations), books and sometimes cinema films create a popular aura around a toy...the first nine months of the year will see a gradual consolidation of the total marketing strategy, with trade fairs in January and February for the industry to tell itself what it's doing that year; but the details will then vary depending on the balance among the different media being used or responded to (pp. 116-117).

Characteristics of Postmodern Children's Media Culture

Rushkoff (1996 a, b), Fleming (1996) and Willis (1990) believe that children selectively choose from the mass media, choices that may help provide answers for children on how to live in postmodern society. Rushkoff (1996 a, b) and Fleming (1996) note that successful children's television shows blend a curious mix, such as western *ninja* heroes fighting for global peace (whether on Earth or some imaginary locale). They derive their powers from non-Christian spiritual elements and from techno-biology. These stories are both highly predictable in basic plotline and yet nonlinear in the addition of many minor plots and complex in the cast of characters. The heroes use frequent media culture references in play and in conversation. Fleming (1996) adds that popular children's media culture "all take as their jumping-off point the bleakest features of a post-liberal reality: social disintegration, the isolation of groups defined by their ritualized difference from each other, an *anomie* that justifies the militaristic saviours, *ninja* experts and awesome technological solutions" (p. 147).

Rushkoff (1996 b) in his observations of the commonalities of the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* and *Tank Girl* and their distinct differences with past children's media culture of the 1950s, remarks:

> (they) dispensed with dualistic judgment altogether and trust their instincts to know who to beat up and how. The object of the game is to have as good a time as possible, eat pizza, make explosions, and surf one's way (cowabunga!) through life. In these comics, it is the villains who are so desperately serious, and the good guys joke at their expense. These comics celebrate what Batman lamented and Superman repressed: individuality, weirdness, inconsistency, openness and even mutation (p. 65).

According to Fleming (1996), *Star Wars* was a determining moment in children's media culture because it was "an unmistakable watershed in terms of a much more densely interconnected and interdependent global popular culture of imagery and artifacts" (p. 94). The pastiche of elements found in Star *Wars* can still be seen in profitable postmodern children's media culture: a "drawing together of imagery from earlier swashbucklers and war films, comics and pulp adventure fiction" (p. 94). Current popular children's television shows and movies are a "primer on living in a discontinuous cut-and-paste reality" (Rushkoff, 1996a, p. 124).

Rushkoff (1996b) discovered some underlying messages appearing in children's shows, messages about spirituality, magic, personal power and the dualism between nature and technology:

> Physical objects can have spiritual essence. Magic is superior when it is connected to the love and elemental forces. The monopolization, centralization, and control of human interaction or land and property is to be resisted. Techniques and technologies that are separated from nature or made into secrets become destructive forces. The ability to experience empowerment in the present moment, spontaneously, is worth much more than power derived from connection to a lineage or social hierarchy (p. 123).

Media Culture as a Source for Play

Children's media frequently pulls out media cultural references from past and present shows and movies from both adult and children's media and deconstructs it for the audience, usually to satirize the underlying messages (Rushkoff, 1996a, p. 125). For example, the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* "have been cultural raiders-gleefully pulling bits and pieces of American pop culture out of context and reassembling it for their own purposes-cowabunga-

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Howdy Doody Show, surfer speak, (and the) urban legends of giant alligators in New York City sewer system" (Lewis,1991, p. 36). Rushkoff (1996b) referred to this playfulness of children's media as recapitulation, which he differentiated from a humor based in random association:

.....a comedy of recapitulation where images and ideas from disparate sources are revealed as somehow relevant to one another.... Recapitulated images are useful in a chaotic culture because they instantaneously express a set of ideas that don't need a whole linear story to be comprehended. They are moments-shapes that resonate because of their self-similarity to other moments and ideas in the culture (p. 47).

Nespor (1997) made some interesting observations about how elementary children inserted adult media cultural references in their conversations. He found their references occurring spontaneously, and typically in non-classroom settings at the school (such as during field trips and at recess). He also observed that these references were often unconnected to each other in the conversations and came from a wide array of sources. Children used media references to establish status before their peers, by "successfully, that is, persuasively, before an audience of their peers, invoke, inhabit, or appropriate the meanings of popular culture products" (p. 184). He noticed that, unlike older-aged children, 9-, 10-, and 11-year-olds had a much more fluid relationship with media culture "messily using it in school and in their interactions with each other to get on with everyday life" (p. 184).

Communal/Global Concerns

Heroes in children's media culture work primarily in groups instead of fighting evil solo. These groups also have a distinctive anti-elitist, populist and libertarian flair (Rushkoff, 1996b, p.119). These teams often practice martial arts,

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borrowing from *Ninja* and *kung fu* imagery (Fleming, 1996, p. 141) as seen in
the *Power Rangers,* the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles,* *Xena the Warrior
Princess,* FOX's *Hercules,* and *VR Troopers.* Fleming (1996) sees the martial
arts as:

> dramatis(ing) the tension between individualism and collective discip-
> line. The *Ninjutsu* system has come to epitomise this tension. More than
> 800 years old, it is a stylised refinement of techniques developed by a
> Japanese sect of so-called 'stealers-in' or *ninja,* which arose among the
> peasants who would not accept the dominance of the noble warrior class
> or *samurai* (p. 142).

Why does Western children's media culture incorporate martial art
imagery? Initially, the switch in toy manufacturing from Germany to Southeast
Asia provided a mixing of Western media culture with that of the East, but even
though a market adopts certain imagery, that does not guarantee that it will
resonate with children. Other societal factors are at work here. Fleming believes
that *kung fu* imagery has "offered an alternative location for notions of work and
skill capable of giving a more attractive sense of discipline and collective
endeavour than those traditionally available (family, factory, firm, or army)"
(Fleming, 1996, p. 142).

These teams in children's shows do not promote models for mindless
conformity. The teams represented in these shows are not necessarily well-
organized or efficient. Members still stand out as individuals, and overall, the
groups are often viewed as "quirky, patched-up, temporary arrangements,
alliances and reconciliations" which "are better than gleaming, efficient,
'imperial' ways of doing things, and ...achieve success where individualism on
its own might have ended in heroic failure but failure nonetheless" (Fleming,
1996, p. 97).

Imagination Games with Chaotic Features

Children's television shows and games place heroes within an ever-changing imaginary culture whereby the heroes survive through astute observation and discovery, games "very unlike the older board games with pre-determined rules and highly inflexible procedures" (Fleming, 1996, p. 188). *Super Mario Brothers, Sonic Hedgehog* and other video game characters wander through a world towards hidden places and unexpected consequences, where actions are not rule-bound in any obvious way (Fleming, p. 188). Video games are not stories to be told but stories to be experienced, stories which become an "imitation of dream space" a world "generated, on the fly, by the game console as we move through it" (Rushkoff, 1996b, pp. 117-118). Such games, especially in the fantasy role playing games such as *Dungeons and Dragons,* invite children to use "whatever resources may be available in any environment, even a changing one," with magical, spiritual, or cyber techno-logies available and in any manner the player can conceive (Rushkoff, p. 129).

Fleming (1996) found the role of today's heroes to be very different from that of what transpired in traditional fairy tales. The "others" are not a supporting menagerie compliant to the hero's will, but instead constitute a complex imaginary "culture," one where the hero has to change and accommodate in order to achieve anything (Fleming, p. 100). The hero faces a universe which appears indifferent and random, but which, if the hero simply sits back and observes, he/she will be able to plug into its deeper sensibility, and discover the order that resides within the chaos (Rushkoff, 1996b, p.100). Rushkoff (1996b) finds that one primary message in children's media culture is hope for the future, that apocalypse can be averted by embracing chaos and being observant and willing to constantly adapt in an uncertain world.

Techno-Biology Mixed with Spiritualism

Another way that society can avoid apocalypse, according to children's media culture, is for biology to merge with technology. This mix may seem cold and unnatural, but there is a spiritual element present. Hasbro's *Transformers* particularly embodies this "complex mix of organic and mechanical imagery," located within "a future world of post-industrial mayhem" (Fleming, 1996, p. 125). Rushkoff (1996b) comments:

> When we look carefully at the reaction of younger cyberdenizens to their
> Sega environs, we find that they make no distinction between infor-
> mation and matter, mechanics and thought, work and play, or even
> religion and commerce. In fact, kids on the frontier of the digital terrain
> have adopted some extraordinarily magical notions about the world we
> live in. Far from yielding a society of coldhearted rationalists, the ether-
> eal, out of body experience of mediating technologies appears to have
> spawned a generation of pagan spiritualists whose dedication to tech-
> nology is only matched by their enthusiasm for elemental truth and a
> neoprimitive, magical worldview (pp. 109-110).

Rushkoff would disagree with Baudrillard and others that such virtual reality would produce people who would desire to reside in a superficial world detached from real objects. He asserts that technology has actually "pushed kids toward spirituality by inspiring a need to reconnect to a more romantic physicality and by provoking a willingness to participate more directly in games and rituals" as expressed in "fantasy role-playing, totemic card games, macabre live-action antics, and even some genuine bloodletting" (1996b, p. 125). In his observations of children's interactions with media culture, he surprisingly discovered that "the more technologically mediated a kid's lifestyle, the more he longs for contact with physical reality, and the more he values real objects for

their authenticity" (1996a, p. 110).

Complex Open Ended, Nonlinear Narrative

Successful children's movies, television shows and comics rely on characters acting predictably in front of a cast of many, caught in a complicated web of crossover plots. These narratives require a demanding attention to details in order to understand the relations between all the characters (Fleming, 1996, p. 121). Rushkoff (1996) and Fleming (1996) both note an ultimate refusal of narrative closure in these popular stories. Some of these, like the videos on MTV, have no apparent narrative at all. To the uninitiated adult observer, the images in these texts appear random and mindless, an unwelcome chaotic barrage on the senses.

Rushkoff (1996b) compares this form of narration in children's media culture and in MTV to that seen in *Pulp Fiction.* This film and children's media culture in general addresses what children can do when bombarded with seemingly random imagery. The more adult (and modernist) approach is to order the imagery so that the images tell the story one wants to hear. However, postmodern children would handle this differently. They would simply "accept that there is no sense to the sequential progression of the images" and would instead choose to surf "through life accepting the responsibility of self-determinism and the grace of nonlinear experience" (1996b, p. 100).

Class Differences Within Children's Culture

Do class differences exist in children's perceptions and appropriations of media culture? Dyson (1996) found that middle-class children also played with cultural material from the popular media, but by the third grade, "they distanced

themselves from that material in official school contexts" (p. 491). Dyson agreed with Buckingham's findings that middle class children are not necess-arily more critical or even more televisually literate than working class children, but that they were more apt to deny their associations with media culture as means to define "their own class position....that is, their own difference from others" (1996, p. 491).

Gender Differences Within Children's Culture

Much has been written about the gender inequities existing in children's toys and shows, and the potentially negative messages these may send to children. Much of this research comes from an adult's perspective, and not from children's perceptions and use of the media. Dyson (1996) and Nespor (1997) detected gender differences in their observations of children interactions. These interactions showed girls actively resisting the stereotypes portrayed in the media, and boys reading gender messages not inherent in the media itself. The mass media was manipulated for social purposes, such as to "antagonize others as well as attract them...interest of affiliating with other boys...social processes of affiliation, resistance, distancing, and negotiation" (Dyson, p. 479). The boys would use and distort media to tease the girls, e.g. referring to female superheroes as "babe" or "fox" and wanting only slender, well-dressed and White girls when girls would be asked to play the characters (p. 481). Dyson found that "even when the boys wrote about the X-men, a superhero team that includes strong, distinctive women, they seldom included female characters" (p. 481). The girls would object to such restrictive stereotypes, but both found the stereotypes of tough guys and weak females as "entertaining, and sometimes amusing, play material" (p. 481). Nespor (1997) thought that girls' use of media

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culture was more complex than that of the boys (but he does not explain this in depth), and that girls' public uses of popular culture seemed to depend on the boys' presence (p. 189).

Postmodern Art

Introduction

This section examines some of the profound changes in the present artworld, as it shifted from the modern to the postmodern paradigm. My reasons for including this section is because postmodern art addresses similar issues as children's media culture, issues which also seem to be relevant to children. Current art curriculum, as represented by the prominent DBAE movement (Discipline-Based-Art-Education), generally ignores postmodern art and children's interests, seeking instead to transmit knowledge about adult-approved Eurocentric artworks and perpetuate modern art's tenets. Quite opposite of modern art's credo, postmodern art is more of a social/communal activity, values representation of society over personal self-expression, freely borrows from media culture, challenges originality as a central premise to define artwork, and cynically views art institutions as political oppressors and maintainers of the economic status quo.

Art as a Social/Communal Activity

Postmodern art wrestles with the issue of the self's formation, placement and relations with others within society. The artist's self fluctuates in "an arena of shifting psychosociocultural identification" (Sandler, 1996, p. 359). Whereas

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modern artists relied on "an extraordinary confidence on the part of the individual artists in their own genius, a confidence that they are revealing some profound truth and that they are doing it for the first time," postmodern artists "exist in a society that doesn't need new discoveries, a society that exchanges information, that correlates all possible languages [all of which have already been worked out] and establishes interrelationships between them" (Sandler, pp. 356-357).

Postmodern artists see themselves as products of society, not separate from it. Bruce Wallis, an art critic, mentions the reframing of the modernist question of "What do I, as a creative individual think? What am I feeling? And how do I construct the world?" to become the postmodernist question, "How does the world construct me?" (Sandler, 1996, p. 338). Modern artists' lofty goal to produce timeless works divorced from the social context has changed to art's ability to describe the artist's relationship "to her or his context through the struggle to make meaning, and in so doing we get a glimpse of the life of the people who shared that meaning" (Sandler, p. xxvii).

Postmodern art re-acknowledges art's place within its social context. If art is more about society and not as focused on that of the individual, original and personal self-expressions become devalued and lose their meaning. What does become important to the artist is how society chooses to represent itself. Baudrillard (1995) comments "perhaps we ought to treat all present-day art as a set of rituals, and for ritual use only; perhaps we ought to consider art solely from an anthropological standpoint, without reference to any aesthetic judgement whatsoever" (p. 17).

Art as Self-Expression is Replaced by Art as Representation

The postmodern artist plays with the complexity of images and texts through which a society represents itself, especially those images and texts which have become so common and ingrained as to be accepted without question (Sandler, 1996, pp.333-334). Jacob Bercovitch, a cultural critic, further defines this representation to include society's "interlinked ideas, symbols and beliefs by which a culture...(uses) to justify and perpetuate itself; the web of rhetoric ritual, and assumptions through which society coerces, persuades and coheres" (Sandler, p. 340).

Art from representation is often alarming to those viewers accustomed to and wanting to see artwork that displays the artist's "authentic and deep emotions," since apathy and indifference can be a characteristic feature of artwork intended to represent society. Marcel Duchamp, considered one of the fore-runners of postmodern art, proclaimed a mass produced bottle rack as art in 1913, one of his many "readymades" that proved problematic for the modern artworld's establishment due to his lack of involvement in the art process and an absence in his personal feelings about the bottle rack. A number of postmodern artists since seem almost wary of attempts by others to interpret the emotional meaning underlying their work. Richard Prince says of his own work:

> I live in the world. I live in 1988. It comes from doing cartoons. It comes from wanting to put out a fact. There's nothing to interpret. There's nothing to appreciate. There's nothing to speculate about. I wanted to point to it and say what it was. It's a joke (as quoted by Sandler, 1996, p. 328).

Media Culture as a Source for Art

Postmodern artists recognize and react to the mass media's pervasive barrage of images, unlike modern artists who, for the most part, treated the mass media with notable disdain. European artists have been especially critical of American postmodern artists, who are felt to be distinctly "preoccupied with the mass media and consumer society" to the point of even employing "mechanical or nonpainting techniques associated with the mass media" (Sandler, 1996, p. 284).

Singularly relevant to children's lives in postmodern society is the questioning of authentic experience and reality in a consumer society. Marvin Hieferman, a curator, comments that artists respond to the prevalent media culture like anyone else, with mixed emotions of "being critical, ambivalent and awestruck" (as quoted in Sandler, 1996, p. 321). Sandler writes that those artists who "were impelled to investigate and interpret the ubiquitous mass media and their experience of it appropriated mass media techniques and images as their artistic language" (Sandler, p. 321). As one postmodern artist, Thomas Lawson, says:

> ...the insistent penetration of the mass media into every facet of our daily lives has made the possibility of authentic experience difficult, if not impossible. Our daily encounters with one another, and with nature, our gestures, our speech are so thoroughly impregnated with a rhetoric absorbed through the airwaves that we have no certain claim to the originality of any one of our actions. Every (action) echoes down a never-ending passageway of references to advertisements, to television shows, to movies-to the point where we no longer know if we mimic or are mimicked (from Sandler, p. 319).

Douglas Crimp adds:

> To an ever greater extent our experience is governed by pictures in
> newspapers and magazines, on television and in the cinema. Next to
> these pictures firsthand experience begins to retreat to seem more and
> more trivial. While it once seemed that pictures had the function of
> interpreting reality, it now seems that they have usurped it...we only
> experience reality through the pictures we make of it. They have become
> our reality. It therefore becomes imperative to understand the picture
> itself (as quoted in Sandler, 1996, p. 319).

Challenging Originality

One way of understanding the image and its impact on our perceptions of
reality is through the act of reproducing and removing the image from its original
context. While involved in this activity, an artist is not concerned with the mod-
ernist understanding of what it means to produce "original" artwork.

Media symbols have changed in their quality during the past few
decades. Media symbols in a digital and electronically mediated world,
Rushkoff (1996b) states, have lost their mass. Artists are no longer appro-
priating static images, with an attributable material source. Rushkoff (1996b)
asks "What is an 'authentic' Nirvana CD? The first pressing? A signed copy?
Does that make the music any different? No" (p. 165).

Some postmodern artists are noted for their appropriation of pre-made
images in their work, such as Troy Brauntuch, Jack Goldstein, Sherrie Levine,
Robert Longo and Phillip Smith (Sandler, 1996, p. 319). Richard Prince, in
explaining his artwork, says "The pictures I went after, STOLE, were too good to
be true" (Sandler, p. 319). Prince sought to copy pre-made images as opposed
to creating original imagery. Prince, explaining the value he found in copying

others' images, says that one could make the image seem new through the act of making (copying) the image again (p. 327).

Art Institutions Viewed as Political Oppressors

Postmodern artists tend to view the art institutions, such as galleries and museums, to be oppressors because they have removed art from the everyday lives of most people both in their negating of the popular arts and in their pricing of most art beyond the range of most people's incomes. Some postmodern artists saw the mass media as a potential liberating force in the arts, especially through the mass media's use of copies and multiples. Gottlieb (1976) comments "The uniqueness of the work of art encourages speculation, which profits only dealer and collector; multiples will free art from commercialism" (p. 57).

Disgusted with art museums, galleries and critics, Buren, Haacke and other deconstruction artists sought to critically reveal the economics of art and the class system it maintained. Mass media could help artists free art " from its marginal, elitist position, become engaged in the cultural mainstream, and the way would be cleared for a raising of the mass consciousness" (Sandler, 1996, p. 380). Louis Lawler criticized modern art's haughty nature of being above commercialism. He asserted that modern art's destiny was to "end up domesticated in rich collectors' homes" (as quoted in Sandler, p. 406). Laurie Anderson sees the art institutions positioning themselves as arbitrary intermediaries between the people and the artists. Her hope is for American artists to actually find ways to finally enter their own culture, and she called for other artists to help realize this goal (Sandler, p. 419).

Naturally, the art institutions saw postmodern efforts from a vastly

contrary perspective, that postmodern artists have merely bought into the trappings of mass media and commercialism. Moore (1991) notes that "whereas modernist artists were wary of art dealers and their values, postmodern artists appear to happily accept commercialism and the great deal of mutually profitable collaboration with their dealers and gallery owners" (p. 38). Gablik, another critic, describes the post-modern artist as "addicted to glamour, openly aligned with the competition for money, status and power, allowing us to see how much avant-garde rebellion is already out-of-date" (Moore, p. 38).

Postmodern Curriculum Theory

Introduction

What implications does media culture have on education? How can educators be proactive? A major problem facing the American public school system is that it remains deeply rooted in modernism (Doll,1993, p. 284). Doll recommends that, in a society where all content has been put into question, educators should "question much of what we have heretofore considered natural or normal" (p. 280). School systems that resort to implementing a standardized curriculum can only maintain this stance for a short time in the postmodern age, a time distinguished by "hybridization, or dualism, or symbiosis, or ambiguity, or complexity" (Jencks, 1989, p. 60).

This section will initiate discussion on issues that concern media culture and some of its possible pedagogical implications for the elementary school age child; handling the information explosion, examining the portrayal of the elementary public school in children's media culture, becoming both media

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consumers and media producers, and redefining the role of the elementary school teacher in the midst of all these changes. As McLuhan (1970) observed, the TV child is a "problem to our 19th century educational establishment" (p. 258).

Media Culture and Its Possible Pedagogical Implications

All Content Put into Question

One of the distinguishing changes in postmodern times is the easy accessibility of a large body of information to virtually anyone. However, this information explosion has wrought one unforeseen consequence for many educators trained to be caretakers of established knowledge: the questioning of a single knowable "Truth" through "rational processes." All propositions of truth must now be regarded as time and context sensitive (Jencks, 1989, p. 59). Facts become recognized as only "interpretations" dissolving traditional authority.

Because of the information explosion, Jencks (1989) believes that the power structure in our society has been altered, becoming more of a cognicracy. Jencks states that the "Postmodern world is not owned, or run, or led, by any class or group, unless it is the 'cognitariat' which is big (about 60% of the workplace) and to "be so fluid as to be non-existent in terms of a traditional class with vested interests and ideology" (p. 47). Control has shifted from ownership to the "ability to manipulate knowledge" (p. 48).

Rushkoff (1996b) advises that, in order to do well in postmodern society, we must understand "what a world without hierarchy looks like," and learn how to navigate it (p. 170). Whether or not a postmodern society is one that has lost traditional class divisions or has lost all sense of hierarchy remains to be seen,

but for now, I think most people would agree that these are indeed confusing times, and something new appears to be happening, especially in regards to handling mass amounts of information. Sudnow (cited in Fleming, 1996) suggests that today's children are now living in an "age of missing information," where in order to handle an overload of constantly changing information, children must learn to exclude the extraneous, since pausing to consider may leave one too vulnerable (p. 188). Learning in an era of excessive information is through play, pattern, recognition and discovery (McLuhan, 1970, p. 118).

Public Schools' Image

Most discussions about public school portrayal in children's media are limited to describing the media's depictions of life at the junior high and high school. Portrayals of elementary schools in children's media culture go "underexamined (as a) source of influence with regard to the way people, including those who are directly engaged, do and might make sense of schooling in their lives" (Farber, p. 13). My observations of children's media that depicts children's daily lives at the elementary school (such as Nickelodeon's *Hey Arnold* and *My Brother* and on FOX's *The Simpsons*) often portray elementary school life as peripheral to the concerns of children. Time spent at the school is often in a dull and lifeless classroom where the true highlights of school life are interactions with one's peers.

Being Both Media Producers and Media Consumers

One of the more potentially liberating benefits of recent technological innovations is that "thanks to the media, computer science and video techno-logy, everyone is potentially a (media) creator" (Baudrillard, 1995, p. 16). As mentioned earlier, researchers have noticed that children see the media as a

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source for play material. Dyson (1996) recommends that this "assumption that cultural materials can be played with seems critical to widening children's access to cultural materials" (p. 493). Both Farber (1994) and Rushkoff (1996b) see that children's play with the media is their way of making meaning of their lives. Thompson (as quoted in Farber, 1994) writes:

> In the course of receiving media messages and seeking to understand them, of relating them and sharing them with others, individuals remould the boundaries of their experience and revise their understanding of the world and of themselves. They are not passively absorbing what is presented to them, but are actively, sometimes critically, engaged in a continuing process of self- formation and self-understanding, a process of which the reception and appropriation of media messages is today an integral part (p. 25).

Rushkoff (1996a) further adds that "as long as people feel they have no power over the images presented to them over the media, they will feel they have no power over events in the real world" (p. 24).

The Role of the Teacher

In what ways can the elementary classroom teacher utilize children's media culture as a pedagogical tool? One way, as Farber (1994) points out, is that the teacher can talk with children about "the familiar world and how it is represented in popular forms" (p. 14), e.g. how their shows, comic books and such portray school, the government, or life in the United States. These topics can be compared with actual events that are happening in the neighborhood to determine disparities and underlying messages that the media is sending. The children can become involved in a discussion about societal changes in the United States and their depictions in various television shows and movies.

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"Young viewers" says Rushkoff (1996 b) "also glean the changing attitudes toward issues like women's roles in the workplace, race relations, sexuality, and marriage...(which) amounts to a fairly complete education in modern contemporary history, and most important, a time-condensed recapitulation of the evolution of media" (p. 232).

To dismiss media culture is to commit a disservice to students, according to Kellner, because "media culture spectacles demonstrate who has power and who is powerless, who is allowed to exercise force and violence, and who is not" (1995, p. 2). Therefore it is imperative that "those immersed from cradle to grave in a media and consumer society...learn how to understand, interpret, and criticize its meanings and messages" (Kellner, p. 2). Kellner further warns that "the dominant media of information and entertainment are a profound and often misperceived source of cultural pedagogy: they contribute to educating us how to behave and what to think, feel, believe, fear, and desire and what not to... (consequently) the gaining of critical media literacy is an important resource for individuals and citizens" (p. 2).

Postmodern Art Curriculum

Introduction

Art education is currently dominated by a movement referred to as DBAE, or Discipline-Based-Art-Education, a movement heavily funded by the Getty Foundation, that prescribes a more traditional and "rigorous" approach to art education by reducing studio time so that art criticism, art history and aesthetics can be taught. Elementary art lessons in DBAE are usually linear, sequential, fact-based, teacher-directed and fairly standardized. Children learn about art

history by analyzing and drawing/painting in the styles of various artists Although recently the DBAE curriculum has started to include art from other cultures other than the art found in the museums of Europe and the United States, and has started to address gender issues, the DBAE curriculum mostly excludes postmodern art, children's experiences and media culture.

This section will first re-frame two primary elementary art theorists, Viktor Lowenfeld and Rhoda Kellogg, using Mead's theory of self-formation because: 1) even though nurturance and guidance of "self-identity" and "self-expression" are frequently touted as reasons for elementary art's place in the school curriculum, neither Lowenfeld or Kellogg explain exactly how self-formation and art relate; 2) both theorists rely on psychology as a way to analyze an individual child's artwork, but generally ignore socio-contextual factors in symbol meaning and production; 3) both studied children's art before postmodern consumer society and the media-driven children's culture and 4) both examine and interpret children's artwork from the lens of the modern artist.

This section will also present what art educators have to say about postmodern art education, today's children and media culture, from both those who ascribe to DBAE and those who do not.

Re-framing Lowenfeld and Kellogg's Theories Within a Social Context Through Mead's Theory of Self-Formation

Mead (1934) thinks that self-formation results from the use of spoken language. However while reading his concepts about self-formation, I saw a similarity between the processes of self-formation that transpire during the use of the vocal and that of the visual. I did not encounter any information about Mead's theory being applied to children's art, which actually didn't surprise me

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since children's art is generally disregarded in academia, except with Gessell and Goodenough mental tests in psychology. However, as Kellogg (1970) observed: "Children's art has major significance for psychology, education, and esthetics, and important implications for sociology, anthropology, and other areas of study" (p. 12).

Does a child develop a sense of self through the art process? To me, the answer is obvious (yes), but my answer is based on observation and intuition, and lacks a theoretical foundation. Two of art education's most notable theorists, Viktor Lowenfeld (1964) and Rhoda Kellogg (1970), mention self-formation in passing. However these art theorists stress the value of art for children because it allows children to express themselves. Although Lowenfeld mentions that art education's task is to "help individuals in their identification with their own selves," he doesn't specify how this occurs (p. 11). He simply remarks that soon after children depict themselves in their artwork, they depict others in their work as they attempt to relate to the other, and *viola!* people will live in harmony on this earth. Kellogg really does not mention art being used to develop a sense of self when she discusses early children's art. She believes that children's art is about children putting down on paper their knowledge about the world and their explorations with the aesthetic. Could Mead's theory be used to explain that children's active involvement in the art process does help the child in self-formation? Does the child, through his interaction with his own artwork, develop a sense of self ? Can a connection be made between certain noted artistic developmental stages (as described by Lowenfeld and Kellogg) with the stages of self-formation that Mead mentions? Is there any congruence between Lowenfeld and Kellogg's theories and observations with that of Mead?

Mead (1934) contends that only verbal language can develop a self. He says that the only way that a biological individual can become a "minded self"

is through being transformed by the agency of language (Mead, p. xx) because language provides a form of behavior in which "the individual may become an object to himself" (p.138). He adds that this communication should use significant symbols, i.e. symbols that draw out the same response in others as they do for the individual (p. 139). These responses from others become internalized, but since they initially derive from social interaction, even these internal responses to the other are deemed as social acts by Mead (p. xiv). Mead believes that the self results from this self-consciousness (or reflection) and this necessary self-consciousness does not come into being until there is language (Aboulafia, 1986, p. 3).

> However, one question that Mead (1934) wrestled with was:
> How can an individual get outside himself (experientially) in such a way as to become an object to himself? This is the essential psychological problem of selfhood or of self-consciousness...The individual experiences himself as such, not directly, but only indirectly, from the particular standpoints of other individual members of the same social group as a whole to which he belongs (p. 138).

I would argue that children use their artwork to see themselves as objects of their own experience in addition to internalizing the verbal responses of parents, teachers, siblings, and peers that emerge from their social interactions. Mead does acknowledge that "language would not have emerged had not the hands been freed from supporting he body and capable, through the juxtaposition of the thumb and fingers, of dissecting and reassembling objects" (Aboulafia, 1986, p. 6). The manipulation of objects with one's hands is, of course, a central method in producing art.

According to Mead (1934), if the "distinguishing trait of selfhood (is the) capacity of the minded organism to be an object to itself" (p. xxiii), then selfhood

exhibits itself as soon as children start to produce controlled scribblings (that is, the child becomes aware of his own marks and the boundaries of the paper) and names his scribbles. Kellogg (1970), in having observed thousands of preschoolers in the act of scribbling, writes "there is strong evidence that the child sees the paper as a unit and reacts to it" (p. 26). The child starts to attach names to his scribbles, usually from an adult's prodding to find meaning in the child's art. Sometimes the child's labels for his art make no sense to the adult, for example, a straight line representing a rabbit. At this point, the child is "communicating without significance," that is his visual symbol is not communicating the same response to the adult as it is to him (Scheffler, 1974, p. 158). The child, as a result of this social interaction, will later start to want his scribbles to make sense to others, and these scribbles will be transformed into symbols which will have significant meaning. Mead mentions how symbols become significant or meaningful by being shared, and during this sharing process, participation and communication transpire (Scheffler, p. 158). It is through this social act, of parents and others responding to the child's art, either by asking the child directly about its meaning or inferring its meaning, that the child's visual symbols become interpreted and agreed upon.

When the child is in the process of constructing his visual symbols, he becomes more aware of how his actions on the paper make certain types of marks, and aims to control his mark-making in order to communicate. Mead would say that the child is now "minded," i.e. "capable of taking an objective view of his own acts, and monitoring his behaviour in the light of their anticipated consequences as seen from the perspective of others who may be affected" (Scheffler, 1974, p. 159). At this time, the child's art enters what Lowenfeld (1964) termed the Preschematic stage. The child explores which visual symbols he wishes to attach to represent objects and people. These

symbols undergo frequent revision. The child strives to be "able to call forth in himself the response that his gesture is likely to produce in others, and moreover, to use such foreknowledge to control his own conduct" (Scheffler, p. 158). The child actively produces what Mead would call "significant gestures" or "symbolism" (Scheffler, p. 158).

When the child has formed his visual symbols, or "schemas," he will use these symbols repeatedly until around nine to ten years old, at which point his attention shifts to depicting what he sees instead of what he generally knows about an object or person. Lowenfeld (1964) calls this stage the Schematic stage. Lowenfeld remarks that "during the schematic stage the ability to share and understand other's feelings is beginning to develop" (p. 147). Typical characteristics of schematic art mirror this new awareness and reflection of Mead's "generalized other" by the child's depictions of space.

Children depict space to show what they know about their environment, but most importantly to show acknowledgement of others' perspectives and viewpoints. For example, children during this stage show space by means that are not observational, such as "baseline," "x-ray," "plan and elevation," "time-series" and "fold-over." The use of a baseline, a line drawn near the bottom of the paper, indicates not only where the ground is, but also serves as the stage for symbols representing people and objects. The placement of these symbols is not intended to serve as truthful accounts about what the child sees visually, but instead these are arranged to fit a story line about the interaction of people and objects. "X-ray," "plan and elevation," "time series" and "fold over" serve similar purposes. They are drawn by the child as a means to interact with this generalized other. "X-ray" lets the viewer see the inside of objects and people. "Plan and elevation" involves depicting multiple viewpoints, such as flipping up a checkerboard on a table so that the viewer can see the game pieces and at

the same time, drawing the side of the table so that the viewer can understand how the objects relate to one another. "Time-series" shows the viewer memorable moments of an event (usually social) that take place during a certain amount of time, e.g. the child will draw himself fishing with his friends at the bottom of the paper, then at the top of the paper draw himself playing baseball. "Fold-over" entails drawing a scene, like a street, so that when the paper is folded in half, the viewer can get the experience of seeing how buildings on both sides of the street face each other. When the drawing is not folded, half of the buildings are rightside up and half the buildings are upside down.

In Mead's stages, when the "minded organism becomes the object of its own reflection, aware of itself from the standpoint of a 'generalized other' the organism becomes a self" (Scheffler,1974, p. 161). He further comments that the mind's special capacity is " to see our own acts from the perspective of another" (p. 161). Lowenfeld (1964) believes "no art expression is possible without self-identification" since "this is one of the very intrinsic factors of creative expression" (p. 29). Lowenfeld elaborates:

> It is impossible to live cooperatively and understand the needs of our neighbors without self-identification. As the child identifies with his own work, as he learns to appreciate and understand his environment by subordinating the self to it, he grows up in a spirit that necessarily will contribute to the understanding of the needs of his neighbors. As he creates in the spirit of incorporating the self into the problems of others, he learns to use his imagination in such a way that it will not be difficult for him to understand the needs of others as if they were his own (p. 44).

Do children, while in this flurry of symbol-construction, create significant symbols? According to Mead (1934), all symbols are universal simply be-cause "you cannot say anything that is absolutely particular; anything you say that has

any meaning at all is universal" (p. 146). Kellogg (1970) found com-mon symbols that appear in both children's art and adults' art. The most prominent significant visual symbol she found common to art of all ages was the mandala symbol, which she signifies to be "a sign of the child's essential artistry," being "a link between the art of the children and the art of adults," a notable symbol offering "proof that adults share the esthetic vision of child artists" (pp. 66-68). The mandala symbol also appears to be the starting place to form the Sun symbol "which has a long and glorious history in art" and these both "appear to provide stimulus for the child's first drawings of a Human" (pp. 75-78).

Kellogg (1970) identifies age 5 to be a time of crisis in children's symbol construction because this is when the child's symbols are typically rejected by the kindergarten teacher, who introduces the child to art symbols (in the form of stereotypes) along with numbers and letters (p. 117). I don't know why teachers and other adults take it upon themselves to teach these symbols since the child can easily see these symbols virtually anywhere, in institutions and throughout the media. In general children's symbols, at best, are judged as cute and mindless, and at worst, something foolish that needs to be stopped and corrected, likened to talking back. Children's art does not need to be disciplined. It does not need to be restrained, altered or thwarted. Yet, as Kellogg (1970) notes, schools remain the primary destroyers of the learning process:

> The demand for a restricted kind of pictorialism in school art is one important influence that causes children to give up art or to do poorly in art or to succeed by restricting their art formulas to those which adults appreciate. Examples of learned formulas are those for elephants, lions, and dinosaurs, all being animals which most children copy directly from adult work (p. 157).

When a child feels he must use these stereotypes to succeed in schoolwork, his

artwork becomes mindless, habitual and unreflective. Mead (1934) says that habitual actions do not require a self (p. 135). Children, while they are engaged in the process of their symbol-making, are being reflective, they have a self. When they are copying the art of others, they are acting not as selves but more like animals, even if they are sitting in a classroom and are involved in a socially acceptable action that appears to be learning. According to Mead "the self is not necessarily involved in the life of the organism, nor involved in what we term our sensuous experience, that is, experience in a world about us for which we have habitual reactions" (1934, p. 136).

What about when a child draws the symbols found in media culture? Is this a mindless activity for the child? I would hypothesize that children freely choose the symbols from media culture to draw, whereas those that are taught by a teacher in a classroom are imposed on children. Although I have witnessed many times the crises that Kellogg (1970) talks about, where a child, upon being taught some stereotypical image like a lollipop tree, will stop drawing altogether, I have not yet seen children give up on drawing when they learn how to draw a media symbol, either by themselves or from a peer. The reasoning for this phenomena is probably that when children draw, they are not just drawing objects or symbols, but they are trying to understand their relationship with the object, the symbol and with others. Burton, in paraphrasing Lowenfeld, says " we do not paint and draw objects in our world, but we paint and draw our relationships with them" (1991, p. 35). Children's drawings reveal the "dynamics and growth of self-world connections" even one's connections to the mass media (Burton, p. 35). The stereotypical imagery, taught as proper ways to depict objects, is far removed from the child's own questions about his relationship to the world.

Kellogg's Modernistic Bias in Interpreting Children's Art

Kellogg (1970) thinks that children draw purely for aesthetic reasons, and that it is adults who erroneously want a name for every visual mark. However Kellogg's viewpoints on children's art are quite modernist in that her beliefs about the strictly aesthetic nature of children's artwork derived from her seeing children's artwork through the lens of someone who appreciates the goals of modern art (i.e art being stripped of symbolic meaning and only being about the elements and principles of design). She tends to cast children into the same role as the poor misunderstood artist who would be better off if left alone than be tainted with the interaction with nonartists. Kellogg is concerned over how social interactions can negatively affect children's art, but she minimizes the positive aspects as well as the importance of social interaction to create art in the first place.

Postmodern Art Curriculum

Postmodern art curriculum theorists differ dramatically in their opinions about the mass media and are generally hesitant over its incorporation into the art curriculum. Efland (1996) fears that if media culture gains entrance into the art curriculum, it may very well drive it (p. 55). Henley (1991) expresses the overall mood in art education at this time "I submit that the current post-modern view of child-art, in which the values of individuality and originality have been called into question, is symptomatic of the same insecurities and self-doubts about our field against which we ourselves struggle" (p. 22).

Besides a resistance to the mass media, some art educators are waging

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a battle against postmodern art and postmodern art curriculum theory. Wilson (1992) recommends that "the new art education should productively rechannel and employ the most desirable aspects of modernist art education" (p. 110). Hobbs (1993), disagreeing with art educators' exclusion of postmodern art, says "It is absurd that art educators embarking on a new agenda, one that involves imparting to students substantive knowledge about art, would knowingly or unknowingly dismiss most of the art of their own time" (p. 106).

DBAE

Supporters of DBAE (Discipline-Based-Art-Education) are the most resistant to media culture's infiltration into the art curriculum. Their position can be likened to "holding down the fort," defending it from their enemies, the mass media and public taste. Fehr (1993) writes "The take-no-prisoners schlock that constitutes today's mass taste is another testament that today's adults didn't learn much about art when they were children" (p. 191). Overall, supporters of DBAE omit children's concerns when deciding their agenda, for example, some of the questions raised by Delacruz and Dunn (1995), in envisioning DBAE's goals for the next century are: *"What kind of people do we want our children to become? What kind of world do we really want to live in,* and *What kinds of educational programs do we need to address these questions?"* (p. 52). For those in DBAE "Art for everyday life...(has) little credibility today" (Hobbs, 1993, p. 102).

Occasionally children's media culture can serve some use for the DBAE instructor but only as a means to "save children's souls" from the corruption of the media. Fehr (1993) writes that "(art) should be subject matter the young artist cares about...in certain situations the Ninja Turtles may do as well (as a masterwork). In developing students' taste, we must take note of where they are

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or we may never catch them at all" (p. 201).

Non-DBAE Postmodern Art Educators

Some of those not in the ranks of the DBAE camp urge art educators to "take an inventory of what it (art education) is doing presently and determine how well practices coincide with beliefs" (Beelke,1991, p. 9). Grumet exhorts art educators to "emerge from the temple of the fine arts to join the curriculum" (1995, p. 41). Sullivan (1993), creating a postmodern-based alternative to DBAE, which she calls ABAE (Art-Based-Art-Education) presents a reconstructed art curriculum that searches for multiple meanings and social connections, upholds an attitude of critical doubt, and listens to and respects multiple voices and multiple perspectives. The mass media is seen as an arena of possibility, offering new avenues for artistic exploration, such as in electronic and digital imaging (Madeja, 1993, p. 11).

jan jagodzinski (1997) criticizes DBAE for merely perpetuating a nostalgia for "an America that never existed in the first place but whose construction underwrites the entire Getty program" (p. 186). Like Rushkoff (1996), he believes that children's relationship with the mass media has fundamentally changed, and urges art educators to acknowledge it. jagodzinski writes "while art educators continue to teach a gaze aesthetic, praising the distinction between 'looking' and 'seeing' in their classrooms, reminiscent of the time and space of their generation, the baby busters live with a glance aesthetic, a continuously changing kaleidoscope of ideas and fashion which are analogous to the 'continuous' flow of television" (p. 192).

Specifically, children's media culture can be valuable for teaching nontraditional art material. Szekely (1991) remarks:

Snoopy pictures are replaced by old-master paintings as great art

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models on children's classroom walls. It is hoped that subliminal suggestions will emanate...to inspire kids toward higher ideals. If Snoopy has to go, however, there is a truly American art of cartoon history that can be put up to generate the interest of young art enthusiasts (p. 42). Szekely also sees how children's media culture can be used to talk about the nature of art and art history. He notes "What is new in designed objects such as toys, children's books, or prizes is related to ideas in other visual arts of the same period" (p. 43). Zurmuehlen (1992) acknowledges how children are learning "the conscious Post-Modernist contradictions and commentaries on aesthetic and cultural conventions to which adolescents and adults are responsive" (p. 14).

Summary

In this literature review I have discussed how children and their relationship with the media is active and interactional, and that children choose and alter the media for social reasons, in order to bond or distance themselves with their peers and to understand their society as a whole. As an art educator, I have examined what postmodern artists, curriculum and media theorists and other art educators have said about media culture. Regardless of what we as educators may think and feel about media culture, we should not ignore or belittle our students' experiences with it. Paul Willis (1990) warns that school-centered systems of representations "will become almost totally irrelevant to the real energies and interests of most young people and no part of their identity formation. Common (popular) culture will, increasingly, undertake, in its own ways, the roles that education has vacated" (p. 147).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This qualitative case study explored the dynamic interaction between media culture and children in their daily school lives. This five month elementary school case study consisted of observations of children's interactions with each other in the art room. Although children's drawings were the central documents, other artifacts such as toys, cards, magazines and designs on clothing were examined to see how children used objects from the mass media to create their identities. Furthermore, children were asked to make audio tape recordings of some their conversations in the art classroom to see how they used media references to establish social identification and make meanings in their everyday lives. These audio recordings were taped during the school day and on school property. Data was analyzed and interpreted through the theoretical lenses of postmodernist, feminist and critical theory.

Initial Considerations

Site and Sample Selection

Initial contacts were made with an elementary art teacher, Joan, in a school district in a lower central plains town of 40,000. Primary discussion of

this study was well received by this art teacher who was open to having a researcher in her classroom, and who found this study to be pertinent. This teacher and I quickly established a good rapport. She did not interfere/compromise my role as researcher because she understood/valued my position as a researcher. She has worked for the district for years and is established in the community. She was my primary gatekeeper because my observations, recordings of children's interactions and photographing of children's artwork came from activities transpiring within her art classroom.

She had been transferred to another school from when I first met her. The school where she now teaches serves a rich mix of students from various socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. Because she teaches art to all the students in the school, I had access to a large number of children (approx. 500 students) ranging from first through fifth grade, a sample large enough for data quality and credibility for this study.

Instruments/Materials

Instruments and materials for fieldwork included a tape recorder and a camera for photographing children's formal and informal artwork (some of the children's artwork has handcopied by the researcher to cut financial costs). No photographs were taken of the children. I also had one field diary, to jot down observations/drawings/maps and sociograms of the children and their interactions, as well as for any thoughts/opinions that came to mind that related to this study, but which were not empirically based. All instruments and materials not in use while in the field were locked in a security box.

Instruments and materials for off-site work included a word processor and computer disks. All fieldnotes, transcriptions, photographs, handcopies, and

audio tape recordings, when not in use, were locked in a cabinet in my office at Willard.

Issues of Entry

My initial contact was, as previously mentioned, the elementary art teacher. I then proceeded to talk with the school's principal and the district's assistant superintendent. I suspected that I would meet with some resistance from the adults, especially some parents (which I did not) but any resistance from some parents would not have greatly effected my study since I had access to an entire school for subjects. Based on Nespor's experience with the elementary students, I did not believe that the students would be resistant to my presence. I could foresee some students possibly misbehaving in order to see if I would discipline them, which is why I was only present with children with a teacher or aide nearby.

Role Management

Initial role maintenance came from assistance of school personnel in helping children to not perceive me as an authority figure. I was used neither as an aide nor as a disciplinarian. I knew that I would place myself in a potentially compromising position if I were to administer discipline and therefore lose my rapport with the children and invalidate my research. I was not alone with the students without school personnel present. I also was not attired as an authority figure, but wore appropriate yet casual wear, mainly T-shirt, jeans and tennis shoes.

For my research to be successful, it was crucial for children to feel that

they could talk freely in my presence and discuss their artwork. To optimize my findings, I tried to emulate my role as researcher on that of Nespor's (1996) stance:

> I was not 'leader', 'supervisor', 'observer', nor 'friend', I was simply a *context* for the kids. I was a marker for particular settings, situations, and activities that kids knew (p. 226).

Nespor (1996) found that the way he was able to achieve that stance was to surrender his role as an expert from the university, to be that of the village idiot. He opened up dialogue with the children by giving them the space to determine what they wanted to talk about. For his purposes (and mine) the formal interview or the informal one-on-one interview placed him in the role of the adult, freezing up the spontaneous nature of the children's interactions. He chose to not use that method to collect data. He writes:

> My point is that using conventional one-on-one interviews would have meant missing most of the kids' way of expressing themselves; they might never have raised the same topics that arose in the other contexts. For example, many of my data on popular culture come from the fourth graders' spontaneous conversations. Attempts to raise this issue in one-on-one conversations produced relatively short, stilted comments or expressions of amazement that I knew or want to know about such things (pp. 233-234).

Reciprocity

At this point, I am allowing my research to be available findings to anyone in the school and district who is interested. This includes the faculty, the school board, parents and even students. I think that these findings would be valuable to the school in providing a glimpse of children's lives, as expressed

by children, about their own experiences, perceptions and interactions with the media.

Ethics and Confidentiality

Since my research focused on the content of many children's interactions with media culture, I did not need nor care to identify children by classroom but through my assigning of common first names, by gender, and by grade level. I identified children by socio-economic class or ethnicity if any particular and pertinent information was revealed that was relevant to this study.

Although I preferred to hand over my audio tape recorder to the children in order to maximize spontaneity, in most instances I was present when the children talked into the tape recorder so that I could interject questions to clarify what they were discussing, to be present to observe the context of the interaction, and to turn off the recorder when the children's conversations no longer related to this study. Also, if the children had access to the tape recorder, they could rewind the tape and listen to previous conversations from other children. If a situation called for my lending out of the tape recorder to children (such as if two interesting but separate discussions were transpiring and I wanted to attend to both), I gave one group of students my tape recorder, but I would install the recorder with a new tape to ensure the confidentiality of past conversations.

If discussion of any serious deviant behaviors became the focus of the children's recorded or non-recorded sessions that I attended, behaviors that school personnel would want to know about, such as gang activity, child abuse, stealing, potential suicide or drug use, I planned to report these immediately to the art teacher. No incidents of this type occurred. Even though I was present at

most of the recorded sessions, and would turn off the tape recorder if the discussions revealed material of a more personal nature or about deviant behaviors, some of these comments could have been recorded when students recorded themselves without my presence. Any comments recorded that the school personnel should be aware of, such as the conditions listed above, would have, again, been reported to the art teacher, and any potentially identifying and damaging comments would have been deleted in the transcription process. However, I think that by being with the children only when the art teacher was nearby did eliminate most of such talk. Regardless, in my final report, I did not mention students' names or identify them in any way.

In the consent forms, I let children, parents and guardians know that all recordings and information I obtained from the children were confidential, and my manner in reporting their conversations kept specific identities hidden. I also let the art teacher know that I was not recording or evaluating her teaching or disciplinary measures as that was not part of my research, nor was any circumstantial information that I obtained used for evaluative purposes.

Any children whose parents had denied their consent to participate in this study or, even with parental permission, but had chosen not to be in the study, were noted and deleted from any recorded conversations during the transcription process. Regardless, children were able to refuse to participate at any time, and any of their requests for their artwork, both formal and informal, to not be photographed, was obeyed.

Concerning the fieldnotes and the recordings, those which were not being used while in the field were locked in a cabinet in my office, all materials under my care while in the field were in a locked security box, and upon completion of data analysis, all transcription material and fieldnotes were promptly locked to be destroyed through shredding within a year, with the

exception of photographs of children's artwork (which were left unidentified-as I was not interested in a specific child's work but in children's overall use of media symbols).

Research Strategies

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection came from full participant observation, fieldnotes were written to provide a thick description of the specific setting, and tape recordings of the children were initiated by the children. Other data came from photographs and handcopies of children's artwork and media symbols within their possession (contingent on their permission).

Managing and Recording Data

I observed all school day most Tuesdays and Thursdays, and elaborated on my fieldnotes and transcribed the recordings as soon as possible before 24 hours had lapsed between the observations. I color-coded my field notes to keep track of dates, names, and descriptions of settings, with maps and sociograms. I initially kept two separate field books, one to contain my observations and the other to contain my feelings/thoughts/questions/noticing of patterns that were from the overall experience and not from the actual time of observation. I found it more suitable to only use one field book due to the busy nature of the classroom. I developed photographs immediately, and sorted photographs according to media symbol or by grade.

Procedures and Time Line

I started observing in the school at the end of January 1998 and ended my observations when school let out in May 1998. My time in the school was dependent on school holidays, personal illness, presentations for various conferences and job interviews. When undue time was missed, I resorted to spending half days on Mondays and Wednesdays to maximize my time in the field. I was able to log in approximately 180 hours in the field.

Concerning procedures, which commenced upon IRB approval, I formally contacted the principal and followed any recommendations, requirements and proceedings that he needed me to attend. I did not need to talk to the faculty. Then I sent out consent forms to the parents, and began fieldnotes based on observations only of media culture use by the general student population. Nespor noted the wealth of information that could be found in these preliminary fieldnotes:

> You first notice popular culture in the school in its visible manifestations: shirts and caps with corporate logos, comics and cards passed about before school in the morning (p. 174).

Only after I received parental consent did I record children's interactions and photograph their artwork and other artifacts.

I then was with the students in the art room, recording spontaneous conversations among them whenever possible. I kept my involvement minimal, and I let students know that I was studying their media. I explained that my research looks at what they think and have to say about the media, such as television shows, video games, advertising, movies, popular magazines and music. I tried to keep their conversations their own, i.e. not have them feel like they had to talk about media every time that they were recorded. Conversation

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transcribed were those that included references to media culture, especially children's media culture, as well as that which had no media references, so that I could examine frequency differences for gender, grade, class and ethnic groups. My involvement in the conversations (if I was present when they occurred) would be to ask "Who is that?" or "Would you show me (some media cultural object or symbol)?" or "Why did you choose to draw a certain media symbol over another?" To begin an informal interview, I asked children what they wanted to talk about regarding television, movies, music and video games. To help them get started, I would ask them to talk about their favorites (e.g., what video game they liked to play). I tried to: a) not make children feel forced to talk; b) to get children to talk comfortably amongst themselves; and c) to get children to talk beyond "it's cool" or "I like it" (if I was able to do this in a non-directive manner). I answered any questions that children asked me about myself, but I refrained from talking about myself, except briefly, and only in order to make them feel comfortable.

If there were media culture symbols within the school, like Disney magazines in the library, or wall advertisements in the hallways, I tried to photograph or these images and tried to use these to stimulate conversation among the children about these occurrences.

If I felt it was relevant to bring in any non-school children's magazines or toys (to generate children's talk) into the art room I first obtained approval from the art teacher.

After school let out for the summer, I refined my organization of the data and began to formally analyze and interpret it.

Data Analysis

These were my three main sources of data. One source was photographs and handcopies of children's formal and informal artwork produced in the art room. I included children's informal art that they had produced at home if they brought it into the art room. A second source was transcriptions of children's formal and informal interactions amongst each other, in particular focusing on their dialogue about their drawings of media cultural symbols, their conversations about specific media-based possessions (e.g., Gameboy), and their use of media references in conversations not based on any media-based possession. The third source came from any photographs and fieldnote observations relating to children's possessions within the art room (magazines, video games, toys, cards) as well as children's clothing choices that featured media symbols.

Data Interpretations

After reviewing the results of the preliminary coding process I drew from Lather's notion of multiple tales (1991). I viewed data through multiple perspectives (i.e. realist, postmodernist, feminist and critical) so that the interpretations were more in accord with the complexity found in children's interactions with media culture.

Realist Perspective

The realist perspective explored these issues: a) the number of times certain media symbols were employed by children in conversation, depicted in their artwork and observed in children's possessions; b) media symbols differen-

tiation by grade, gender, socioeconomic class, and ethnic group; c) photocopies of these media symbols as produced by the market; d) photographs and handcopies of these media symbols as used in children's formal and informal artwork and e) any school-sanctioned media symbols residing in the school building. Also included is the symbolic nature of the constructed reality of children, a reality increasingly mediated by media cultural symbols.

Postmodern Perspective

The postmodern perspective examined changes in children's culture, such as valuing collective identity and communal memberships over individual autonomy, and the embracing of bio-technologies.

Feminist Perspective

The feminist perspective was used to contend with media images of girls and boys, the children's perceptions of/resistances to these portrayals, and differences in media use based on gender.

Critical Perspective

The critical perspective focused on the nature of the corporate involvement in constructing children's culture, such as racial/ethnic and class differences possibly found in children's interpretation and their appropriation of media messages.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Introduction

<u>Chapter Outline</u>

After spending almost half a year in an art classroom, I was somewhat stymied at the task of organizing the data that had accumulated into a meaningful and organized compilation. Lather (1991) succinctly describes my dilemma when she writes, "The ground I explore is that of a relentlessly heterogeneous reality, the irreducible particularities of which do not take well to dualistic categories" (p. 124). Even the semblance of order was "an act of power" (Lather, p. 125) for I was immediately confronted with the predominance of boys' voices and girls' silences regarding their artwork and involvement in conversations that pertained to this study.

Sorting the data into categories and neatly analyzing the data proved to be an arduous chore, so I have chosen instead to use the realist perspective, of what I saw and heard, as the overall framework of this chapter. I then interspersed the postmodernist, feminist and critical perspectives throughout the realist story.

This chapter begins with my initial ventures to Madison Elementary, my talks with school personnel and my introductions to the children. I start my observations with descriptions of the school and children's interactions within the art classroom. I then discuss the process of recording children. The rest of

this chapter focuses primarily on children's artwork as it is broken down into symbols from corporate/consumerism, the mass media and popular culture. Transcriptions of children's conversations are included as they pertain to the artwork being analyzed.

Life in the Field

Getting Access to the School

After receiving IRB approval (Appendix A), I returned to talk with the elementary art teacher, Joan, who remained supportive of this study. In fact she had kept some art work that the children had made since I had last visited, that contained corporate and popular culture symbols. She signed a consent form for her participation and another consent form for the school's willingness to participate (Appendix B). She gave me a copy of her class schedule, and it was at this point when I learned that some of the first grade classes were taught by a visiting art teacher (who worked at a nearby school in the same district). Because Joan's teaching load was too heavy, this other art teacher came every other day and took over some of the classes. I considered whether or not to involve this other art teacher in my study, but decided against the notion, since I would only lose complete access to one first grade class, and I did not wish to delay my research by any more complications while awaiting further approval. I only needed the principal's signature, but he was at a meeting in the administration building. Even though I insisted that I could wait, and did not wish to interrupt him at the meeting, the secretary had him paged at the meeting to come back to the school. Fortunately for me, the assistant superintendent, who was the next person I needed to meet, arrived with the school principal. The

principal introduced me to the assistant superintendent, and we started the process of establishing a meeting time. The principal signed a school consent form at this time (Appendix B).

At the Administration Building

I had some trouble setting up a meeting with the assistant superintendent. I was eager to get the approval situation all squared away before Christmas vacation, so that I could begin research promptly when the students came back from their break.

I felt tongue-tied and exasperated when I explained my research (school administrators usually have that effect on me), daunted that this man stood in the way of my completing my dissertation in an expedient fashion. I did not come off as a professional as I had hoped, but, regardless, the assistant superintendent was most helpful and supportive, and a district consent form was drafted and signed (Appendix B). I felt fortunate. Because my study was limited to the art room, and I would therefore not be interfering with the regular school curricula, I was able to avoid presenting myself and my study at a full school board meeting.

I do think that one reason that my study was accepted so readily by the assistant superintendent was because of the school I chose. This school, which I will call Madison Elementary, had a reputation in the school district for having some of the more rambunctious children in the town. Rumor had it that these children came from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and their parents and guardians were occasionally caught in questionable and possibly criminal occupations. I perceived that my research at Madison could, in a small way, give the school a boost in status.

To backtrack, before I chose Madison, I had originally gone to another

school in the district, which I will call Walton Elementary. I went to Walton initially because I had known the art teacher for a longer period of time. In fact, she had been at Madison the year before, and Joan had been at Walton. These two art teachers had switched schools, schools that were on opposite ends of the socioeconomic spectrum. Walton Elementary School is situated within one of the wealthiest neighborhoods of the town. When I visited the art teacher and principal at Walton, my study at the school was discouraged. Both the art teacher and the principal expressed concerns that the parents and guardians, who were so involved with their children's lives at Walton, might constantly interfere with my study. The art teacher also had observed that she had seen more symbols from the mass media at Madison than she had seen thus far at Walton, probably because, she surmised, the parents, being less involved with their children's lives at Madison, were less inclined to dictate and control what their children had access to in the mass media. (Joan had also made this observation, noting that the children at Madison tended to include many more symbols from the mass media in their artwork than she had observed during her years teaching art at Walton Elementary). I was advised to research at Madison Elementary instead, which suffered from the opposite problem-a lack of parental support-with the belief that my study could thrive better under those conditions. However, the consent forms soon became a point of concern. Even the assistant superintendent feared that I would have to fritter most of my research time reminding and pleading students to have their parents and guardians sign consent forms and proceed with the arduous task of getting these signed consent forms from the home back to the school, and from their regular classroom to the art room. The assistant superintendent expressed his further concern that these students at Madison Elementary tended to be more blase, and may lack motivation to even participate in the study. He told me that if I

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encountered any problems with getting consent forms back, that I was most welcome to meet with him again to work on this potential problem.

Process of Getting Participation/Maintaining Rapport-The Consent Forms

My next task was to motivate interest (shall I say, market?) my study to the children of Madison Elementary. Since I had to talk with all the students that Joan taught, I spent several days introducing myself to each class that came in the art room. I had access to seventeen different classes, with a total of 82 first graders, 66 second graders, 88 third graders, 73 fourth graders and 69 fifth graders. Having been a lone elementary art teacher who served an entire school, the large number of children were not a problem for me, and I became quickly accustomed to the dynamics of each class, recognizing students and learning their names. In fact the manner in which Joan taught and conducted the classes was so similar to my approach in the past, that I felt at ease in her classroom almost instantly.

Joan gave me the first few minutes of each class to present my research, that is, read my script (Appendix B) and pass out consent forms (Appendix B). Each class lasted only thirty minutes, so I tried to keep my presentation and any questions that followed as brief as possible so I would not interfere with Joan's curriculum. I soon memorized my script and opted for a more spontaneous presentation of my study, hoping that this more fluid approach would lend itself to more interest in participating, and hence more returned consent forms. To further hinder the loss of consent forms as the forms made their maiden voyage from the art room to the regular classroom, Joan suggested that I have the

students sign their names on their requested forms. Even though this took some time (especially with the first graders who were still learning how to write their names), it was well worth it, because forms left in the art room as well as in the regular classroom could be easily returned to their rightful owner.

Some of the children were confused about what a consent form was, so I related it to an experience I am sure that most of them could relate to, the consent forms used whenever their class would go on a field trip. I explained the importance of the parent's or guardian's signature, but some students, in their willingness to participate in this study, signed for their parents as well (which I corrected). I did eventually end up with a few returned consent forms whose student and parental signatures looked suspiciously too similar and childlike in script, and these children were exempted from the study without comment to the children.

When I presented myself to each class (and throughout my time at Madison Elementary) I wore T-shirt, jeans, and tennis shoes to distinguish myself as a non-teacher. This worked for the most part, except in a few instances which I will address later. While presenting, I purposely wore nondescript T-shirts so that the presentation would go as smoothly as possible. Later on, I would wear T-shirts that depicted alien imagery, X-Men etc. to generate conversation and gain attention of the students, (hoping to get their consent forms returned).

I soon learned that children were confused by the term "mass media" so I would try to explain it using examples of television shows, movies and video games that I thought they would watch and play. I noticed that the more examples I gave of the mass media, the more excited the children generally became about participating in the study. Using examples made me wonder whether a child, not liking a particular television show I mentioned, and thinking

that that show was what I was specifically researching, would sway the child's decision in participating. Also, I noticed while I was giving examples of the mass media, I often gave examples that came predominately from boys' media (*Ninja Turtles, Batman*, etc.). I hoped that the girls would still volunteer for the study. I did notice that when I gave examples of musical groups such as Hanson and the Spice Girls, the boys tended to loudly grunt their disapproval. However, within weeks I received 88 total signed consent forms, and these were equally split, 44 boys and 44 girls, with volunteers from each class. Even though I had tended to emphasize shows, etc. from boys' media, I may have encouraged girls to partake in the study because they felt a link with my being female. I did notice that in the first and second grades, I had proportionately more female volunteers, and from grades three through fifth, I had proportionately more male participants. I had only 3 total female participants for all three fifth grades.

In general, I found that most of the students were interested in what I was studying. Some classes in particular shouted enthusiastically their approval that I would be asking them their thoughts about the mass media. Some of the older children, particularly in the fifth grade, wanted to give me their consent and forgo the parental signature altogether, perhaps deeming themselves already old enough and independent from their parents. For the most part, the children were conscientious about telling me about the status of their consent forms ("It's in my backpack!") and when I could expect to see it (" But I promise I will bring it next time I come to art!").

I kept consent forms available throughout my time at Madison Elementary and found that almost everytime I audio-tape recorded children or photo-graphed their artwork, other children, seeing the attention, would come up to me and request a consent form so that they could participate too. In fact, at one recording with a first grade girl, I noticed another girl sitting at the table, who had

been intently listening to the interview, looked at me with visible tears in her eyes. I wondered if I had done something to upset her, and feebly asked if she would like a consent form too, to which she immediately nodded and grinned.

Some students, who Joan later described as natural leaders in certain classes, helped me without my asking. One fifth grade girl, who according to Joan held most of the power in the class (the boys were reportedly scared of her) reminded some of her fellow classmates, when they lined up, to pick up their consent forms left on the tables. Interestingly, this same girl did not choose to participate but made sure others did.

If a student had been absent, or had recently transferred to Madison Elementary, thereby missing my presentation, other classmates would inform me and would often explain my study to these children. One boy came up to me right when class was starting to let me know that he had been absent (I wouldn't have known) and that he wanted a consent form. I started to explain my study to him after Joan had finished with her demonstration for an art process, but the boy sitting next to the absentee one had already explained my study to him so well that the absentee told me in detail that he knew that if he chose not to participate one day, even though his parent's had given their consent, he could refuse that day and participate at a later date if he so chose. The boy sitting nearby then preceded to clarify how no grade would be given for participation and no classes would be missed.

Although most of the children wanted a consent form from me after I gave my introductory presentation, I did have a few refusals. Initially I was hurt by these refusals and found them to be discouraging. The group refusals were the most perplexing to me, that is, where an entire table of three or four children would refuse to belong in the study. One group of fourth girls refused, and after I presented I sat down and wrote these questions in my fieldnotes, questions

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about all the different possible reasons children may not wish to participate:

> Were they concerned about their drawing ability and I would disapprove of their artwork? Was it for reasons due to religious affiliations? Were the girls prompted by one of the boys in the class who had refused first and who sat adjacent to them? Is there a group leader among the girls who initiated the refusal and the other girls followed suit to show their allegiance/friendship? Were they unclear about what I was doing? Was it fear of the unknown that made them decline? Did they feel imposed upon? Are they people who are not into participating in anything, nonjoiners (with whom I can relate)? Did they fear they'd lose the consent form papers and were worried they'd get in trouble? Did they hesitate about trying to get permission from their parents-was that an ordeal? Was it just because I was still a stranger to them?

I only had one student, a third grade girl, who officially quit the study. I had not interviewed her nor taken any photographs of her artwork, so she may have quit because she was not getting any attention from me.

Because I was initially worried about not getting enough consent forms back from the fourth and fifth graders, I focused my efforts on promoting myself to these groups (and felt I was possibly experiencing some of the frustrations marketers may feel with this age bracket). I made a point of making myself more visible by spending as much time as I could with the fourth and fifth graders (instead of, e.g. examining artwork in the hallways), by roaming around the room (instead of sitting in the corner taking notes), by wearing my more flamboyant T-shirts with cartoons and superheroes prominently displayed, and by pretending to take photographs of artwork and by actually audio-tape recording the few children who had returned their signed consent forms. The camera drew some attention and the audio-tape recording peaked their interest.

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They especially liked seeing what a transcription looked like and seemed to like the idea that I considered their words important enough to write down. I soon was rewarded with more consent forms.

Joan suggested that I might need some consent forms translated in Spanish (Appendix B). I had several Hispanic students who had declined, and Joan, knowing their parents did not speak English, thought consent forms in Spanish might help persuade the children. I showed these new forms to the boys but they still declined. I would, though, highly advise bilingual forms to be written and available for research endeavors.

Children's Concerns About the Study

The children did express some concerns about this study. Upon presenting myself to a second grade class, I felt like I was confronted with a mini-IRB. This class asked me such questions regarding my methodology, such as "How will you know if we are participating?" (an issue of record keeping) and "What will you do with the photographs?"

Some children, when they were given permission to be recorded, were a bit disappointed that their identity was to remain anonymous:

> **What I do is I transcribe these, which means that I take what you say and I write it down in words, and then I just write down '4th grade boy,' so I don't have your name.**
> A1: You can't put my name on there?
> **No. Sorry. Can't do that.**

Only one child asked if he could have his artwork photographed but not be audio-tape recorded. In fact, being audio-tape recorded caused more consternation for some children. Photographing their artwork did not seem to trouble the children in the least.

A fourth grade boy thought I would be secretly videotaping him when I asked to audio-tape record him. His classmate (who I was recording too) spent

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time explaining to him that no videotape equipment would be used and that all I had was a regular camera for taking photographs.

Often when I was in the process of recording children, lengthy discussions would ensue about the research process itself. One fourth grade boy was trying to understand what a transcription was (I think he confused 'transcription' with 'translation'):

> A2:   Are you going to like write it in Chinese or something?
> **No. I'm going to write it in English. I don't know Chinese.**
> (several students want me to check, insisting they have given me consent forms)
> A2:   Are you gonna put like the pictures that I draw or something in the....
> **If I have where I see some of your artwork and I take photographs of it.**
> A2:   I got, I got um....
> **And what you can do if you want is you can bring some artwork for me to photograph.**
> A2:   Cool. So that means if I draw something tonight, I can bring it and give it to you? (boy at table 'yeeeessssss') Cool.

The children were also curious about where this information, that I was collecting about them, would be eventually, because they expressed an interest in seeing this research once it had been completed. One common misconception among the younger children was that the information that I was collecting was for a television station:

> One boy (talking into microphone, a question directed at me): What channel is this going to be on that?
> Another boy: Ask her what channel that is gonna be on?
> Third boy: (Insistent to one boy): Ask her. Ask her! Don't be embarrassed.
> (A minute later, one boy talks loudly into the microphone): What channel is this p-le-a-s-eee!
> Another boy: What channel is this gonna be on?
> Third boy: I don't know what channel this is gonna be on.
> (in background) **This isn't gonna be on any channel.**

Older children wanted to know what paper this information would appear in so

they could read it:

> F: Are you gonna put it in the school paper?
> **This is not a school paper, this is a dissertation. No, this will not be in a newspaper, will not be on television....**
> G: It will be written out of everything that you say.
> **I can show it to you some time if you want to see what it looks like....well its called a dissertation and right now its at 80 pages, and by the time I get done with this, it'll probably be around 300 pages**
> F: Are you gonna show the school it too? The paper?
> **I'll be showing it to a committee, which is, it's 5 professors, and they'll all read it, and they'll read what you have to say, except for I won't be putting on there** (F's real name) **said such and such, you'll just be like 'boy, 4th grade'** (we both laugh).

Children's Reactions to Me

The children were incredibly helpful and polite to me during my time at Madison Elementary. They would make a point of acknowledging me by saying hi or waving at me as they came into the art classroom. Several even wanted hugs. Since I usually sat near the pencil sharpeners, the children would start conversations with me while they were waiting in line to sharpen their pencils. On the days that I was not at the school, the children would pester Joan about my absence. Joan told me once "You're a celebrity." I even had a student recognize me outside the school. I had stopped to eat lunch at a local taco stand. The student came in with her parents, and once she saw me, she kept trying to get her parents' attention to point me out to them. They appeared not to be listening to her as they were intent in picking up their lunch order. Near the end of the school year, a fourth grade boy asked me "Will you be here next year?"

Sometimes the children would assist me in interviewing. Their questions usually prompted superficial responses from the interviewees, since their questions were limited to the interviewee listing favorites (a tactic they had heard me use to initiate the interviews), but I allowed their help in questioning to

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continue because I liked that they were taking an active part in the research:

> (student at table: What's your favorite TV show?)
> **You're talking about they're (Nike advertisements) action-packed, there are some interesting advertisements like for Reebok.**
> (girl at table: What's your favorite talk show?)
> B2:   My favorite talk show is...
> **You watch talk shows B2?**
> B:2   I watch the late late show.
> (children at table continue to barrage B2 with questions: Do you have HBO? Who's your best friend?)

And in a few cases, children would start to interview me:

> O: Have you ever seen The Craft?
> **Yes. That's the one with those three teenagers, witchcraft and....**
> O: Four. Have you seen Sabrina the Teenage Witch?
> **I haven't really watched it. That's on Friday nights right?**
> O: Yeah.
> **Isn't that that same girl who plays Sabrina, she's on Nicklelodeon's Clarissa?**
> both: Yeah.
> **Okay. That's what I thought, that she was on that one.**
> O: On one, two, it was on three, I'm not, a family reunion or relative's nightmare, there was this girl who played Clarissa on there. She even sounded like Clarissa.

To step into the role of researcher while being in an art classroom was at times difficult. I wrote this in my field diary:

> It is difficult to separate my role of researcher/teacher. The children,
>
> especially the younger ones, will ask me for assistance and I oblige-
>
> mostly to help establish rapport. I spent today mingling with most classes,
>
> helping students pick up supplies, looking for consent forms that they
>
> forgot and even tracked one student down in his classroom to give him
>
> the form. Again, I think this will help build trust and rapport. The children
>
> automatically see me as a disciplinarian because I am an adult and have
>
> asked me to help stop so-and-so from doing such-and-such.

Despite my comments to the contrary and despite Joan's corrections, the children occasionally mistook me for being a classroom teacher as well. I think most of this was due in part because I was another adult in the classroom and also the children lacked experience with a researcher in the classroom. The children called me teacher several times and would either be corrected by myself, Joan or the other students:

> While I was writing, a group of first grade children swarmed over to the pencil sharpeners (which is where I sit). Some pushing and shoving occurred and I looked up to see the ruckus. The children at the pencil sharpener looked at me and got quiet, apparently awaiting my admonishment. I just shrugged my shoulders and told them "I'm just sitting." Joan, who had been watching me from across the room, started to laugh.

I did cross that teacher-researcher line several times. Sometimes when children needed help and saw that Joan was busy helping another, they would then come up to me seeking assistance. Occasionally, if Joan seemed particularly busy, I would briefly help the child. Joan would often motion the children to leave me alone while I was working. One time I did grant a girl permission to use the bathroom, because Joan was out of the room, and the girl was obviously in agony.

I tried to avoid situations where I would need to provide discipline, but a few times I felt that my role as strictly researcher was about to be compromised. This scenario typically transpired when Joan had to walk a class to their homeroom or to the gym for P.E., and the classroom teachers, seeing that I was present, would let their class into the art room and leave. A third grade class came in, once, rowdy and loud. Within minutes, a girl came up to me to tell me that someone had been punched. I surveyed the room, and fighting did not look

imminent (the one who had been hit was smoldering but did not look like he was going to act by punching back), so I told the girl to tell the art teacher when she returned. Joan came back and reprimanded the class, clarifying that they should know how to act when there was no teacher in the room. A few children pointed to me, indicating that they believed that there had too been a teacher in the room and that I had failed to discipline them. Joan set them straight that I was a researcher only.

The most serious situation occurred with a fourth grade class that had classmates at odds with each other throughout the art lesson. While Joan was talking to a couple students outside the art room, I noticed one girl had burst into tears, another girl had stormed out of the art room, and the girls and boys were dividing into factions. I was watching in case a fight broke out. The clean-off alarm sounded, indicating only a few minutes before the next class would arrive. As a former elementary art teacher, every cell in my body screamed to do something to help, but I knew I had no authority, nor did I want to place myself in that role. I compromised by walking among the tables and saying quietly that it was time to clean up. None of the students heard me, but at least I was doing something. I felt completely helpless even though I was not responsible, nor did Joan expect me to do anything.

Occasionally children would misbehave while I was tape recording them, especially the boys when I would have them discuss wrestling. The boys tended to get excited and consequently loud. Sometimes their excitement seemed uncontainable, for their comments, being overheard by others in the class, would soon trigger others to partake in the conversation. Differing opinions about wrestlers would often incite brief shouting matches. After one particularly lively interview with three fifth grade boys, Joan said that she thought one boy became loud to show off and see what I was going to do about it. She

suggested that the next time I should tell the children that they may want to keep it down because they were distracting others.

Teacher's Reactions to Me and the Study

Joan was totally supportive throughout my study. She reminded students to bring back their consent forms when she saw them in the halls, in the lunch-room, and even when they visited her house to play video games with her son. In fact, the first consent form I received was her son's, a fourth grader. She would save children's artwork for me to examine on days when I was not at the school. She was quite interested in the study, and I found her suggestions, insights and help to be invaluable.

She appreciated and enjoyed seeing all the creative ways her students handled mass media imagery. I can remember my own days as an elementary art teacher; the insane class schedule left me little time to look at children's art and listen to them while they were creating. I can only remember seeing mass media symbols being inexplicably drawn over and over again, and I found their frequent occurrence, at that time, to be frustrating. My teaching schedule (seven classes a day) was light in comparison to Joan's frantic pace of teaching up to twelve classes a day, with each class only lasting thirty minutes. I found it interesting to watch Joan waver back in forth, from the satisfied educator who sees and recognizes the value in children's artistic expressions about the mass media, to the exasperated teacher who half-jokingly temporarily bans all mass media imagery because she was tired of seeing it. I myself continue to struggle with that issue.

<u>My Concerns About the Study</u>

One of the main reasons why Joan's art classes were so beneficial to this study was that Joan, like myself, believes that children's art time should allow for social interaction. Our art classes shared the same energetic buzz of children's voices and movement while they created. This similarity of Joan's classes to mine in the past was at times so close, that it seemed to me I was back in my old elementary art classroom. As a researcher, I was finally doing what I had wanted to do most as a teacher: to temporarily forgo my duties as classroom manager and disciplinarian and instead watch and talk with the children while they engaged in the art processes. At times my old "teaching self" would emerge and take over, and I would momentarily concentrate instead on seeing the class as one to manage rather than as one to observe. I would make mental notes about interesting ways Joan presented topics or managed art supplies for my own futuristic "something-to-try-in-my-classroom" list. Joan had many ideas that could benefit me as a practicing art teacher, and I frequently had to re-focus myself to my study.

Because of the hectic art class schedule, I often held back in interviewing children, especially if I saw that they were very involved in a process, were running behind in completing class assignments, or were trying to meet a dead-line (such as making props for a school play). I wanted to be as unobtrusive as possible in Joan's job, but from the start I winced at some of the trouble I had already caused, for the children, while standing in line to leave, would swat at each other with their rolled up consent forms.

From the beginning, when I presented my study to the children, I kept my descriptions purposefully vague about what art I would intend to photograph (that which had mass media symbols). During my second week at the school,

one second grade boy had drawn a fireman putting out a fire. He had turned in his consent form and was excited about the prospect of having his art photographed. I hesitated because his drawing had no mass media symbols. He astutely noticed, and decided that I needed more convincing to take the photograph, so right then and there (as I was still trying to figure out what to do) he added two white Nike swooshes on the firemen's shoes and pointed these out to me while he drew them so I would note the inclusion. I quickly saw how easily I could direct children's art unwittingly as they tried to please me. I wanted only to photograph children's spontaneous use of mass media imagery. I took the photograph, but I also took photographs of the art of two girls in the class (who had turned in consent forms). Neither one contained any mass media imagery. I took these photographs within this boy's view, hoping to undo the damage.

I had originally wanted to spend a greater amount of time interviewing children about the mass media symbol use in their artwork. One interview with a third grade boy about his drawing of alien space ships in an outer space drawing made me seriously question if I could even ask children about mass media symbols without having them re-frame their discussion of their art to suit my study. In this case, the boy seemed to toss out at the spur of the moment that his drawing was based on two movies. I'm sure that the pleased expression on my face (of having found children's art that played with the mass media) prompted this boy's discussion. Again, I saw how much the children either wanted approval from an adult, or simply some attention that they could get from me. In either case, I kept my interviewing children about their artwork to a minimum in fear that the spontaneously produced imagery would soon be artificially constructed and defeat my purpose. I spent most of my time looking at and analyzing children's art, using children's comments about the mass media

in general to argue for children's playful appropriations with the mass media in their artwork and in their conversations.

Although I pride myself for having watched (at times endured) countless hours of children's television as preparation for this field work, I soon discovered how ignorant I truly was about what interested the children. I watched what struck me as interesting, and had excluded television intended for adults but which children might like. Most of the television shows and movies that the children talked about contained material that held little fascination to me personally (ex. sci-fi and sports). I was equally unacquainted with the music groups they liked. Not being a fan of current popular music, I never really listened to current music to hear the lyrics or to note differences among groups. My time-warp trap became especially apparent when it came to video games that the children discussed. I had underestimated the importance of video games in their daily lives. For me, video games were at arcades that you went to once a week, not at home. I had played video games at their inception (Pong) and enjoyed them in video arcades (Joust, Centipede), but most of the home video game developments had passed me by, so terms like Playstation, Nintendo 64, SEGA, etc. were meaningless to me. The children soon made me realize how out of touch I was with the mass media that inter-ested them. This ignorance made me wonder how many mass media symbols I didn't catch in their artwork or media references in their conversations due to my lack of recognition (I almost missed a Tommy Hilfiger tag).

I was also concerned about my month long absence midway in the study, an absence needed to perform presentations at national conferences and a few job interviews. When I came back to the school, the children were happy to see me. I learned that a rumor had been spread by the children that I had left for good. Joan told me that one fourth grade boy had complained to her, "After I

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went to all that work (to get consent formed signed and returned) then she's not here." Another boy informed me that during my absence he had "gotten a a dog and a Playstation."

Data

Observations of the School Environment

The new Madison Elementary is now located on the southwestern outskirts in a town of 40,000 in the south central plains. Last year, Madison Elementary was housed in an old dilapidated building, in an equally run-down residential neighborhood, awaiting completion of its new school building. Even though Madison Elementary's new site is only a few streets away from its old location, its new site is situated in a more economically prosperous neighbor-hood, and is bordered on its western side by farmland. A middle school for sixth graders is positioned on Madison Elementary's eastern side, and most of Madison's students will go there when they pass the fifth grade.

I spent some time exploring the school to see what images were dis-played. I was curious if any of these images would appear in children's artwork. I was also curious to see if any symbols emanating from corporations, popular culture and the mass media would be present and visible.

I explored the hallways first. The halls themselves are standard cinderblock that have been painted a light gray, speckled with an even lighter gray, navy blue and maroon. I suppose this elaborate use of color was intended to spruce up the walls and disguise the cinderblocks. However, the specks actually accentuated the porous texture of the cinderblock, thus emphasizing the institutional nature of the building. The blue-gray mottled carpet and the

burnt orange trim helped somewhat to raise the cinderblocks from their prison cell charm, adding a rather restrained cheeriness.

The regular classrooms were grouped in pods by grade level, each grouped around a large open square space. All the classrooms had a wall of glass facing this open square space area, so I had an easy time seeing the imagery in each classroom. Many of the images in the classrooms were purchases from an educational resource manufacturer named Carson-Dellosa. From my observations in this school (and a few others), Carson-Dellosa's products appear to be popular among elementary educators. The imagery is highly stereotypic, conservative and bright without being bold or loud. The distinctive mark of Carson-Dellosa products is the ever-present smiling face, which shows up on animate and inanimate objects alike. (Appendix C). The Carson-Dellosa smiling face stands out in that normal oval-shaped eyes are tipped on their sides, tilted towards each other, forming an inverted V shape. Two small curved marks, like apostrophes, indicate eye-brows. "Femaleness" is differentiated by two curved eyelashes per eye. A pink oval shape directly under the eyes represents the nose, and a large U shape is drawn for the mouth with small curved cheek lines enclosed in pink circles. Overall the Carson-Dellosa smile expresses pained embarrassment more than contented cheerfulness. With so many smiling faces in the images, one receives the message of enforced happiness, either from a quiet resignation to one's fate (aided by heavy medication, perhaps?) or a repressed denial that anything bad could exist. Because of the multiple insipid smiles, a more cynical person (such as myself) would sense a cover-up, that social reality is being deliberately falsified to maintain the status quo. Because of the stereotypic nature of the images, a conservative nostalgia oozes forth, harkening back to supposed simpler times in American society and schools when diversity and social

problems could be ignored/neglected without legal consequences. Any children depicted by Carson-Dellosa (Appendix C) stand mostly motionless and with mouths closed (but always smiling), role models to the classroom children of grateful, obedient and quiet children.

This disturbing Carson-Dellosa imagery is repeated in "curriculum resources" (Appendix C) so that children are bombarded with these images not only in their classroom environment, but also in their learning activities too. These activities further try to reinforce these images to children through coloring these as dittos and cutting and pasting these images from Carson-Dellosa patterns. I have often wondered what children would have to say about these images, but the almost complete absence of Carson-Dellosa's maniacal style in the children's artwork that I observed attests to the meaninglessness of this type of imagery to them.

Colorful banners (also often purchased from educational resource manufacturers) were placed in the hallways. I found these messages through-out the school:

> We're building a better world - one student at a time!
> Excellence starts with you!
> You are not finished when you lose. You are finished when you quit.
> Success comes in cans, not in cannots.
> No one can do everything, but anyone can do something.
> Attitude is a little thing that makes a BIG difference.
> Tolerance is seeing with your heart instead of your eyes.
> Your mind is your most powerful resource.
> Respect yourself. Respect others. Respect your school.
> You never know what you can do until you try.
> The most important tool for success is the belief that you can succeed.
> To settle an argument, think about what is right, not who is right.
> What is popular is not always what is right. What is right is not always
>   popular.
> Everybody wins with teamwork.

These platitudes are intended to inspire the children but instead they have a lecturing tone to them. The pronoun "you" in these phrases is frequently used,

which tries to convey a sense of specialness of each child, but the overall implied message is that of conformity of the group to help the school, and later society, function smoothly. I mention these school "advertisements" because I wish to compare them with a Nike advertisement I found in the school's library, in a well-worn <u>Sports Illustrated for Kids</u> magazine. Nike's swoosh logo is an especially powerful graphic image for the children I observed. I found the Nike advertisement to be more inspirational than the school's messages because the Nike ad addresses the "you" in a more personal manner by relating the reader to another recognizable and real person, WNBA's Dawn Staley. The school banners used a faceless "we" (as in "We're building a better world...") and uses third person pronouns (such as "everybody" and "no one" in the school banners):

> (image of fractured Dawn Staley, NWBA, constructed of multiple photographs arranging her image diagonally on the page, the photos used to elongate her figure, Nike on shirt and red Nike on top)
>
> Dawn Staley is a giant, she is EIGHT FEET tall,
> She is listed in your program guide, officially, at five feet six inches. **But how do you measure energy?**
>
> She deserves a new unit of measurement, a new mathematics, sensitive enough to record the expansions that happen in the heat of the game, when what matters is the **size of your** passion.
>
> Everything about her is outsized: her heart, her creativity, her appetite for the game. And she grows with every no-look pass, every surge past a defender, every steal from a daydreaming point guard.
> (photo of NIKE stamped with "Air Flight Deny")
> Designed for speed, creativity, extreme energy.
> Designed to let Dawn Staley be huge.
> Dawn Staley **does not boast**, but she will say: I play like I am 8 feet tall."
> Dawn Staley is eight feet tall, and **she is still growing.**

Unlike the static nature of the school's messages, the child reader for the Nike ad is assumed and encouraged to be active, changing, dynamic and growing

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(with words such as "energy," "passion," "expansion," "appetite" and "speed").

Schools tend to maintain an antagonistic relationship with the mass media. I saw one poster on the window of the school's library. The poster faced the hall and depicted a cartoon child sitting in a big chair, totally absorbed in a book, while a TV set, switched off and forgotten, was encased in cobwebs. The poster reads "Books-the other channel." Despite this conflictual relationship between schools and the mass media, some mass media personages are allowed to enter the school grounds. In the school halls I found two cartoon characters (both with their own television shows), Winnie the Pooh and Charlie Brown. I found it odd that Charlie Brown is viewed as such a benign figure, since the cartoon often makes critical comments about public schooling, from the "maw maw maw maw" voice of the rarely-seen classroom teacher (signaling that the teacher's presence and words are not important) to the misaligned Peppermint Patty, who struggles with standardized testing.

I also looked for corporate encroachments into the school territory. During my first day at the school, I decided to eat the school lunch. The lunch consisted of a Taco Bell bean burrito. The wrapper carried a Nintendo adver- tisement featuring the video game Mario. The school also has a Dr. Pepper soda machine near one of the entrances. The soda brands sold by this machine have shown up in fifth grade personality drawings. Even McDonald's logo made its appearance on a dinosaur poster from The Field Museum in Chicago, which hung in the hallway.

Observations in the Art Classroom

The art classroom (Appendix D), along with the music room and the library, was centrally located in the school, with hallways and regular class-

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rooms running parallel on either side. Unlike the regular classrooms' large glass windows, the art room only had windows on its two doors. The art room and the music room were built to be tornado shelters for the school.

The art room was large, with ample space for children to walk and interact. The children were grouped in fours at tables. The Carson-Dellosa imagery was missing. Instead, a tall construction paper palm tree stood at one side of the dry-erase board. A lone Dole banana (donated by Food Services) was taped by the tree as were colorful parrots and birds on tagboard. Magazine cut-outs of photographs of tropical fish and a lion (school's mascot) were posted on another wall near the small storage closet. Most of the walls in the room were covered with corkboard and burlap, used to display children's artwork. A poster with Garfield the cartoon cat hung under the large digital clock.

I spent some time observing the children's clothing to see if images on their clothing appeared in their artwork. Because of the prominence of the Nike swoosh in the artwork of these children, I expected to see a strong brand loyalty to this company in their clothing choices. Looking at their outfits, only a few children appeared to be diehard followers of any brand. These few children (usually boys) would wear Nike shoes, Nike socks, Nike shorts, Nike shirt, and Nike jewelry (rings and necklaces). Two boys, in different classes and grade levels and unrelated, even had their hair cut so that the back of their head sported a shaved Nike swoosh. Most of the children, though, would mix the brands (often mixing competing brands) in what seemed to indicate random and fickle brand loyalties. It was common, for example, to see a child wear Reebok shoes with a pair of Nike shorts and an Adidas shirt.

Younger children, both male and female, tended to wear clothes with cartoon characters from Walt Disney movies (*Little Mermaid*, *Aladdin*, *Beauty and the Beast*, etc.) or from a children's cable channel Nickelodeon (especially

Rugrats). Older children (third grade and up) tended to wear brands associated with adults (or at least teenagers), such as JNCO, Paco, ZONZ, and Tommy Hilfiger. Older children also wore clothes that depicted images from adult media culture, especially sport team loyalties (ex. NWO, WCW, Dallas Cowboys, Chicago Bulls). Regardless of the age, children often wore T-shirts advertising local businesses and events.

Both boys and girls wore clothes with Looney Tunes characters in the younger grades, but by the fourth grade, the boys refrained from displaying their associations with Looney Tune characters (in fact, they rarely wore any T-shirts with cartoon characters). The older girls chose to wear clothing that had only two Looney Tune characters-Taz and Tweety. The Looney Tunes characters also changed in their portrayal as the girls aged, from lovable and wacky for the younger girls, to "copin' a 'tude" for the older girls, with Bugs Bunny and friends attired in hip hop clothes, baseball cap turned backwards, and expressions of aloofness to downright defiance. This defiant image even carried over to other popular culture images on children's T-shirts. I saw one fourth grade girl wear a T-shirt that had the standard yellow smiley face, but it wore a backwards cap and looked surly. The girl's T-shirt read "Bad Girl". Oddly, the more daunting of the fifth grade girls, who tended to dress more like the boys, with their baggy T-shirts and baggy jeans, wore T-shirts depicting Elmo of *Sesame Street's* Tickle Me Elmo fame, who retained his innocent and perky expression.

Symbols from the mass media, popular culture and corporate logos became labels of gender as the children aged, and the "appropriate" use of these symbols was reinforced by both genders by their absence, inclusion, and by verbal disapproval. The yellow smiley face, a popular culture symbol drawn mainly by girls rather than boys, appeared once on a boy's T-shirt, but in this case the yellow smiling face's expression was that of pain, as it was splattered

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by an approaching baseball.

Younger children often learned about expected image preferences for their gender through looking at their peer's artwork, but they especially referred to the art of older children. Near the end of the school year, the fifth graders had each completed a personality drawing, which Joan hung up in the art room. The younger children spent time looking at these personality drawings while they worked. One time I saw a third grade boy go up to these drawings. He pointed out objects in these drawings for the benefit of the boys at his table. In part it sounded as if he was showing off his knowledge about corporate and media symbols to his friends, and to possibly demonstrate his allegiance to certain symbols (and hence, his friends), but he also made sure his male friends could hear his disgust when he pointed out a Spice Girls cassette tape depicted in a girl's personality drawings. His friends in turn showed derision as well for this musical group associated with "femaleness" (probably because of the all-girl group's proclamation of "girl power"). However, when I showed a group of first grade boys and girls an issue of Tiger Beat magazine (whose audience is mostly preteen and teenage girls), the boys reacted positively to the Spice Girls (Appendix E).

Another instance of the gender gap in symbol use occurred during a Valentine's Day assignment, where children were decorating their valentine bags with construction paper hearts. The heart symbol, like the smiley face, is frequently drawn by girls, but not as much by boys, and rarely by fourth and fifth grade boys. Some of the boys altered the heart symbol, I think, as a way of distancing themselves from this symbol. Several sports-related images merged with the heart symbol, a Chicago Bull's mascot (figure 1) and several Nike swooshes (figures 2 and 11). One boy cut out a pop-out ghoulish alien in his
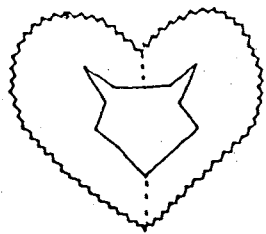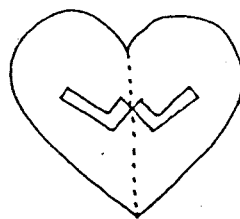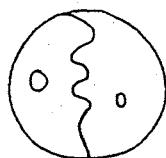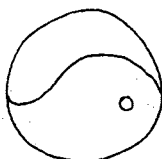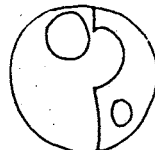
Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

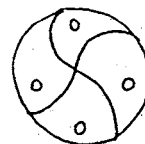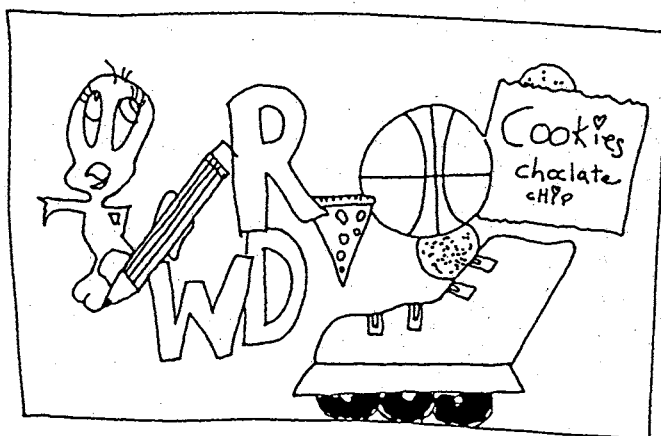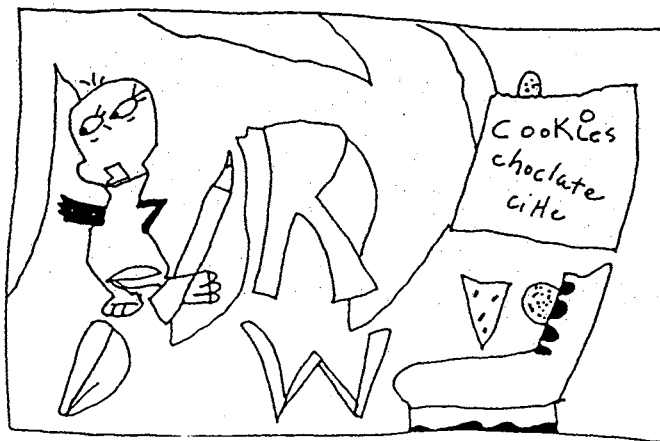Figure 4

Figure 5
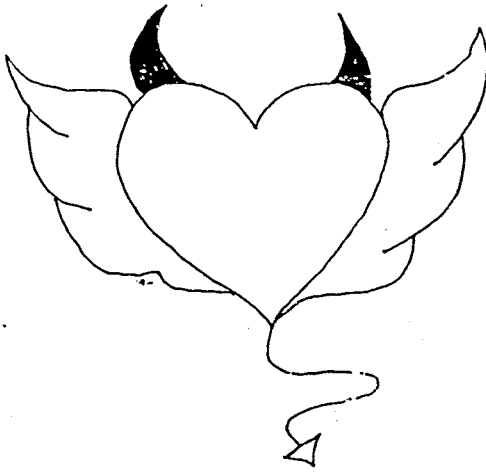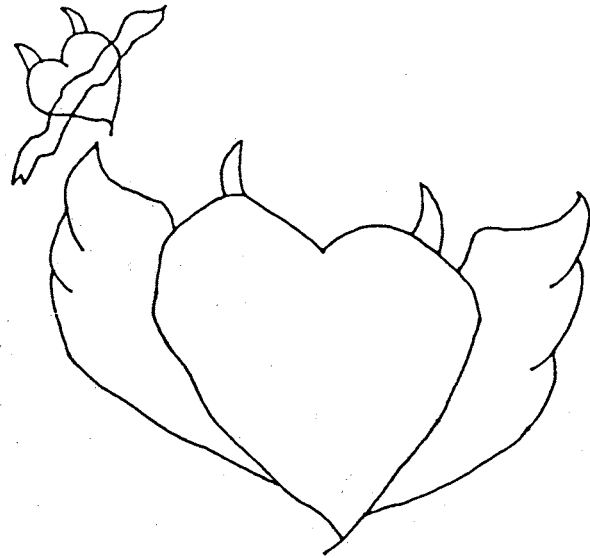

Figure 6

Figure 7

Figure 8

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Figure 9

Figure 10

folded heart's center (he said it was from the movie *Independence Day*), perhaps as a way to add a repulsive element (a "make the girls" scream' component) in a symbol associated with cuddling and intimacy.

Not only did children discuss these images in relation to gender, but they often learned how to draw these images by asking or looking at other children's artwork. I observed some first grade girls who were curious about learning to draw the yin-yang symbol and drew it and discussed it amongst each other (figures 3, 4, 5 and 6). Younger children often referred to older children's art to learn how to draw these symbols. At one point the fourth graders began to draw aliens during their free time in art class. They hung their drawings up on the wall. Later, I saw a second grade boy, when he had completed his art assignment, take some scrap paper and a pencil over to the area where the alien drawings were located. He spent some time looking intently at the aliens (most were the standard green tear drop head with large fly eyes). He was just starting to draw when he noticed that it was time for him to go to his next class. In another case, a first grade girl, having some free time, examined the fifth

graders' personality drawings on the wall. One fifth grade girl's drawing (figure 7) caught her eye and she drew it (figure 8). She made a few selective changes in her copy of the older girl's work: she did not choose to draw the basketball, she turned the pencil, and she altered the background, breaking it up with more colors.

Sometimes imagery of questionable origin pops up in children's artwork that other children attempt to copy. One particular variation of a heart cropped up in a few fifth grade girls' personality drawings. I call this image "the winged devil heart" (figure 9). Joan believed that one of the girls learned this symbol from an older sibling. A first grade girl noticed this winged devil heart while the personality drawings were on display and began the process of learning this symbol (figure 10). Joan, unsure of this winged heart's source, felt obliged to tell children to not copy this image until she learned the meaning of this symbol.

Sometimes this copying of a symbol is more about copying another student's unique approach in portraying this symbol, i.e., the other student has placed the symbol within a different context or medium than it is usually seen. During the same valentines assignment mentioned earlier, I saw, from across the room, a fourth grade boy cutting out a giant Nike swoosh on the fold of purple construction paper. I had never actually seen a child in the process of making a Nike swoosh. Nike swooshes would just appear in the art room, like dust bunnies under a sofa. I saw the boy cut out the Nike swoosh, and open it up. The now two joined Nike swooshes did create a heart shape when opened (figure 11). The boy then glued down one side of the Nike swoosh heart to his valentines bag. He flapped the heart open and closed several times. When closed, he had a Nike swoosh, and when opened, he had a heart. He looked very pleased with himself and then he went around the room, showing children at the other tables what he had done. Soon the other children, fascinated with

his idea, proceeded to make this Nike valentine for themselves. In this case, the copiers mimic both the symbol and another child's use of the symbol in a particular art medium. Children often experiment with these symbols to see how they will turn out in a medium different than its intended material. For example, I have seen a Nike swoosh representation in clay, papermaking, crayon resist (figure 12), and stenciling (figure 13).
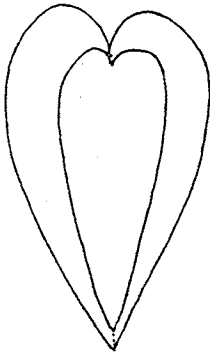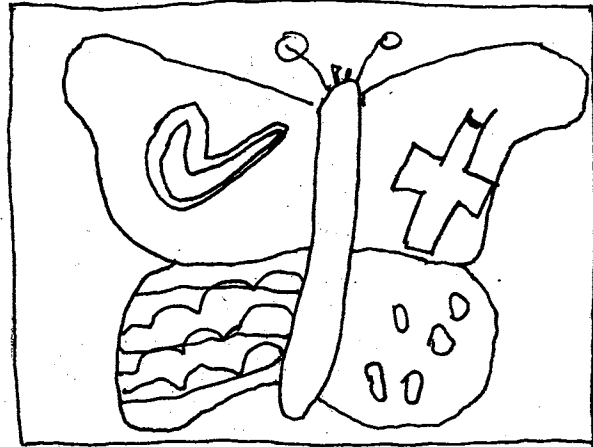

Figure 11

Figure 12

Figure 13

Corporate, mass media and popular culture symbols appeared consistently in children's artwork during my time at Madison; however, I did notice that certain art assignments brought out these symbols. As mentioned earlier, different art processes prompted children to explore these symbols to

see what they would look like if made with different materials, but some focused topics may prompt these symbols as well. Two topics presented by Joan to third and fourth graders were underwater scenes and outer space drawings. Joan emphasized nature in both of these topics. With the underwater scenes, she and the children discussed sea creatures such as fish, shells and aquatic plants. With the outer space drawings, the classes talked about the planets, meteors, comets, stars, U.S. rockets and space exploration. But when the children worked on their drawings, they included mass media references. In the underwater scenes, the children drew Ariel the Mermaid (from Walt Disney's *Little Mermaid*, now a television cartoon) and the Titanic (from the current movie).

The outer space assignments brought out many depictions of aliens. In fact, during one of the outer space presentations, the children engaged in a spontaneous discussion among each other about the possibility of alien life forms. Joan steered the talk back to planets, space stations and satellites. Aliens, though, have become a very popular topic in the mass media of late (*Independence Day, Mars Attacks*, the *X-files, Deep Space Nine, Babylon 5, Men in Black*) and in children's media culture (*Space Jam, Journey of Allen Strange*, action figure toys from *Independence Day*). Those art assignments which prompt media references seem highly related to the connections children find between the art assignment and themes currently popular in the mass media. Also, it is through children's interactions with one another that these connec-tions form between the art assignment and the mass media. In the case of the outerspace drawings, aliens became a topic for expression. Whether the exploration of the alien symbol/concept will be by one student or many in the class depends on the dynamics within the group. During this outer space assignment, I saw some classes where aliens were neither mentioned nor

drawn, and then in other classes, aliens became the dominant focus of the outer space drawing.

However, art assignments that direct children to focus on a mass media event (i.e. the media reference does not come directly from their interaction) may have the opposite intended response. I witnessed one art assignment where, because of a request from their classroom teacher, Joan had fourth graders make origami cranes in honor of the Olympics at Sagano. I thought that I would hear children talk about the Olympics, but I did not (they did talk about other shows on television). I also did not see much enthusiasm for the project.

Mass Media Comments Overheard in the Art Classroom

Unlike the rather limited range of mass media symbols that children chose to draw (which were current or that emerged from a in-style retro), children's verbal references to the mass media seemed to be unlimited in their scope, and covered past popular mass media sources. Corporate logos, that are absent in children's drawings (such as McDonald's) are expressed verbally, especially with corporate slogans, whereas some symbols that are frequently depicted by children (such as Nike) are not referred to verbally. Many times these overhead mass media comments were said humorously and playfully, as a starting point for interaction with other children. I overheard these media references in Joan's classroom:

From commercials and commercial products:

> during Pictionary, boy draws a bird, boy yells out "Toucan Sam!" (Froot Loops cereal)
> during Pictionary, girl draws a square, another girl yells out "Happy Meal!" (McDonald's)
> boy "Brought to you by Ben-Gay." (sounding like television announcer)
> Teacher asks about pronunciation of some name that has an "O" ending, triggers boys to say "Spagetti-o's...Ravioli-o's..."
> boy singing "Slinky, slinky, you gotta have a Slinky." (Slinky toy)
> boys: "Supersize!" (reference to McDonald's)

boys in line "Let go of my Lego!" (frozen waffle commercial)
boys at table singing Meow Mix jingle (cat food commercial)

From television shows:

girl walking around with a mirror, showed a red-headed boy his image
and said "I think you need to cut your hair." (there was some hair
that stood up) Another boy at table said "Yeah, he looks like
Alfalfa." (Little Rascals)
boy seeing painting demonstration where Joan places purple next to
green " Yuck! Barney color!" (Barney and Friends)
boys naming their cat puppets "Catman!" (Batman), "CatFreeze!" (Mr.
Freeze from Batman) and "Supercat!" (Superman)
boy (pulling T-shirt over head) "I am the great Cornholio!" (Beavis &
Butthead)
boy singing theme music to old Batman television series
boys at table "duh! duh! duh!" repeatedly (Homer from The Simpsons)
girl: "Lucy, I'm home!" (both a reference to her grandfather and the I Love
Lucy Show)

From popular music:

girl at one table says "Shake, shake, shake" which triggers boy at
another table to reply "Shake your booty" followed by dancing (KC
& the Sunshine Band)
group singing "Di-di-di-di bong bong." (Selena)
boys singing at table "Bad bad bad bad boy, you make me feel so good"
(was a Miami Sound Machine song, now a hiphop song and video
on MTV by Puff Daddy and Mase)
boys and girls broke out singing Aerosmith's "Janie's Got a Gun"
boy singing "You light up my life." (Debby Boone)
boys singing "We will, we will rock you." (Queen)
girl: "I've got the power!" (from a hiphop song)
boy singing "Hello muddah, hello faddah..." (a popular comedic song)

From movies:

boy (found a Z-shaped piece of construction paper) "Z for Zorro!" asks a
student "Are you gonna see the Zorro movie?"
"Schwing!" (from Wayne's World)
girl talking about another girl's artwork "It's Dumbo! She made a Dumbo
lion, ya'll!" (Walt Disney)
girl: "Lions, tigers and bears, oh my!" (Wizard of Oz)

And variations, where children mixed references:

boy: "What cartoon character cusses the most? Roadrunner. Beep! Beep!

(Looney Tunes and censorship beep from television)
boy singing of Alanis Morisette's "Ironic" but in mock operatic style
boy speaking like Popeye then "A kingdom for my shirt (?)."

Recording the Children

I had to allot much time to letting children become comfortable with just being audio-tape recorded. One first grade girl was hesitant about being recorded, and she insisted that I handwrite what she said instead. She quickly became impatient with this process. She then allowed me to record, saying that she was only joking. For the most part, children liked being recorded and would often ask me, as soon as they came into the class, if I was going to interview them that day. In fact, I had to settle one dispute between two second grade girls who battled over who was going to talk with me before they came to art. Some children could talk incessantly while they were taped and could ignore distractions and handle interruptions with ease. Other children appeared nervous as soon as I turned the tape recorder on, especially with classmates listening to their comments. I found that the interviewing was easier and flowed more smoothly when children would interact with each other about the mass media, and then I would later paraphrase the words of any children who had participated but whose consent form I did not have. I tried not to fiddle with the tape recorder as much as possible, for when children forgot it was there, their responses became richer and more spontaneous.

One fourth grade boy was especially enchanted with being taped, so much so that even after repeated interviews, he would spend most of his time making noises into the tape recorder, addressing an imaginary audience:

before taping F says "Come talk to me baby!"
Where did that come from?
G at table about F: He watches too much television.
Go ahead and talk about things you like, TV, movies....
F: (talking into side of recorder-speaker side, and laughing)

Hello....what are you doing today?
The microphone is right here.
F: (laughing) Oh...
G: Tell her your favorite TV show.
You watch lots...
F: Good morning!
You watch lots of TV?
F: (distracted and obviously enjoying being recorded and clowning around about it) I like Power Rangers!
G: You like Barney?
F: (Clowning) Yes I do like Barney, no I'm just kidding, I don't...Listen to all you crazy people...ch ch ch ch....(lowering voice to sound more adult) for all your TV fun come to me... come on to me Bubba...I knock you out!

And later:

F: What you are listening to now is, is scissors cutting my finger. (scissor sounds, laughs)
I think you are real fascinated with the whole idea of being taped.
(I rewind the tape a little and let them listen to themselves on the tape. They loved it.)
F: Okay, Mortal Kombat is a cool thing (cutting paper with scissors) Ouch! I cut my finger! (He didn't). And...it's cool. (?) dies in this one.
Who dies?
F: No I'm just kidding. He turns into a dragon.
(other 2 boys start explaining while F returns his attention to the recorder)
F: (scissor sounds) This is me again...Two scissors....G shut up... now....really!....(whispers) Ah ! He's a girl. It is cool. Mortal Kombat is the best.
What about X-men, do you watch X-Men?
F: Yeah, that's cool, Cyclops, choooooo!
Is that your favorite?
F: Whenever the bell rings can we listen to what we were saying?
No.....(children were getting ready to line up) I just let you listen to it just a little bit. No, that's it.
F: Okay! Ahchooah! I cut my finger! (he didn't) The blood is dripping fast!

I showed this boy a transcript of this recording. He was so excited that I had

taken the time to write out his words, that he wanted to know if I could make a

copy of the transcriptions of his conversations that he could keep. Since his

identity was concealed in the transcription, I would briefly show his transcription

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to other children to explain what I planned to do with the recordings. The children were fascinated with the notion of me transcribing sounds, and F's "Ahchooah" became a running gag with some fifth grade boys:

Z: That was funny, man. Sorry! It's just the chocolate (?) phhhaalthh!
J: It ain't funny.
Z: Wooah Woop! Can I do something?
I don't know.
Z: You guys! Man, instead of wrestling, I think, instead of wrestling. Ahchooah! Man you had better stop that. (laughing) (to me) You don't have to type that out okay?
(one of the boys at the table burps on purpose, boys laugh)
I'll delete it. I don't know what it was, but I'll delete it.
Z: It was Ahchooah!
J: Yeah! He just goes 'Ahchooah'!

And then later:

J: That's called...what's that called again?
Z: That's called shut up (heh heh) (to the microphone) I meant to say 'be quiet'.
J: I've been, I've been waiting so much months...
Z: (to microphone) 'Be qui-e-e-t."
J: I've been waiting so much months to watch NWO to break up since...
Z: (now involved with the microphone)(moaning) Aaaaaaaaaaaaah! Aaaaaaaaaaah!
How long has the NWO been around?
J: They've been around for about two years.
E: It's like two years.
Z: (still moaning) Can you spell this? Aaaaaaaaaah!
I'll find out.
Z: (laughs) I'll find out.... Ahchoo!
That's 'Ahchooah.'
(all three boys start saying 'Ahchooah')

Other children were content with finding new sounds for me to transcribe:

A2:   Where's that speaker? Hello? I'm going to make that buzzing sound. (He has an alien button on his shirt that when he pushes it it makes a buzzing sound) Aaah!
I'm going to have a fun time trying to transcribe that sound.
A2:   Oooooh.
See, anytime anyone makes a sound, I have to transcribe that sound like 'oo-ee, oo-ee' you know I have to write it

down in words. So I'm going to have fun with that one.
A2:   Ooh. I'm going to do it again.
All right. Do it again just so I know what it sounds like.
A2:   (pushing button again) It's gonna sound (boy: "sounds like a laser sound"-boys start imitating sound)

This same child, a fourth grade boy, also played with television's use of a beep

sound used to censor inappropriate words:

> A2:   (to me) If I cuss, can I bring my pager and you can use it to beep out the words?
> **You just don't need to cuss, okay?   Just chill.**
> A2:   Okay. I'll beep. (Started to play with censorship idea)
> B2:   (explaining movie Karena, Karena) She wore a top..... on the first day of school...
> A2:   (to microphone) Beep! Beep! Beep!

Sometimes children mistook the tape recorder for a request line for television

programming:

> J: (to the microphone) Can you give us more hours of wrestling?

I did not disclose my taste preferences about the mass media to children.

I tried to maintain a poker face and appear objective, for which I was criticized at

one point by some boys:

> **What about wrestling? Are you interested?**
> A2:   Yeah! NWO and WCW?
> **Okay, yeah.**
> A2:   I watch that stuff.
> **So explain some of that to me cause I (one boy, smiling, says "She's not a fan of wrestling. She's not a fan of anything")Who? (replies "You.") Me? What do you mean I'm not a fan of anything? I'm a fan. I have certain television shows I really like to watch.**
> A2: Like (some sport mentioned)?
> **Well I'm not really into sports. (boy to group "I told you") Well I like basketball. (boys wanted to know my favorite football team) Okay. Okay. I like.....uh...uh... I'm just going to pick something at the top of ....Denver. (looks of disgust from some of the boys and discussion about Packers and Wisconsin)**

Children's Artwork and Talk

Concerning children's artwork, I have noticed that despite what symbols they chose to use from corporate logos to mass media symbols to those coming from popular culture, the children used these symbols in three major ways:

1) Portrayed the symbol in its true form, by displaying the symbol solo, and in its standard colors (e.g. yin-yang in black and white, green alien head with black eyes, Nike swoosh as it appears on shoe, yellow and black smiley face, red heart, etc.)

2) Altered the symbol to mesh with a design, focusing on altering lines, shapes and colors, for aesthetic reasons.

3) Placed the symbol (which may be altered to fit the overall design) with other symbols from mass media, popular culture, and corporate logos, often done for humorous or playful effect (e.g. alien wearing a Nike shirt, combination yin-yang and Nike swoosh).

Defining Corporate/Consumer, Mass Media and Popular Culture Symbols

I have sorted the children's drawings and recorded conversations into three main categories: corporate/consumer, mass media and popular culture. These categories are frequently intertwined. For example, aliens appear as a popular culture theme in our society, but their popularity is conveyed through the mass media and their imagery is used to sell commercial products. This convoluted mixing shows up in children's drawings and conversations as well. Children often mixed symbols, e.g. placing corporate symbols alongside popular culture symbols. I found that certain symbols would be predominately used by a certain gender (e.g. peace signs for girls), or ethnicity (e.g. lowrider

for Hispanic), or certain class (e.g. wrestling for lower socioeconomic class). It was within popular culture that contestation about gender assigned meanings occurred the most. One would expect class to be a factor with corporate symbols, which I think it was to some extent, such as with a small group of fifth grade girls drawing the Tommy Hilfiger logo; however, children from any class would draw corporate logos, especially the Nike swoosh. In these cases, maybe the act of drawing the symbol served as a way of owning the product, and thus its consequent class affiliation, or maybe it was more important to children to display the symbol than own the product itself.

Corporate/consumer: This category emanates primarily from corporations manufacturing products for physical consumption. These symbols may be brands of specific products or represent places for consumption, such as stores or restaurant chains, or may be symbols for currency to engage in consumption, such as dollar bill signs.

Mass media: This category includes both the means of mass transmission and communication as well as what is aired for mass audiences. This would include television programming, movies and popular music. Also, the instruments used for mass transmission and communication are added, specifically television sets, video games, radios, cassette players, cassette tapes, compact discs, telephones and cellular phones.

Popular culture: This category includes professional sport teams and their logos, lowrider imagery, retro images (peace signs, smiley faces), symbols associated with femininity (hearts, flowers), Eastern philosophy and martial arts (yin-yangs), and aliens

Regardless of the source, if images and conversations are derived from mass media, popular culture or corporate America, I think it is important to note how children's personal experiences still form an integral part in why these

references occur in the first place. Consumerism, the mass media, and popular culture themes are experienced daily in children's lives at home and at school. They are embedded in children's constructions of their world. These references also form necessary connections with others, in interacting and negotiating affiliations. Children's reasoning for these references could range from saying or drawing something that is easily recognizable to connect with another, or because of the reference's associations with peers, siblings, family and celebrities. For example, I can still vividly remember an instance when I was a third grader. One of my classmates, my friend Bonnie, knew how to draw a flower by making four slender pointy petals, aligned like a compass, and then filled in the empty spaces with overlapping curves. I remember the pleasure I learned from drawing that symbol, not because it was an especially interesting flower, but everytime I drew it, I thought of my friend. It was this association with a peer that made this symbol meaningful to me, and I made sure she saw me draw this symbol often. It was very much like wearing a friendship bracelet. This simplistic flower symbol, though, unlike the friendship, was short-lasting. I do not remember drawing it past the fourth grade.

Corporate/Consumer

At first I found the notion of children drawing corporate brands to be a bit disconcerting until I noticed that the brands that children tend to depict are the ones that they have the most daily contact with, either that they wear and can feel daily (e.g. shoes), or from products that they can purchase on their own (e.g. candy).

I also noticed that children made gender distinctions among the brands, ones that did not seem obvious to me. Once while I was talking with some fifth grade boys about their clothing, and we were discussing their baggy JNCO

jeans, I asked one of the boys if girls wore JNCO jeans too (which I saw they did occasionally). The fifth grade boy told me "I don't know girl styles. I don't want to know." I later noticed that only certain girls would don the baggy JNCO jean style, those who seemed to have more power in the group, as if to use jeans as a way to gain some masculine power. These girls also wore other clothes more familiar with boys' manner of dressing, opting not to wear T-shirts with hearts and teddy bears, but instead wearing shirts with Nike and other sports-related logos. In fact, I really could not discern what brands were considered to be strictly for girls, and I only once saw a fifth grade girl draw an intended feminine brand-Covergirl, and that she did not even keep in her finished drawing (figures 14 and 15).
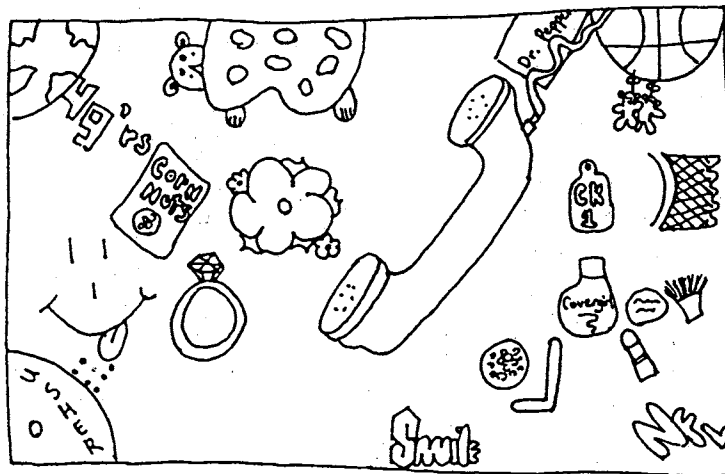
Figure 14
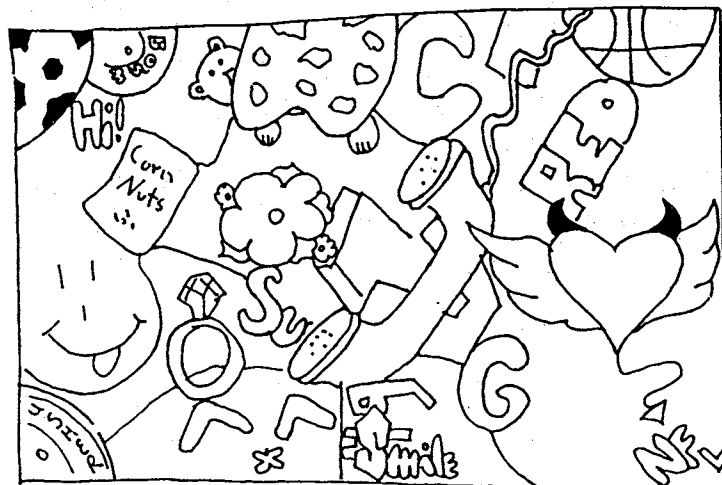
Figure 15

Corporate brand symbols may seem to be out of place in an art class, art education typically focusing on appreciating fine art. However, when children include these symbols, they may actually be showing they do appreciate art and design. In their fascination with corporate logos, they are truly reveling in what would be considered the apex of commercial art and design, not the fine art world. This seems to affirm that art is more meaningful if it is integrated in one's daily life. Art that considers itself to be separate and above daily life for many, thereby attaching a class association, cannot expect to be valued by most people. Children's use of brand symbols may reflect more of a deficiency in the fine art world, rather than a deficiency in themselves.

Clothing Brands

Clothing brands, out of all the other brands marketed to children, appeared the most in their artwork. The brands drawn the most were Nike, Fila, Reebok, JNCO, ZONZ and Tommy Hilfiger. Nike seemed to be trans-gender, but Fila was mostly drawn by girls. Both sexes drew JNCO, but only boys drew ZONZ. Tommy Hilfilger was a late arrival in this study, a brand adopted by some fifth grade girls. Other apparel drawn by fifth graders were O's for Oakley sunglasses, which I later learned were quite costly. Not relating to a brand but to apparel was jewelry, especially large carat diamond rings, drawn by a group of fifth grade girls.

Shoes

Among all brands, depictions of shoe brands outrank all others by far. I've noticed that children in first through fifth grades will draw shoe brands, especially Nike, more than any other brand or any other product including food.

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Other product brands are not even a close second. Many reasons are possible, and I believe that they are all probable to some extent. Advertising, parents, peers, and associations with athletes play some role. But I think feet and consequently shoes signify independence for children in both their movement and in aiding interaction with others. In fact, children's first representational drawings at the end of the scribbling stage are head-feet figures (figure 16), which is their first representation for human beings. The head-feet figure has a circle for the head (with possible mouth and eyes), two legs and two feet. Arms and hands are not usually depicted initially, nor is there a body present.

The Nike Phenomenon

As mentioned earlier, out of all the brands available to children, the Nike swoosh appears to be the most potent symbol for them. Nike swooshes are consistently drawn by children throughout the elementary grade levels, starting as early as first grade. Joan had one first grade class explore crayon texture rubbings. She had mentioned in her demonstration that children's shoes had textures, just as an example to relate texture to their own experience and to help give them an example to get started. One boy, after making a rubbing of a large Nike swoosh imprinted on the sole of his shoe, excitedly showed his rubbing to his classmates. Several wanted to make a rubbing off of his shoe and he obliged. He pulled up a chair in the middle of the room, sat down and stuck out his foot. When these few children finished and left, he started to advertise, saying " I have a Nike! I have a Nike!" He spent most of the class period gathering crowds of children around him to make texture rubbings of his shoe. Another boy, seeing the attention, and noticing that he too had a Nike swoosh at the bottom of his shoe, pulled up a chair not far from the other boy, propped up his foot as well and advertised in a similar fashion, but he did not attract as

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Figure 16

Figure 17

Figure 18

Figure 19

Figure 20

Figure 21
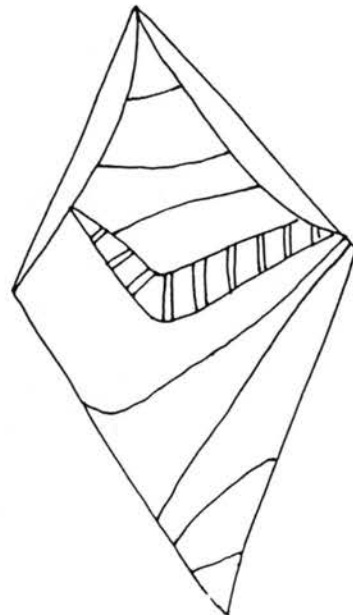
Figure 22

many children (I think because his Nike swoosh was not as large).

In all the grades, the Nike swoosh varied from child to child, with two common ways of composing the symbol, ranging from a trueness to the original symbol with varying tail lengths (figure 17 and 18), to Nike as a check mark (figures 19 and 20). One fellow educator suggested, in a conversation, that children noted the similarity between the check mark seen in grading and marks of approval and correctness in the public school with that of the graceful Nike logo. One child combined these two ways (figure 21), with the angular check part comprising the top of the Nike, and the curved part of the swoosh at the bottom, and another added stripes to the Nike (figure 22) to integrate the swoosh with the overall kite design. Yet another child contrasted the curved lines of the Nike with the straightness of other lines in the design (figure 23), and a first grader altered the Nike swooshes into more of crescent shapes (figure 24). It was Joan who informed me that these crescents were intended to be Nike symbols by the child.

Others mixed the Nike swoosh with other symbols, not usually affiliated with Nike. One child placed a extended tailed Nike swoosh in the design composed of Native American symbols (figure 25). Other children mixed Nikes with symbols from popular culture, such as a second grade boy's quilt block design mixing of Nike with yin-yangs (figure 26), a third grade girl's mingling of Nike with peace and smiley faces (figure 27), and a fourth grade boy's alien (who is hot pink instead of the standard green) clothed in Nike attire (figure 28). Another interesting mix occurs on a shield design from an art assignment dealing with medieval heraldry, a mix comprised of two altered Nike swooshes caught in yin-yang opposition, the yin-yang element suggested by contrasting colors and dots (figure 29). Nike swooshes as mouths cropped up in two different grade levels at different times, one as the mouth for a clown (figure 30)
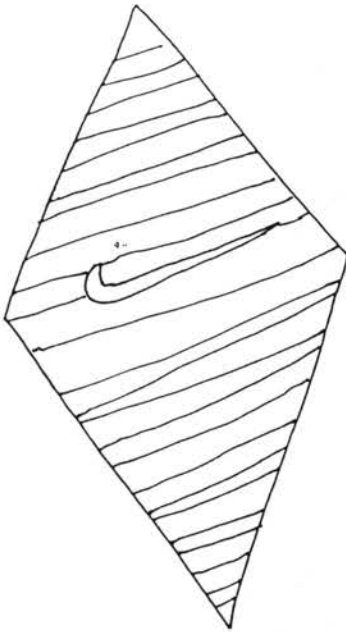
Figure 23
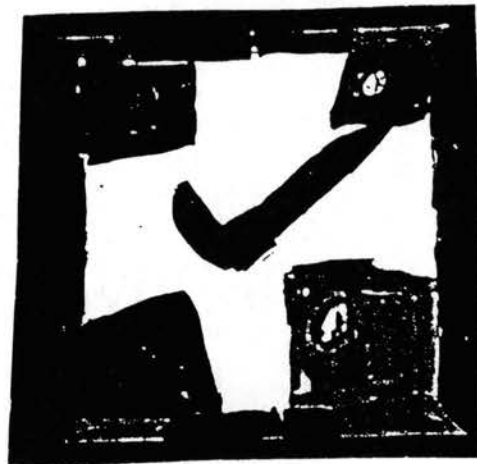

Figure 24
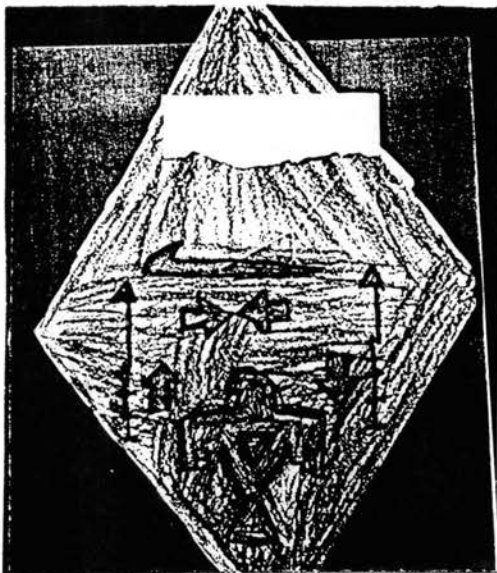
Figure 25

Figure 26

and another to form as an alien's expression of glee (figure 31). Clearly Nike as a symbol for athleticism is altered by the children and extended into other domains of life. For example, the third grade children had drawn oil pastel

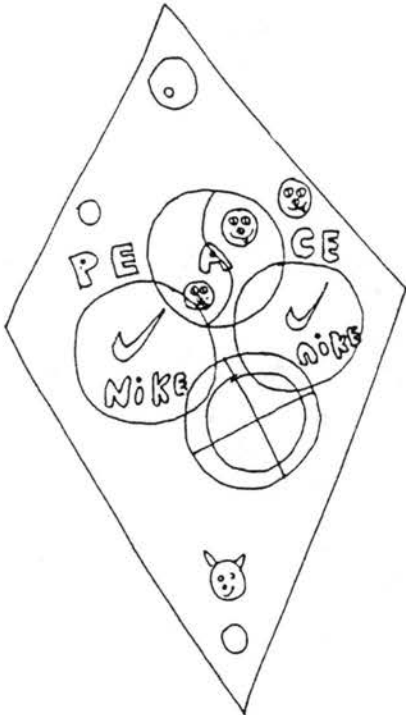clowns, and one clown wore a Nike branded harlequin's outfit. "Just do it" extends to the circus world as well.
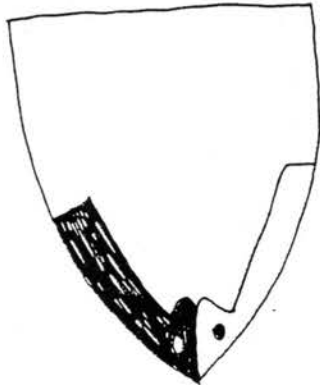

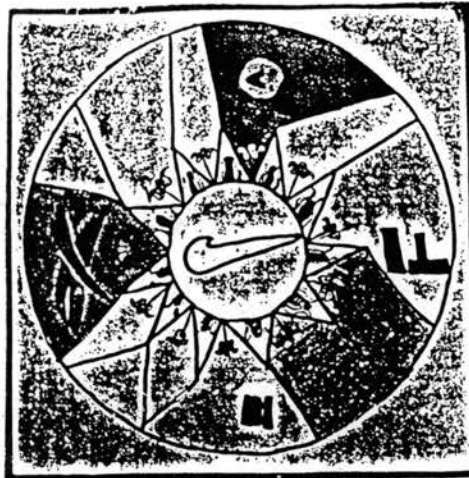Figure 27

Figure 28

Figure 29

Figure 30

Figure 31

Figure 32

Figure 33

The other shoe brands were not altered in like fashion in children's drawings. Even though I saw children wear Fila, Reebok and Adidas shoes and clothing as much as I saw them wear Nike, the children did not play with these other brands to this extent, nor did they readily integrate these brand logos into overall designs. A fifth grade boy, in his design based on Pennsylvania Dutch hex sign imagery (figure 32), replaced most of the standard imagery of flowers, hearts, leaves and birds with shoe brands. The Nike symbol is enlarged and placed prominently in the middle, encircled by light pink tulips. Reebok, Adidas, Air Walk and Fila hover around the swoosh. I asked the child about his design and he remarked that he was "just playing around." He owned a pair of Nikes, but he did not consider them to be better than the other brands he had depicted. Another boy at his table, listening in to the conversation, pointed out that the Adidas symbol had been incorrectly drawn and the two boys discussed the Adidas logo with each other.

The Fila logo was the second most often depicted shoe logo, and the fifth grade girls preferred to place it their personality drawings. While working on these drawings, one fifth grade girl started to wander around the classroom,

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looking for a Fila symbol on somebody's shoes or clothing. She asked out loud for help from her classmates, "What color is Fila? Which way is it? Where does the red go?" An interesting and telling combination produced by one fifth grade girls is that of the red and blue Fila logo placed on top of a green dollar sign (figure 33). Fila's colors remained true to the corporate logo. A third child mixed the No Fear clothing line with that of Fila (figure 34) by having the letter F be broken into two parts like that of the Fila symbol, but in this case, the colors were altered to be all black, repeating the black stripes in the kite design.
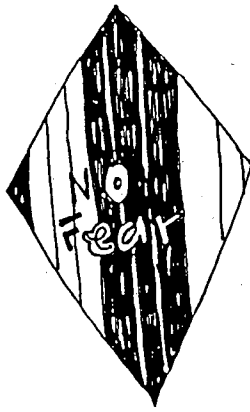
Figure 34

Figure 35

Even though children's fascination with the Nike swoosh permeated their drawings, they were often surprised when I asked them their opinions about Nike, and had trouble verbalizing their thoughts about the popularity of this symbol and its meaning to them. Most of the children, when asked, replied that they simply liked the symbol and thought it was cool. At least the symbol itself could help elevate one to the stance of "coolness" as seen in this drawing about Jose (figure 35). It is debatable if the Nike hat alone is what transfigures Jose from the mundane world to that of the realm of those perceived to be cool, but instead emerges from a combination of symbols and a posture.

I interviewed one fifth grade girl:

And another thing I'm going to ask... are you familiar with all the Nikes and the Reeboks and Adidas?
Y: Not really.
Cause I was going to ask what your opinion's on all that stuff?
Y: Well.. I guess my favorite is like Fila and Nike.
Okay, now why.
Y: I just like Fila and Nike, I guess. I just like it.
I'm noticing that Nike is super popular, but there's more advertisements for Adidas and Reebok.
Y: Yeah.
And I'm just noticing that children are starting to wear stuff that has Reebok and Adidas more so than just being straight Nikes. And then I noticed that Nike changed their slogan, it used to be "Just do it" now it's "I can," and now they're changing their commercials.
(another child at table talks about commercial he saw that had Nike and Sprite advertising together. He thought it was cool.)
Y: I haven't seen it yet.

I noticed that this girl sat in the sidelines, so to speak, when it came to symbol usage in her artwork and in her conversations, adopting symbols more for showing affiliation with her peers than any other reasons. For example, when I asked her and two other girls about professional wrestling, her statements were brief and hesitant, saying "cool" and "yeah I like it." The other two girls expressed differing opinions and hotly debated their loyalties, whereas she simply stated her likes and dislikes without much emotion, often watching her peers' reactions to my questions before commenting.

A fourth grade boy altered his brand preferences midway after overhearing another child at his table state that "Filas are more in style" (than Nike):

Of like stuff like Nike, Adidas, Reebok, Air Walk and so forth...
        (student yells out "What's your favorite shoe?")
B2:   My favorite shoe is Nike.
Nike. You have Nikes on right now?
B2:   No I don't know what I have on.
So why do you like Nike?
B2:   Cause they are like, like the bomb.
(child mentions to me that Nikes are in style) **Reeboks' in style and Adidas is in style.** (another child mentions that Filas are MORE in

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style) (Student asks B2 again "What's your favorite shoe?"
B2:   My favorite shoes are Nike and Fila. Yeah cause I have some sandals, they're like black and glittery and they are Filas.
What do you think about the Nike commercials that they have? (girl at table mentions that they are action-packed)
B2:   I like their shirts the best, Nike T-shirts. I have a Nike shirt

A second grade boy supplied me with the most information regarding the

shoe symbol variations in the Nike line:

V: And we got the basketball, with this real autograph by Michael Jordan.
Oh really? A basketball that's autographed by Michael Jordan?
V: A REAL autograph. And sometimes I wear Air Jordan, sometimes.
Yeah, I've seen that where you've got the Air Jordan shoes and that means...Michael Jordan wears them?
V: Yeah. He wears Air Jordans. He sells Air Jordans.
So why is it called Air?
V: I guess cause he jumps so high and I guess cause he slams real hard, and he jumps in the air when he slams, and I guess that's why they call them Air Jordans.
So you say you wear Air Jordans?
V: Yeah. Those are my basketball shoes.
Why do you wear Air Jordans?
V: I don't know. I don't know. They just feel comfortable.
Are they put out by Nike or is that different?
V: I think they are put out by Nike. But Michael Jordan named them after him, Air Jordans.
Have you ever had Nikes?
V: Yeah. I have a pair at home.
So which of these is better, Air Walk, I mean Air Jordan, I get these confused, Air Jordan or Nikes, which ones?
V: Well they have Nike Air and uh...
Nike Air and Air Jordan, is there a difference?
V: Yeah, I would say. (pointing to the design on his shoe) Yeah, cause Air Jordan always has this guy with a basketball in his hand and he's kinda of doing the splits and his hand's way down here and he has a Nike sign...
That's a Nike Air?
V: Yeah. Yeah and it's kind of a symbol of Nike, Michael Jordans, Air Jordans. I get confused.

<u>Jeans</u>

Of course, Nike, Reebok, Fila and Adidas are clothing tags as well. Brand logos for jeans were more likely to be drawn by fourth but especially fifth graders, and these jean brands were not mentioned nor depicted by the younger grades. JNCO, ZONZ and Paco jean brands dominated, but their depictions were few and far between. Their symbols tended to be drawn solo, not integrated as part of a design, nor mixed with any other symbols from the mass media or popular culture. I spotted some on one fifth grade folder where the children stored their artwork. The girls had written several of these jean brands on their folder. Overall, JNCO was the most popular, and I wondered if this was because the letter J in the name was so similar to both the yin-yang sign and the Pepsi logo. These jean brands were words, albeit short ones, but potentially too awkward to integrate in artwork, unlike the Nike swoosh. I was not as familiar with JNCO, so I could not distinguish if children were playing with the symbol or drawing what they had seen from an actual label tag. For example, in figure 36, JNCO, a brand symbol, is drawn as a branding implement, which I found clever. I've seen JNCO's tag, and it did not look like this, but I am unsure whether this is a variation of the tag put out by the company or a playful visual pun made by the child, or maybe a drawing of a neon sign in a store that the child had seen. Twice, JNCO jeans are placed alongside Nike (figures 37 and 38), with a crane wearing a Nike shirt, and a tough, muscular guy wearing Nike shoes. ZONZ appeared several times in fifth grade boys' personality drawings (figure 39), but again, it appeared separated from the rest of the drawing.

Interestingly, figure 38 is from an assignment where children were to draw a scene showing people standing in the rain (an assignment mentioned in
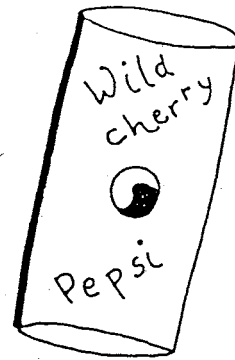
Figure 36

Figure 38
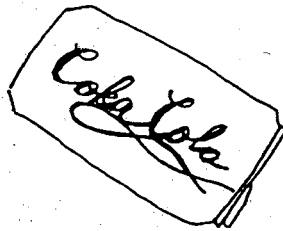

Figure 37

Figure 39
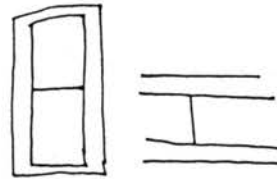
Figure 40

Figure 41

Figure 42
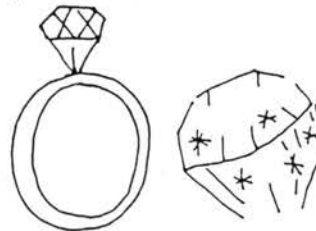
Figure 43

Lowenfeld, 1964, p.206, with drawing by child, without brand symbols). All four boys at the table drew this same tough man with JNCO jeans and Nike shoes. They spent time talking and comparing what each one was drawing, eventually all adding a graffiti-sprayed brick wall in the background (which I later saw in Lowrider Arte magazine), a broken window, bullet holes, a dog or cat going through a trash can, and lowrider bikes (Appendix E). The leader of the group drew an advertisement for Taco Bell in his finished piece.

I almost missed identifying the Tommy Hilfiger label on some fifth grade girls' personality drawings (figure 40), dismissing it initially as one girl's way of breaking up the empty background space in her drawing. This was a symbol that was just starting to appear in the children's art at the end of this study, and it is a relatively new brand. It has promise of being adopted by the children as a symbol to incorporate in their art work because it is a visual symbol instead of a word, and its colors (red and blue) are like that of other familiar brands, such as Fila and Pepsi, though, personally, I find it to be a rather dull logo with equally dull commercials.

Other Apparel

A few fifth grade children chose to include what appeared to be a flattened letter O, which I was to later learn stood for Oakley sunglasses (figure 41). They labeled these letter O's, so I gathered that Oakley was not a well-known brand among the children. It is a brand more familiar to older teenagers (and hence perceived as more sophisticated).

As part of their personality drawings, five fifth grade girls added jewelry. While one of these looks like a plausible beaded necklace that the girl would have owned and worn to school (figure 42), the other jewelry pieces looked more like wishful thinking of possessions to aspire to have in the future (figure

43), with two large carat diamond rings suitable more for an engagement than everyday wear.

Food brands

Surprisingly, food brands were not that common in children's artwork. When food was portrayed, it usually took a generic form, such as a bag of popcorn or a pepperoni pizza, without reference to a particular brand (like Tombstones) or restaurant (such as Pizza Hut). In fact, I only saw one restaurant logo ever drawn, and that was Braum's (figures 44 and 45), each with two scoops of ice cream piled on a cone, closely resembling the actual Braum's logo. However in looking at these drawings, the children may have provided information about their own personal taste preferences. Figure 44 is red ice cream (strawberry?) and figure 45 is orange ice cream with sprinkles and a cherry on top. Again, the children may have chosen these colors for aesthetic reasons.

Food brands typically took the form of soda, candy and chips-items easily purchased by most children with small amounts of money at convenience stores. The soda brand drawn the most was Pepsi (figures 46, 47, 48 and 49). Coca Cola was only depicted once (figure 50). Considering the competitive nature of these two rival brands and the amount of money they put into marketing, I was expecting more of an even split in what soda brands children drew. Also, in the teacher's example of her personality drawing, which hung in the art room the entire time I was there, she had the word Coke. I noticed that children would borrow stuff from her drawing to incorporate in their art, such as a lightning bolt, a map, and sports equipment, but Coke was only used by one student, who drew an elaborate can (figure 50). Given the fact that Coca Cola's

Figure 44

Figure 45

Figure 46
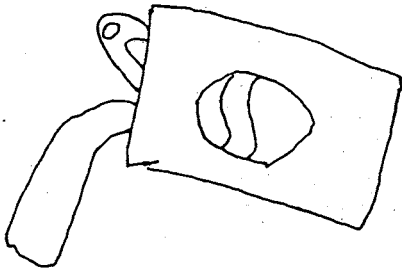
Figure 47
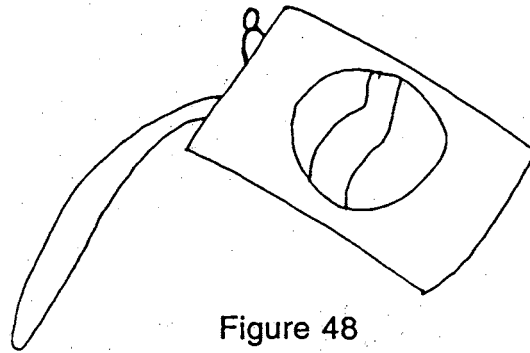
Figure 48

Figure 49

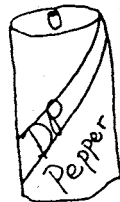**Figure 50**

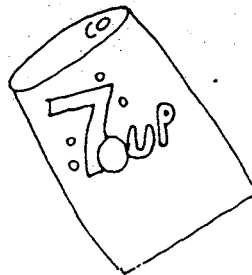**Figure 51**

Figure 52

Figure 53

Figure 54

Figure 55

logo is script instead of a solely visual symbol, and that Pepsi's logo closely resembles a yin-yang, might explain why the Pepsi design was chosen over Coke: its visual symbol offers more possibilities for artistic manipulation than Coca Cola's script. Only two of the figures (figures 47 and 48) have an accurate Pepsi logo, in that the children draw and color all three bands in the circle, whereas figures 46 and 49 forgo the middle white band altogether. Figure 49 especially alludes to the yin-yang symbol, without the dots.

But what about figures 51, 52 and 53? Here the children have drawn Dr.Pepper, whose logo is script-based, like Coca Cola. The difference might have been that there was a Dr. Pepper vending machine at the school, located at the bus and bike ramp. Children would have had the opportunity to see this vending machine's advertisement every school day, from as many elementary grade levels that they went there, and of course, they could buy Dr. Pepper from this machine as well, to possibly consume on the bus or bike ride home, or even if they walked home. The cherry 7Up and the A&W cream soda (figures 54 and 55) could also be purchased from this same vending machine (as were A&W Root Beer and RC Cola, also depicted by children in their drawings).

Concerning candy bars and chips, I spotted Hershey's chocolate bar (figure 56), Butterfinger (figure 57), Butterfinger BB's (figure 58-which is also advertised with Bart Simpson) and Reese's peanut butter cups (figure 59). Bubblicious gum (figure 60) and a Doritos bag (figure 61) were also represented. These drawings all have brand names, but little package detailing. The children simply chose to label these products.

Other Brands

Two remaining brands not related to clothing or food occurred and that

was a Rawlings baseball (figure 62) and a Lawn Boy lawn mower (figure 63). Again, I would like to reiterate how children's experiences with objects, and its attached brand is part of that experience, explains more about the brand's inclusion in their drawings than marketing alone. Children who play baseball would probably be familiar with Rawlings as a brand, but they would also be familiar with other properties of the baseball too, such as its size, weight, color and how it appears to be put together (its stitching). About the lawn mower, I learned from Joan that the boy who drew this Lawn Boy mower on the side of
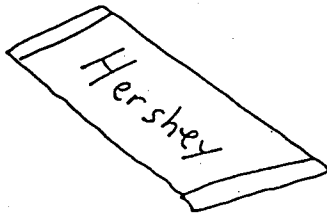
Figure 56
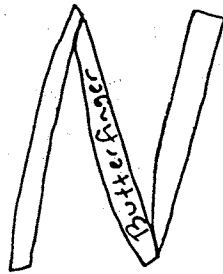
Figure 57

Figure 58

Figure 59
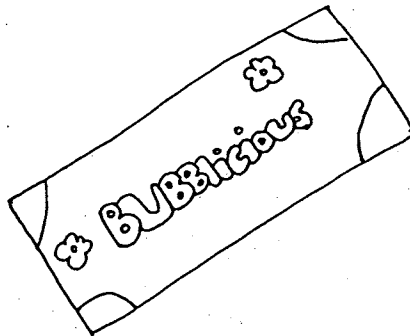
Figure 60
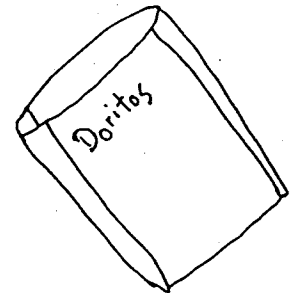
Figure 61
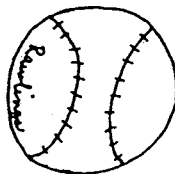
Figure 62

Figure 63

his letter R (which was part of his name) mowed neighbors' lawns to earn extra cash, and he had done this job for some time.

Advertisements

Television advertisements easily mingled in children's conversations with one another. One fourth grade girl came up to talk to me as I was trying to get my tape recorder to work. The batteries had run down. She intently watched me pry the defunct batteries out of the recorder, and remarked that I used the Energizer brand. I asked her which ones she used. "Energizer," she replied, "because they have the cute bunny." "Well," I asked, "What does Duracell have?" "Nothing." she replied. "What should they have?" I inquired. She then looked at my T-shirt that had a computer-generated alien dancing and read "Keep on Abductin'" and formed her response about what Duracell needed to represent its product, "A disco alien."
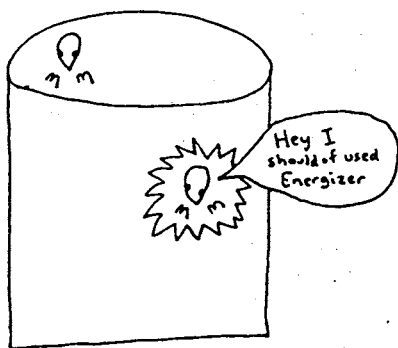
Figure 64

Figure 65

Energizer and aliens did make a show in a fifth grade boy's drawing (figure 64). The actual assignment was for children to draw creatures coming out of a can, which in this case, were aliens, one peeping out of a hole saying "Hey I should of used Energizer," which sounds similar to V8's slogan "Hey I should of had a V8." Another child added Taco Bell's latest slogan "Yo quiero Taco Bell" (figure 65), even drawing the chihuahua featured in the commercials. Other children at his table drew dogs too, but they did not include the television commercial reference.

<u>Stores</u>

One day I came into the art room and was immediately intrigued by a second grade boy's work hanging on the wall (figure 66). It was of a treehouse with a small Wal-Mart and a larger K-Mart. Both Wal-mart and K-mart had stores in this town. I had not seen any stores drawn by children so far at this school. I asked the boy to talk with me about his drawing:

> V: She told, we started on this uh project and she told us to put all the different kinds of things and...
> **What is the project?**
> V: We were supposed to put, we were supposed to draw a tree house, and it's like ... we could put these jungle gym nets, and uh bikes on it, cars and we could put stores, houses, TV... (I was not sure if he was referring to the actual assignment or reconstruction of his assignment since he was looking at his artwork to jog his memory).
> **Yeah, I noticed you've got a TV set and a...**
> V: And a chair.
> **Yeah a recliner right next to it...**
> V: And I got a K-mart, and I got me a house and Wal-Mart. There's my car.
> **What type of car is that?**
> V: Thunderbird. And then I made a balcony. There's a window and...
> **That's interesting that you have a Wal-Mart and a K-Mart.**
> V: And I made this ladder so I could climb up we could get jump up, if our arms were long enough we get onto that branch and then we could uh go inside the tree cause there's stairs all the way up and then we

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could up there and then we could watch TV.

So there's stairs all inside.

V: Yeah.

You go to K-mart very often?

V: Not very often.

What about Wal-Mart?

V: Pretty much, yeah.

Cause I noticed you've made the K-Mart quite a bit bigger than the Wal-Mart, so I wasn't sure if there was a preference.

V: Yeah. I would have put a Hasting's up there, but I figured that I didn't have enough room.

Yeah, they have a Hastings here in (town).

V: Yeah.

I just saw it today. I need to go check it out.

V: Do you know that one teacher (name)?

No.

V: Well a friend of mine, he said he saw (that teacher) in Hastings.

I imagine any educator looking at this drawing might be concerned about the depiction of stores by a child this young, but what I found was that, for this child, the treehouse was what was the most meaningful to him because he had one at home. He talked for most of the class describing in great length what his treehouse looked like inside and out, and how it differed from the one he drew. He talked about the games he and his friends played in his treehouse. His decision to make his Wal-Mart much smaller than the K-Mart had more to do with size constraints while composing his design than any store loyalty.
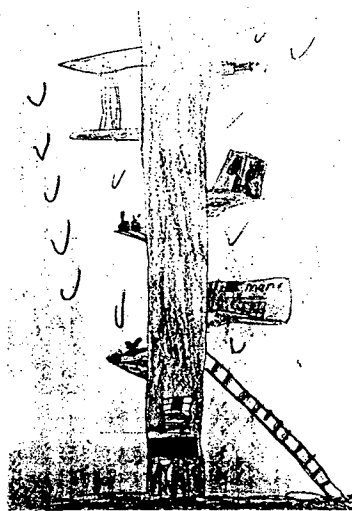

Figure 66

An interview regarding a first grader's race car collection led to this

discussion about stores between this boy and his male friend at the table:

> U: We got Jimmy Spencer, Ricky Rugg, Ricky Craven..... Hey (to boy
> at table) do you know, do you know now, guess what? Down there in
> Wal-Mart in toys, they got these collectors....
> (boy informs U he knows this, and has two of the collector toys)
> U: Dale Earnheardt.
> (boy surprised that they have a Dale Earnheardt)
> U: Yeah, they got a Dale Earnheardt one too.
> (boy wants to know if this Dale Earnheardt car is in the toy section at
> Wal-Mart)
> U :   Yeah.
> (boy says he didn't see them and presses U for more specific location.
> Confirmed that toy is located near the battery-operated and wind-
> up toys.)
> (to boy at table) **So now you need to go back and check it out.**
> (boy claims that he didn't know their location because his two toys were
> given to him by his grandparents as a Christmas present)
> U: Then that's where they probably got' em. K-mart sells them too.
> (some more debate between U and the boy about Wal-mart and whether
> K-mart would sell these toy cars)

The Act of Shopping

I did not see children draw themselves in the act of shopping, but I did

see some of the tools needed while shopping, that of a shopping cart to hold the

goods, and that of the dollars needed to buy it. A fifth grade girl added a

shopping cart to her personality drawing (figure 67). Five fifth grade girls drew

numerous dollar signs floating throughout their personality drawings (one on a

bag indicating wads of cash, figure 68). These dollar signs were often mixed

with consumer products. For example, one girl who had drawn thirteen dollar

signs in her personality drawing, had also included symbols for Nike, Fila,

JNCO, Tommy Hilfiger, Dr. Pepper, Big Red (soda), Hershey's chocolate bar,

Next's musical CD and a $1000 bill (figure 69). Although this may look like an

example of rampant consumerism, the context for what occurred while the child

was creating this piece is unknown. This girl may be really into acquiring many objects, and drew this piece without interacting with any of the girls at her table. But this piece could also have been drawn with humorous intent, possibly playing with the stereotype of the female shopper, or emerged from a playful escalating boast session among her peers about what they would like to own some day, or downright make believe about what they own at the moment.
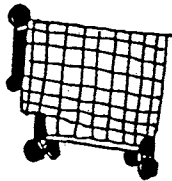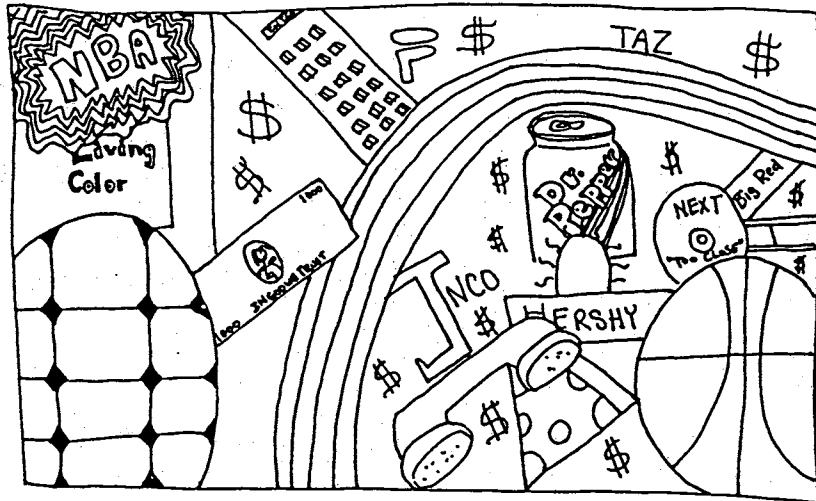

Figure 67

Figure 68

Figure 69

Collections

I occasionally asked children about their collections, to search for connections to these collections and the children's artwork. Some of the children's collections were small, consisting of maybe five objects. These small collections seemed to be child-initiated objects of desire and were often toys. Sometimes the children's collections were shared with a parent. Large collections of "untouchables" kept safe in boxes or meant for display on shelves seemed to me to be adult-initiated and directed.

Small cars, either Matchbox or Hotwheels, were the focus for two boys. One third grade boy's collection of Matchbox was small but a source of pride for

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the child:

> So what type of cars do you like to collect P?
> P: I like to collect...let's see... um....those truck, those short ones and race cars and motorcycles and......
> Okay. Where do you get these?
> P: Well um sometimes I get them at Dollar General, sometimes I get them at Christmas. Sometimes I get two packs of them for Christmas.
> What are they like, those cars, about how big are they, these cars? Is that like those Matchbox?
> P: Yeah.
> Those Matchbox metal cars?
> P: Yeah.
> Which cars do you have that you are the most proud of in your collection?
> P: My motorcycle and the uh the racing cars and those big old round trucks.
> What type of motorcycle is that? Is that a certain type of motorcycle or?
> P: Oh I don't...
> Is it a Harley or a .....
> P: I got two uh Harleys.
> So you have several motorcycles?
> P: Yes.
> What are some of the names of the race cars?
> P: There's one that's says Speed and there's another one that says, it says it has 10 on it.

This second grade boy's collection is important to him because he shares it with

his father:

> Do you collect anything like cars?
> V: Seashells.
> Seashells?
> V: Yeah and I also collect Hotwheels. Me and my dad do that together. Me and him have the same hobby.
> Okay. You guys share a hobby, you and your father. What are the Hotwheels? Is that like motorcycles.....?
> V: They're little cars, like Camaros and Chevys.
> It's like the Matchbox series?
> V: Yeah, it's like Matchbox but they call them Hotwheels. Yeah, we collect Hotwheels and stuff.
> How many do you have? In your collection?
> V: 24.
> And which ones are your prized possessions, in the Hot wheels?

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V: Convertibles, Chevys..........
Any Chevy Novas? I drive a Chevy Nova, just thought I'd ask.
V: No. Isuzu, Corvettes, and what's that one (thinking) Ford Explorer.

A first grade girl collected beanie babies and Barbies:

Okay, tell us about your beanie baby collection...
S: Um I have 5 beanie babies and I like them a lot and I always play with them. I like turtle uh a tiger uh a bear and a baby monkey.
Are there some that you are thinking about getting in the future?
S: The tiger beanie baby.
What are some other toys that you have?
S: Barbies.
The Barbies? Yeah, they've been putting out some new Barbies. Which ones do you have, of the Barbies?
S: I have 3 dolls. I don't play with them all. I have the skating Barbie.
Skating Barbie? Okay. Is that the ice skating, is that the one where she bends, I think I saw that one, her legs bend, her arms bend.
S: Uh huh.
Is it like the Olympic skating Barbie?
S: Uh huh.
Do you have it where you have Ken? (as an Olympic skating pair)
S: (shaking her head no)
(another girl at the table tells me about her Skipper doll)
S: And I have two Barbies that I can't open, they're in the box, and then I have the doctor Barbie, the vet Barbie.
(girl at table goes into detail about her Barbie collection)

Another girl, a fifth grader, accumulated Winnie the Pooh paraphernalia:

Are there any cartoons that you like, or things that you collect?
Y: Winnie the Pooh stuff. I love Winnie the Pooh. I've got shirts, and alarm clocks and shoes, and all this different stuff.
You wear them to school?
Y: Yeah (laughs).
You've (got) stuffed Winnie the Poohs?
Y: I've got the hug and snuggle one-the one wear you push his nose and it like wiggles or you squeeze his tummy and my little sister's got one.
Is your sister into the Winnie the Pooh stuff?
Y: Kinda sorta.

Joan pointed out a first grade boy who almost daily wore T-shirts featuring

various race car drivers. These T-shirts were meaningful to him because of his family's connections with the the race car scene.

So how many T-shirts do you have U?
U: Lots.
With race cars?
U: Lots.
You got one on right now?
U: Uh huh.
I was looking at it from back there. (pointing to where I usually sit in the classroom) **What is all that?** (pointing to his T-shirt) **I don't watch race cars or all that.**
(other boy at table becomes very involved with this conversation, to the point where my interviewee has a difficult time getting a word in, which is why U's comments are so brief. This boy informs me that U's T-shirt reads "Mike")
Okay. Why does it say Wichita Kansas? Is that....
U: Because that's where he lives... that's where Mike... (reading name on T-shirt)
Peters... (still reading name on shirt)
U: Yeah.
...lives? And he's a race car driver? Okay. He lives in Wichita, Kansas.
U: (struggling to get a word in edgewise) They go from Wichita to Tulsa.
So, do you have a bunch of shirts with Mike Peters?
U: Uh huh. We collect them all because that's my dad's friend.

A third grade girl wanted to tell me about her glass teddy bear collection:

Go ahead and tell us about your bear collection.
X: I have over two hundred bears.
Two hundred?
X: Uh huh (nodding yes) They're Cherish Bears.
What's Cherish Bears?
X: Cherish Teddies.
Okay. Is that a brand or something, Cherish Teddies?
X: They're glass.
Glass teddy bears? So you can't really snuggle them or anything? They sit on a shelf.
X: Uh uh. (shaking head no)
Do they have it where they're all different types, like they have different expressions on their faces or something, we're talking about 200 hundred teddy bears, glass teddy bears.
(another student asking about recording) **Only if I got a consent form back. What do they look like? Are they different colors? Are they clear crystal?**

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X: They're different colors and some of them are clear.
How big are they?
X: About that big. (using hands to show measurement, about 2 inches tall).

Mass Media

When I asked children to talk with me about television, video games, movies and popular music, children overwhelmingly chose to discuss video games and movies rather than television, which surprised me. Like the corporate symbols, children were highly selective in what symbols from the mass media they portrayed, with most stemming from children's television (professional wrestling being the main exception).

This section also includes children's renderings of television sets, video game controls, compact discs, tape cassettes, walkmans with headphones, boomboxes and telephones. Noticeably absent from children's drawings and conversations were computers.

Television and Home Video Games

Children drew television sets both turned on and off. Two fourth graders integrated stereotypic versions of television sets in letters they drew that formed part of their names (figures 70 and 71). But other children drew more personalized television sets, possibly meant to portray their own sets at home. Figures 72 and 73 are two sets turned on, with some program being aired. What is peculiar about figure 73 is that the child colored his set in bands of red and green, which in his finished artwork, coordinates with a red and green banded boombox (figure 105), both intended to repeat the colors in the Mexican flag drawn in the background.
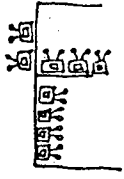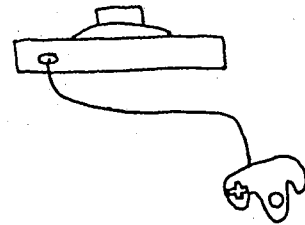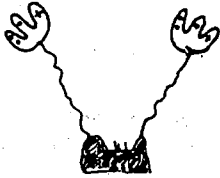
Figure 70

Figure 71
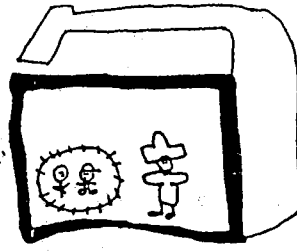
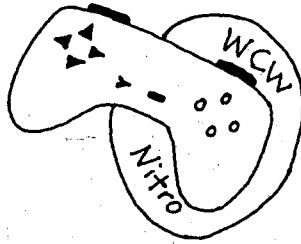Figure 72

Figure 73
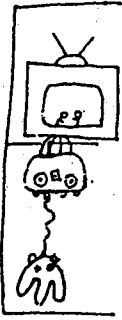
Figure 74
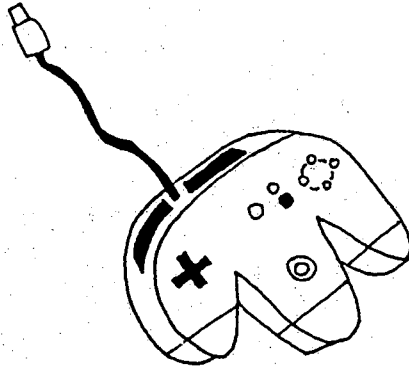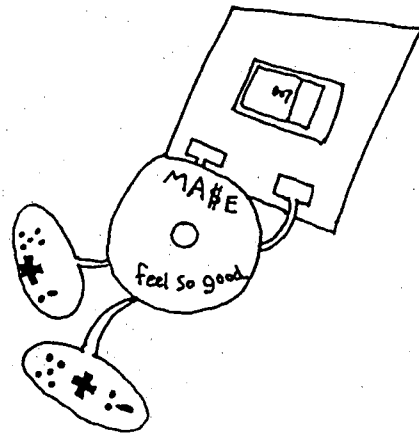
Figure 75

Figure 76

Figure 77
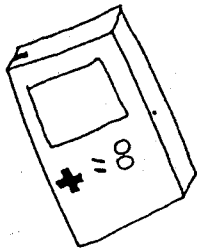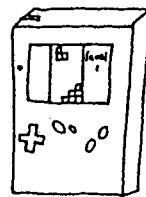
Figure 78

Figure 79

Figure 80

Figure 81

Figure 82

Figure 83

But home video game systems were represented more often than television sets. One fourth grader's television set, again incorporated into a letter for his name, has a complete Nintendo 64 video game system attached (figure 74). Whereas the television set is stereotypic (with stick figures on the set indicating that the power is on), the video game control and console is highly detailed. I don't know whether the figures shown on the set are from a video game in session or from regular television programming. The children mentioned several home video game systems, namely Playstation, Nintendo 64 and SEGA. While differences among these systems seemed obvious enough to them, I found the systems and their consequent games highly confusing. Some fourth grade boys tried to explain Playstation to me:

> F: Hey! I'm gonna get a Playstation, it's cool!
> **Okay. I've been seeing that Playstation and Nintendo, what is the difference between them, I'm confused, I don't know much about...**
> F: Playstation 64 is better than Playstation.
> G: Playstation is where it looks like a CD, but you put it in there and it's a game and you play it like Mortal Kombat and like all that.

Figures 75, 76 and 77 show the Nintendo 64 systems (figure 77 forms the letter V for a fourth grader's name) whereas figures 78 is Playstation and 79 is SEGA. In one art assignment where fourth graders were asked to create make-believe funhouses, several boys inserted Nintendo and SEGA systems into their drawings.

I also found hand-held video games such as GameBoy (figures 80, 81 and 82) and Giga Pets (figure 83) in children's artwork. One GameBoy (figure 82) already turned on and ready to play at level one, looks like the video game Tetris. A fifth grade girl talked about her GameBoy:

> **Do you play any video games?**
> Y: I play my Gameboy sometimes. I've got all these different games. I've got Mario, Donkey Kong, Tetris one and two, and Kirby, you know, I've got a whole bunch of 'em.

What's Kirby?
Y: It's this little thing. It's like a ball-thing, or he is, and I've got a Pinball one and another one and where it's kinda like Tetris where you have to get certain little blocks in certain spots, but they're pretty cool.
Gameboy? I don't own any video games. I've played them in the past, but don't own any.
Y: It's this little hand-held game-like thing you might have seen on commercials on TV like the ice-cold one thing, the silver one, like the freezer, where that little boy is going "Neh, neh, neh, neh, neh."
No I haven't seen it. And I pride myself on watching a lot of TV.....
Y: Well there's that one. Well, what it is, it's like that one and that one (pointing to her drawing, figure 81) and it has A, B buttons and it has a plus sign for all the different ways to go and a start and select button and an on and off button and it's got a screen that is about that big (2" by 2 1/2") and you just push these buttons and play the games. They're really cool.

Television Programming

When it came to talking about television shows, children, particularly those in the lower grades, wanted to talk about children's television, with most shows discussed coming from the cable channel Nickelodeon. Nickelodeon was also the only network visually identified (drawn inside several children's television set depictions). Non-cable traditional networks like ABC, NBC and CBS were neither discussed nor drawn. From Nickelodeon television, Rugrats' characters Tommy, Chucky and Angelica were frequently mentioned, and younger children wore T-shirts depicting these characters. I showed children several issues of Nickelodeon, the magazine put out by the network, and they generally enjoyed it. (I also brought Disney Adventures, but the professional wrestling and lowrider magazines-from adult media-generated the most enthusiasm). One new show on Nickelodeon, the *Journey of Allen Strange*, is about an alien that appears as a child, and whose friends are children. As will be discussed later, aliens were as powerful as Nike's swoosh, and aliens were

the focus of children's movie choices:

> ....Journey of Allen Strange. I just noticed that one's
> advertised. I've never seen that.
> X: Tuesdays, there's uh there's a new one where they are trying to
> send Allen home.
> in the Journey of Allen Strange?
> X: Yeah.
> They are going to send him home to his, to his planet?
> X: Uh huh. (nodding yes)
> Do you watch that one very much?
> X: Yeah.
> How is he different?
> X: Cause he's an alien.
> Do they say where he's from?
> X: Uh uh. (shaking head no)
> They just say that he's from out there, outer space, some
> place. What does he do that's different from people, than
> humans?
> X: He shrinks his head and reads a book real, real fast.

Out of all the interviews, only one child mentioned a non-cable sitcom as

his favorite, a sitcom fashioned for both adults and children, *Home*

Improvement, but when he talked about it, he initially referred to the show as

"Tool Time," a fictional show for public television within the sitcom, hosted by the

main character Tim:

> So tell me about television. Do you have any favorite shows
> that you like to watch?
> A2:   Uh...Tool Time.
> Tool Time? What is that?
> A2:   It's a show out and it's a show about Tim, the Toolman, Taylor,
> Home Improvement.

Children preferred animated cartoons over traditional sitcoms, and

sometimes their preferences were cartoons embroiled in controversy, such as

FOX's *The Simpsons* and MTV's *Beavis and Butthead* :

> Do you have any cartoons that you like to watch?
> A2:   The Simpsons.
> Okay. Tell me about The Simpsons. Do you have a favorite
> episode or a favorite character or?
> A2:   Mmm....the episode I like is when they are in the air force, when

they went to the air show and they got, and the air force man trapped them in the gates and wouldn't let them out and they, he, they just got stuck, and I forgot what his sister's name was... (boy at table "Lisa") Yeah, Lisa walks out of the pool she was swimming in the pool and she comes out with a towel around her and she says "I am the Lizard Queen," out of the water.
I think I saw that one.
A2:   Yeah. I like King of the Hill too. And Beavis and Butthead. (boy at table "yeah!")
I've heard about South Park, is it playing? (boys look confused) **I guess it must not be playing.** (boy at table asks me a question about some movie) **What's going on with Sideshow Bob and Krusty the Clown?** (from The Simpsons)
A2:   I, I, it's been a long long time since I've watched it (other boys at table "we watch that all the time" and fill me in on Sideshow Bob) I like the part where Bart calls the bar and says is there an "Al Coholic" here? (boys start talking about it) He goes "Is there an Al Coholic here?"

When I was teaching near Houston in the early 1990s, Bart Simpson and Beavis and Butthead appeared a lot in boys' artwork. They did not make a showing in the children's art that I saw for this study, but the children still talked about these cartoon characters.

Looney Tunes cartoon characters remained popular, in part to their recent movie *Space Jam*, a hit movie combining Looney Tunes, Michael Jordan and aliens. Looney Tunes' Marvin the Martian became a focal point in a fourth grade girl's funhouse drawing (figure 84), which was also copied by another girl at her table (figure 85), the copier altering Marvin's helmet by adding a heart. Depictions of Tweety and Taz, both considered hip by the children, differed in that children usually drew Tweety (figures 86, 87 and 88) but would only spell Taz's name, which made no sense to me since both Tweety and Taz decorate children's clothing to about the same degree. I asked some girls to explain their interest in Tweety:

Favorite cartoon characters?
O: Yeah. Tweety Bird.
Tweety Bird? Yes I've been seeing a lot of Tweety Bird, children walking around with T-shirts with Tweety all on them.

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I didn't think Tweety was popular.
(O and girl at table discuss girl's Tweety backpack and shirt)
You have several things, do you have any Tweety jewelry, or do you have that? A Tweety watch?
O: I know somebody who loves Tweety (another girl's name), she's my friend. She has a Tweety Bird beanie baby, Tweety Bird (stuffed) animals and Tweety Bird everything!

And a fifth grade girl's responses:

That's something I didn't see a couple years ago, Tweety Bird stuff. Any cartoons that you watch?
Y: I like Tweety Bird um ... Bugs Bunny, and I like Space Jam the movie you know. I like um Sylvester and that's pretty much all I like.
I noticed that Tweety Bird's becoming real fashionable right now.
Y: Oh yeah, yeah.
I see Tweety shirts and...why is that?
Y: I don't know! (we both laugh). Tweety's just a big thing I guess.
Well he doesn't have his own show does he?
Y: No.
Cause like Taz, Taz has his own show.
Y: Yeah.
But Tweety just shows up every once and a while
Y: Yeah.
But he's (Tweety Bird) a real popular thing for people to have. That's like I was real surprised when I saw girls wearing Tickle Me Elmo shirts.
Y: Yeah.
And I was going, "Elmo?" Okay. So it's real interesting fashion
Y: Yeah. (we both laugh) See (that girl) over there with the black coat? She has a Tickle Me Elmo backpack. And when you push it, it goes "Hoo hoo hoo, hoo hoo hoo." And it's real cute.

Equally enigmatic to me is Elmo's adoption as a symbol by fifth grade girls. One placed Elmo in her personality drawing (figure 89). I wondered why Elmo and Tweety would be a more desirable symbol for girls than other characters. Tweety cleverly escapes the clutches of the cat, Sylvester, but for the most part resides as a caged and confined creature. Elmo, a puppet from Sesame Street, is supposed to be a preschool-aged puppet. He is understandably faddish with younger children, but fifth grade girls? I asked one of these girls, who Joan
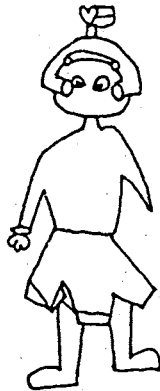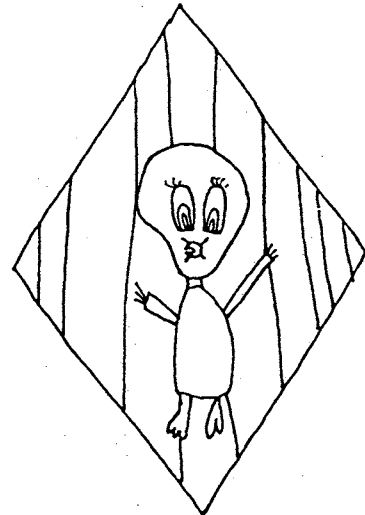
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Figure 84
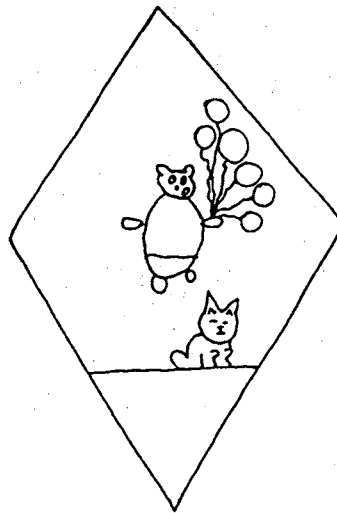
Figure 85

Figure 86

Figure 87

Figure 88

Figure 89

Figure 90

pointed out to me as holding most of the power in her class (even intimidating the boys), why Elmo? She just grinned and sheepishly replied "cause he's cool." Do they view Elmo like a substitute baby doll, or as something small and young that they are expected to nurture because they see it as their role as females? Both Elmo and Tweety have childlike voices. I think both Elmo and Tweety are considered to be male.

Winnie the Pooh, a figure caught in that liminal state between legitimate children's book and Disney television, sprang up only once in a third grade girl's kite design (figure 90). As mentioned earlier, Winnie the Pooh also received the stamp of approval as one "acceptable" cartoon character for children, since his presence is allowed on hallowed school grounds, a fate never to happen to poor Beavis and Butthead.

Sailor Moon (Appendix E), a cartoon originally made in Japan but dubbed in English for American viewing, was mentioned several times by younger girls to be a favorite. *Sailor Moon* shares many elements with other shows such as *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* and the *Power Rangers*, elements mentioned previously. The girls particularly like Sailor Moon, who is a teenage school girl primarily concerned with boys and shopping. Sailor Moon fights evil beings with her fellow female school chums, the Sailor Scouts, who get their powers from planets. Obviously, Sailor Moon's power derives from the moon. What I find disturbing about Sailor Moon is her powerlessness, even when she is transformed from school girl to Sailor Scout, ready for battle. Her transformation into warrior entails little more than a costume change, quite different from similar characters popular with boys, such as the *Transformers*, who at least get some decent weapons. Sailor Moon's skirt is shortened, and she gets some jewels to adorn her hair. When she and the other Sailor Scouts fight, they often depend on Tuxedo Mask, a handsome and mysterious man, to

save them. All the Sailor Scouts, but especially Sailor Moon, turn into absolute jelly when Tuxedo Mask arrives.

Like Beavis and Butthead and Bart Simpson, I expected to see the boys draw more superhero cartoon characters, now that *Batman*, *Superman*, *X-Men* and others are on the FOX network. The boys talked about them, but I did not see any in their drawings. I think with this group superhero cartoon characters were supplanted by professional wrestlers, who shared a striking similarity in costume and muscles to superheroes, and who also enacted a drama of good versus evil weekly (WCW versus Hollywood NWO).

Video Games

I also thought I would see the video game characters Mario and Sonic the Hedgehog in children's art, as I had seen in the past, but they did not occur. But their absence in children's artwork means little in gauging their popularity. Both Mario and Sonic the Hedgehog beat out all other video game personalities, and children were eager to talk about them. I relied on two second grade girls to explain both of these games to me. Both went into great detail about these games. Here, one talks about her experiences with Mario:

Tell me about your Nintendo, that you've had for years T.
T: Well I've had it since I was two years old.
Two years old? Well how old are you now?
T: 7 and a half. (girls at table discuss ages)
So what about your Nintendo......
T: I shoot these ducks. Yeah Duck Hunt. And I have two Super Mario games. And I haven't gotten past the second stage.
Which one? Mario or Duck Hunt?
T: Mario. Duck Hunt's I's got um all the way to one hundred stage.
Wow. So what's the difference between the two Mario games that you have?
T: Well, the first one doesn't work at all!
Well that would hamper things wouldn't it?
T: And Duck Hunt and Mario both go together. They're in one old tape but we have to use the little thing that you, you know that that thing

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that you...

The buttons? The console? Game console?

T: Yes. Up or down. You gotta push down for Duck Hunt on the console or whatever it's called, and then for Duck Hunt, and then you plug in this fake gun and first you gotta shoot up on in the air and it shows one or two ducks or clay shoots.

So is it, is it the Duck Hunt is on the same tape as the Mario that doesn't work?

T: Yeah.

Okay.

T: No! The Mario that doesn't work is on its own tape. Yes, so, what else were you going to ask me?

Well you could tell me about Mario.

T: Well when we get this mushroom, he's a nice mushroom, he makes you super.

Bigger, okay.

T: He make you about that much bigger (measuring size with fingers) And and uh and when Super Mario jumps on bricks, when his head hits bricks, they break.

She then preceded to draw out the game on a piece of construction paper:

T: See, like these bricks that I'm drawing (on construction paper) this, like one full square. Bricks make little tiny baby bricks made into a square (she has a rectangle divided into 4 smaller rectangles, drawn with crayon on paper) and when you hit some if they don't have points in them that you catch you get more points. (other girl at table gets involved in conversation, nodding in acknowledgement) He uh... (girl mentions how Mario jumps to get points). Yeah. On stage, on World 2 that's there's... (girl says how points come from each brick hit) Not stage, it's world. And if you jump on these mean turtles and you jump on them again and they hit something and bounce back, you're dead!

Okay.

T: Unless you run from them.

So watch the turtles. Watch out for the turtles.

T: Unless there's nothing behind you, except a deep deep pool. They'll die if they go down that pool. If you don't jump on them, they'll come to life again. They will just go in their shell and then they, and then when you jump on them again, they zoom back.

So how far have you gotten in Mario? Is there a level two or....

T: I've only gotten to level two, half-way (girl mentions that she has reached level three) And then I died when I jumped on the turtle cause there's this thing that you jump on behind me and I had to run but I didn't so I died. And Luigi, Mario's best friend, my grandfather used to play him but I play against my own self now (girl corrects T-Luigi is Mario's

brother) (T trying to figure out pronunciation) Lug-ee or Loo-gee. I can't remember. (girl gives pronunciation as Loo-gee). And he's white and he has a white outfit with a white hat. Mario doesn't have a white hat. Mario's is red. (discussion of what color Mario's hat is, girl insists her Mario has a green hat). I have white.

The other second grade girl further describes Mario:

> D: Then I have Super Mario Land which you're trying to beat the whole thing. After you beat the whole thing, you get the Princess, it's Cooper who took the Princess and uh so Mario is trying to find Cooper that took Princess and he finally found the Princess and so, like it's a bunch, and after you beat Cooper's castle you get all paid back and you beat Cooper and he shoots these big old balls things at 'em, and he has the Princess in this thingy. He's got her mouth covered up and she can't talk, so she's got to sit there in there and once she screamed "aahh!" and then she goes "Mario watch out!" and then all of sudden he moved and he jumped up, you got to give him about ten hits and then after he gets ten hits, then he dies and then you get the Princess. Then he rewards Mario and Luigi for trying to get the Princess and stuff. And then he tries to get all these little mushrooms and that's one of the things that helped too and Yoshi helps him out too.
> **Who?**
> D: Yoshi, a little bitty dinosaur that helps Mario get around.

Like television, video games often have their spinoffs, such as a Yoshi game

that originated from Mario:

> **I didn't know there was a little dinosaur in Mario.**
> D: And there's a video game called Yoshi too but I don't got it.
> **And those are those dinosaurs. They have their own video game.**
> D: Yeah. It's Yoshi. It's like Tetris but it's not.

Occasionally while I was interviewing one of the girls, the other would enter the

conversation:

> D: I wanted to get Mario 3, I played it before and after you beat that you get another one. Cause there's this one if you gotta go into the desert, get out of the desert and then you got to the Hawaii (I think she means tropical terrain) and you get to spend too. We've rented almost every video game but...
> T: I'm going to get Mario 3.
> D: Mario 3 has got a desert. And that's the first one. That's easy.
> T: That's the first world.

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D: Yeah.
T: I betcha it's short.
D: It's got about twenty or nineteen in it, so.

I consulted both girls regarding Sonic the Hedgehog:

T: Oh....I have Sega and I like to play Sonic the Hedgehog.
Okay...
T: One.
Sonic Hedgehog One? There's more than one?
T: Yeah...there's Sonic Spinball, Sonic Two, and ...all the way to Sonic Four, I think.
Okay, you've got Sonic Hedgehog One.
T: One. And my Uncle Adam has Sonic Hedgehog Spinball and he has Sonic Hedgehog One, but actually we have number two.
Okay, and uh what exactly goes on in Sonic Hedgehog?
T: Well there's these really hard stages and all the way to the Pinball part is really hard. You have to jump up on the pinball thing and push push the B on it and you have to.........
Bee? What's the bee?
T: The B button.
Okay.
T: And you uh like you, if you want to jump, you press A or C, and if you want to go really fast, like you got to push the down button, and he ducks, and he like... and you push C or B or A, he goes really fast if you push it a hundred...uh about five times, and then he goes zoom! and if it's a hill, usually that's the only time you do it unless there's these little trampolines that you go back to it, you push the button you're heading in, and, the only button that you're heading in, you swooooosh right over it.
Wow..... (not understanding a word of it)
T: You've got to keep pushing it.
You push it to get it going? (still lost)
T: Uh huh.
What is Sonic the Hedgehog?
T: He's a Hedgehog!
Well what is he like?
T: He's kinda blue. He's a blue hedgehog.
Blue hedgehog.....Does he have anything on TV or movie or anything?
T: I think...he used to, and there's Tales on him too. Tales is some kind of flying raccoon.
Uh, who's the flying raccoon?
(Unison of several girls at the table " Tales!")
T: A flying raccoon or something.
Is he friends with Sonic the Hedgehog?
T: Yeah, and he usually follows Sonic. On (Sonic) number One there's one or two players on it.

Okay.
T: And uh you have to beat this guy on one player and you sometimes, oh yeah you have to jump on him about 15 times and then he's dead, and you've got to free all the creatures you've killed...
Okay.
T: You jump on this trampoline but it doesn't go up it just stays down until the creatures are out.
Okay, what creatures?
T: They're on the ....hardest one, the easiest one is this pig and raccoons... and there's all kinds of animals on it.
Okay, so what Sonic the Hedgehog does is free other animals that are trapped?
T: No, he uh the ones that he's jumped on two times and then he kills it, kills them. He frees the animals that he kills.
D: (joining the conversation) He's actually a superhero, that's what he is.
Okay, for what? For animals...
D: People and stuff, cause I used to watch the TV show and it said....
T: And then he kills this guy. There's this guy that stole one of his players, actually the personal hedgehog's and at the end of the game, if you get the whole game, you get the princess and then you win the whole game.
That's what happens at the end of the game? If you go through all the levels, you win a princess?
D: The princess that the guy stole from.
And Sonic the Hedgehog is trying to save the princess, the ultimate.... that's what he's trying to do?
D: The guy that stole the princess set out enemies for him(Sonic) so he (Sonic) couldn't get close to him (guy) so...
T: Yeah, and there's about 50 or 15 stages, and I have this friend, she's about 16 and she gets past all the rest of the stages. She 's got through this one where you have to get these big bubbles underwater, and he (Sonic) makes this kind of noise like 'Ble-e-eup!' And he jumps up and catches it. (Alarm goes off signaling clean up time). That's the end.

Video game personalities, like Mario and Sonic the Hedgehog have even entered the realm of television and cinema. Mario and Mortal Kombat each had two movies, and Sonic had his own television show at one time. SEGA even has its own cable channel:

Who makes the Punisher? Is that SEGA, Playstation...
H: SEGA channel.
SEGA channel? So this is off of cable?
H: Yeah.

Okay. I don't get SEGA channel. I feel deprived.
H: You have to pay $15 if you get that, each month.

Most of the children linked their video game playing with interaction time with others, be they relatives or friends. Video game playing can be a site for socializing. I sat in once as a group of boys were talking about their various video games. The boys set up times to meet and try out the games. Joan mentioned to me that her sons frequently have their friends over just to play these games. This fourth grade boy plays Punisher with his father:

> **So what happens? Do you know what happens if you reach all the levels, what happens at the end?**
> H: No (laughs) I don't. I haven't beat him (bad guy in game) yet.
> **I was wondering if you saw somebody else who had played...**
> H: It was just my dad and me who got to the sewer. I tried it again and I got down there, and I lost. But I got further...I didn't get as far as I did with my dad, cause he died (used his three chances) and I was still able to play, so it was hard because I only had that much more (?) and I didn't have any continues left...and then there's this big guy named Ratty (?) came after me and punched me. I killed it and then it said "Game Over" and you don't get a password to go back.

Sometimes the video game playing can involve competitive sibling rivalry:

> D: It's hard to do to win in Avalanche cause there's this witch, and if you play on the witch's side, you win all the time, and if you don't play it then (witch's side), you don't win so my sister's always getting the witch's side. But I always win without the witch so my little sister (got mad) so it was fun! My little sister kept on saying "mmm - ay" (sulking). She got to punch me cause she wanted to win so I traded her the remote even though I was on the witch's side, I didn't win, she almost won, but I beat her.

Movies

Children were also selective in depicting movies as well, their choices comprised of movies currently playing in the local theaters, movies available in video store rentals, and movies that had not yet been released. One girl added

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two video cassette tapes to her personality drawing (figure 91). I suspect that Ariel from *The Little Mermaid* (figures 92 and 93), identified by her bright red hair and purple bikini top, could count both as movie and television, since it originally aired as a movie several years ago, became available on video cassettes, and now is a daily cartoon on the Disney channel. Media hype about Godzilla's latest movie was just starting when this child's pencil drawing (figure 94) appeared on a paper bag that a child decorated to hold quilt squares for sewing a future quilt block. The quilt blocks were in preparation for a field trip to an old timey school house as part of a social studies project.

Movies starring Leonardo Dicaprio were a hit with the girls. Figure 95 is a girl's drawing of people waiting in line, in the rain, outside a movie theater. Outside the theater hangs posters advertising three movies in which Leonardo Dicaprio starred-*Titanic*, *The Man in the Iron Mask* and *Romeo and Juliet*. These movies are not concurrent, but the drawing serves more as a tribute to Dicaprio's films. *Titanic* inspired one third grader's underwater scene for a class assignment (figure 96). The art lesson required children to first work with chalk pastels, making bands of colors on their paper. Then children were to cut out shapes from scrap wallpaper books that were about life that exists underwater. They then glued these shapes to their chalk pastel design. This child purposefully selected a wallpaper design of thin stripes, and then cut out the ship pieces. The child glued and labeled both ship pieces as "Titanic" so that there would be absolutely no doubt in the viewer's mind about the meaning of this collage. The wallpaper designs picked by the child in which the seabed and shells were clipped seemed to be a less deliberate decision, being floral patterned and not related to the underwater scene.

This second grade boy asked if he could talk about *Titanic*::

B: It's real good!
Okay. Go ahead and tell me about it then, B.

B: It's about..it's the real story about the Titanic and it has one of the survivors' telling the story and it's uh a real good movie and uh it's it has uh like a part where, a sexual parts like that and stuff. It's a pretty good movie and uh I've watched it eight, no not eight, about three or four times. It's a good movie. And it's going to be on at the drive-in this Saturday.
Oh, okay. Maybe I'll finally get to see it, when it's becoming a dollar a movie, that's usually when I go and see movies. Who is the survivor at the end (of the movie) **that's talking?**
B: I forgot, but uh it's this one lady that was on television this one night but I don't remember her name, and uh and that guy that was on , there's this guy that on that helped the lady, the survivor was the person telling the story, and she was the boy's girlfriend, sort of. So it's a pretty good movie.
Was a lot of it done with computers?
B: Yes. A lot of it was done with computers. Whole lot of it. Probably about 58% of it was done with computers.
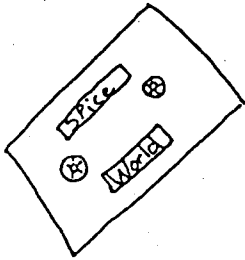
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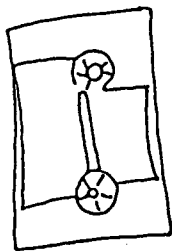
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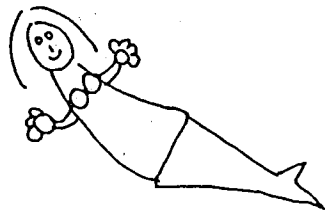
Figure 93

Figure 94

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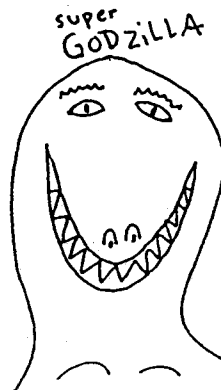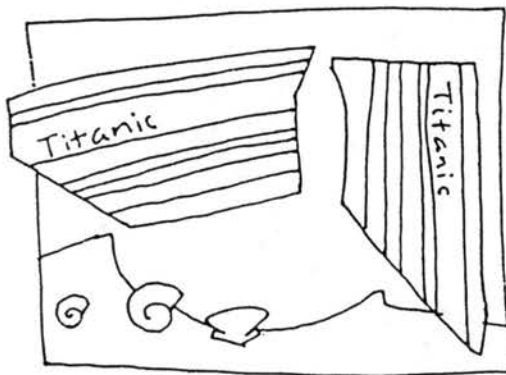
Figure 95

Figure 96
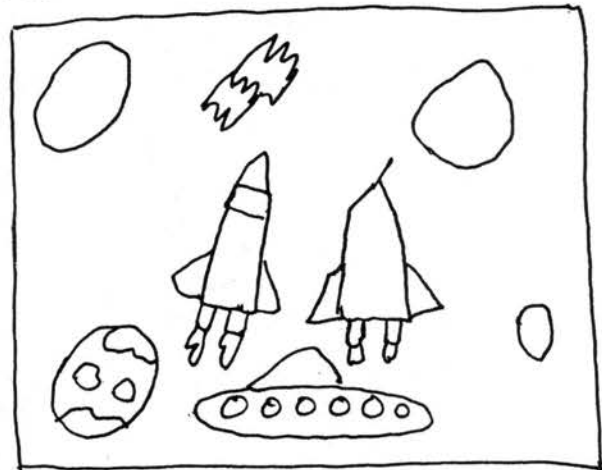
Figure 97

Children were fascinated with aliens, and for a month the third and fourth graders spontaneously produced a flurry of alien images that they would hang up in the art room. Movies such as *Space Jam*, *Independence Day* and *Mars Attacks* became the focus of their movie talk. Since I had not seen *Mars Attacks*, I asked a fourth grade girl to tell me about it:

What is Mars Attacks about?
O: It's about these aliens who came to Earth and uh they start saying 'we come in peace' 'we come in peace' and then this guy let this bird go and the alien shot it with his gun and the guy in front of him he shot him down and turned him into a skeleton. Then he started turning everybody into a skeleton by shooting them. I think the funniest part is where he takes off the girl's head and a dog's head and switch it and put the dog's

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head on the girl's body and put the girls' head on the dog's body. And then they took like this man he works with, they just took his body and put his head on something.

(lost) **Okay. Now who wins in this? Mars or? I haven't seen it.**
O: The Earth does.
The Earth wins.
O: Because they listen to this boy's grandma's tape and they do not like it.
(other girl at table joins in-description of green stuff from alien)
Okay.
O: The President thought they finally made a compromise cause they shook hands but then the hand came off the alien like um something was a stinger, and he stung, his hand went right through the President.
Ooh. So the Martians actually got to meet the President of the United States.
O: Well, yeah.
So, what were the Martians like?
O: They were like... they sorta looked liked brains, their heads, and um, and in one part of the movie, one Martian dressed up like a regular person, and doesn't look like a regular person at all. Uh huh (responding to girl at table) It's just really pale. Uh huh. (girl talking) The other aliens just wear space helmets.
Okay, so is this the main ones that you get to see, like the leader?
O: Yeah!
That you get to see the brain head without the helmets?
O: Uh, well that's how they died. Their helmets come off, they die.
Oh.
O: They can't breathe our air, but not in this uh Mars.
Why are they attacking the Earth?
O: Because they want the whole uh...they want uh all the like uh uni (verse) or something, with all the stars. They want that all to themselves and no other planets in the way.
Do they try to trick people off the Earth?
O: No.
I saw Independence Day, have you seen that?
O: Yeah.
Is it like Independence Day?
O: Uh sorta, not really. But, cause none of their ships crash or anything. Nobody's in that water. And most of all they have guns that when they shoot them, people turn into skeletons.

While looking at the outer space drawings with alien ships that Joan had hung up in the hallway, I asked a third grader if he would like to discuss his oil pastel drawing. I asked him to talk about the alien ship (figure 97):

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W: Well the UFO I got from my friend (name). And the Earth I got from him (pointing to boy at table) and Mars I got from myself and I don't know what that is and that's a comet and (boy at table says that he know what it is). That's nothing. Pluto is more of a blue planet. Well that's Pluto....

(Seeing two blue shapes) **So is this blue one here, is that Pluto ?**

W: Okay! Another Pluto, Earth II!

Okay.

W: I always liked the movie (laughs).

All right. What movie?

W: There's this movie called Earth II.

Oh really? What is that about?

W: Well these people go to another Earth, with these cool-looking ugly-looking aliens. I went to a theater and saw it. (boy at table corrects -- - title is really "Spear") Whatever! (laughs) I just call it Earth II anyway.

Okay, Earth II, and you got these two rockets here?

W: Yes and they're in a race to see who gets to there.

To Earth II?

W: Yeah.

Okay. So now tell me about this right here.

W: Oh, he's trying to zap them down so that one of them loses. Cause he's going for that one. Cause that one's more faster. And that one's catching up.

Is this an alien ship?

W: Yeah.

So this is an alien ship. And are these two ships, are they from Earth?

W: Yes.

And they're going to go to Earth II?

W: Yeah.

And the alien is going to zap this one?

W: Yeah.

The alien ship is going to zap the green rocket ship because

W: Yeah, cause he don't like that dude. Cause he's from Mars, like Mars Attacks. Have you ever seen Mars Attacks?

No I didn't see Mars Attacks. Who's from Mars Attacks?

W: That dude. It's these little creatures that they go there and if they say they come in peace they start killing people and they shrunk this one guy and stepped on him, and whatever kind of place where you get shot by, that's what what color your bones turn to...

All right. So we have the basis of these two movies that could be in this work, Mars Attacks and Earth II. This is Martian.

W: That's the Martian.

The green one is the Martian?

W: Yeah.

Okay, and this one,(pointing to drawing) are they from Mars?

W: Yes.

But they are going to attack that one?
W: That one, cause he's from Pluto.

In general, Walt Disney's latest animated movies, like *Pocahontas* and *Hercules*, received less attention from children, though lower elementary children commonly wore shoes and clothes advertising these movies. Walt Disney animation was often associated with what little children watched, with older children choosing Mickey Mouse over the more recent characters developed by the company. A second grade girl talks about Walt Disney:

> D: My favorite movie is Titanic and uh whenever I was a little kid my favorite movie was uh The Little Mermaid because I always used to watch till I got the movie and whenever my cousin got me Pocahontas uh we always used to watch it but now on TV now there's coming out a second part Pocahontas and it's continued and Pocahontas and John Smith is going to get married. So she becomes his wife.

Popular Music

By far, girls indicated musical preferences in their artwork much more than boys, and girls were more likely to want to discuss favored musical performers. The musicians themselves were visually reduced to names except for the Spice Girls, who themselves used the peace symbol, a symbol already commonly drawn by girls. The girls would list the musicians, sometimes on a drawing of a compact disc, sometimes adding the title of the song that they liked. Fifth grade girls wrote these popular music references in their personality drawings:

> Celion Dion "My Heart Will Go On"
> Titanic (soundtrack)
> Next "Too Close"
> LL Cool J
> K-Ci and JoJo "All My Life"
> Jewel "And I Was Meant for You"
> Savage Garden "I Wanna Stand With You on a Mountain"
> Spice Girls " If You Wannabe My Lover"

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Sugar Ray "I Just Wanna Fly"
Bone,Thugs and Harmony
Usher
Puff Daddy
Mase "Feels So Good"
Disco

One girl made an interesting tribute to Elvis (see figure 98) during her freetime art. I found only three fifth grade boys who named their preferences: Savage Garden, ZZ Top and Ray Steven's Greatest Hits.

Figure 98

The Spice Girls and Selena are also connected to movies. The Spice Girls released *Spice World* just before this study began. I questioned a fifth grade girl whether or not she had seen it:

Y: I like Spice Girls, but I like country too and my favorite country singer is John Michael Montgomery and I like his song Soul. It's a really catchy song and I got it memorized by heart and everything but It's really good song.
Have you been to any one of his concerts?
Y: No. But I do have a friend and her mom went to a Lone Star concert and she got an autographed picture of all of them and so it was really neat. And I've got it framed up on my wall.
Are you thinking about seeing Spice World?
Y: I'm trying to. I haven't talked my mom into it yet, but I'm going to.

She included a *Spice World* video cassette in her finished personality drawing

(see figure 91). The Spice Girls have since lost one of their more vivacious performers, Ginger Spice. I spent some time listening to their music and watching their movie *Spice World*. I found the group's admonition for "girl power" superficial, since their definition of "girl power" seemed to constitute dressing seductively and hanging out with girlfriends, hardly a bold feminist move. But the Spice Girls did incite groans from the boys, which may have been gratifying enough for the girls, and the boys, though not liking the group, seemed to respect the band, just enough respect to make the girls' adoption of the group as a site for power.

Unlike the Spice Girls, Selena was revered by the both sexes, partly because of her early death. While I was showing some third grade boys the_ Lowrider Arte magazine, they flipped to the page that had an artist's rendition of Selena (Appendix E). The boys immediately recognized the face, and in unison whispered "Selena" while gently touching her face. I had taught in Houston at the time of Selena's murder, and clearly remember the children's grief. Later, a movie came out about her life. A non-Hispanic first grade girl, had seen the movie:

Do you have any favorite shows? Shows that you like to watch on TV?
C: My favorite show is..um..one of my favorite shows is... (pause, thinking) one of my favorite movies is Selena.
Selena?
C: Uh huh.
Yeah, I didn't get to see that. Now what's it about?
C: It's about this...um..this real famous singer, that she died, and she, and her...uh.... (interruption from another student showing her artwork, girls at the table shush away) what's it called....her president's fan club shot her...
Oh...
C: And it was a true story about what happened. I bawled and bawled the first time I saw it. I was crying.
Eh...yeah. And when did you see that movie?
C: I saw it this year, the first time I saw it, and then I got really hooked on her, I got really hooked on her, and I just kept on seeing that movie a hundred times.

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How many times did you end up seeing that movie?
C: I don't know (laughs).
Did you keep on going to the movie house..uh the theater?
C: No, well I kept on renting it at Hasting's.
Ohh....yeah, that's a good place.
C: (agreeing) Uh huh...And well Mom was looking for me that Selena tape, and we couldn't find it, we couldn't find it anywhere.
You mean the music or the movie?
C: The tape... the music.
The music?
C: Uh huh... And Santa Claus brought it to me.
Oh really? And now you have a tape of Selena's music.
C: Uh huh.
What do you think about it?
C: I really like it. And I really like the Spanish too.
Do you know any of the words or...
C: No! (we both laugh)

Instruments which transmit popular music, such as a radio station (Figure 99), and boomboxes, materialized about equally in both boys' and girls' art. Boomboxes (figures 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105 and 106) were detailed and different, attesting to children's renderings of boomboxes that either they possessed or had used at one time. Figure 102 adds a musical note, signifying that the boombox is turned on, figure 104 is in the complementary colors orange and blue, figure 105 has red, green, and white bands, matching the Mexican flag in the finished drawing. Children also drew personal Walkmans with headphones (figures 107, 108 and 109). The circles in figure 107 denote a tape cassette player, and the rectangular bumps along its top describe the buttons one pushes for rewinding, fast forwarding and playing the tape.

Compact discs (with their cases), tape cassettes, and even one record cover (labeled only as Ray Steven's Greatest Hits) entered children's drawings too. The two lines connecting the two circles in K-Ci and JoJo's tape cassette (figure 110) imply the small viewing box to see the tape inside the cassette holder. The children found the iridescent quality of the compact disc an opportunity to play with color and design (figure 111).

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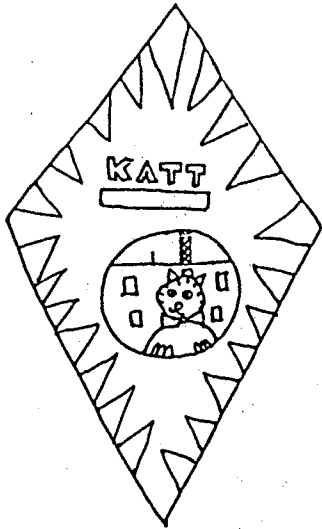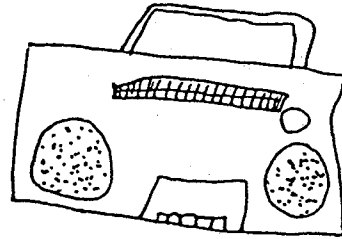
Figure 99

Figure 100
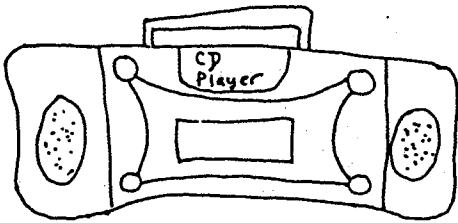
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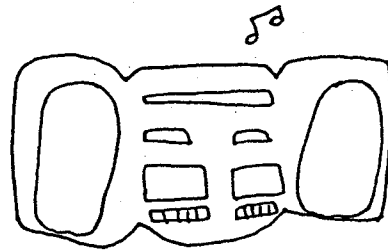
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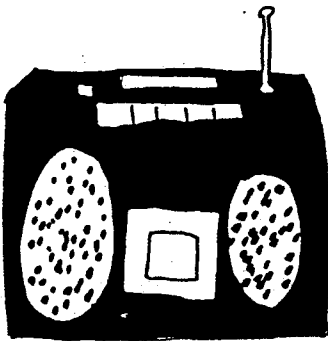
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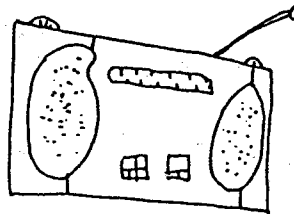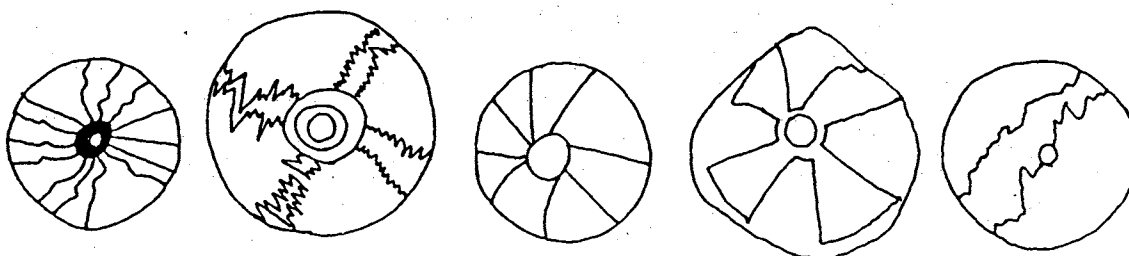
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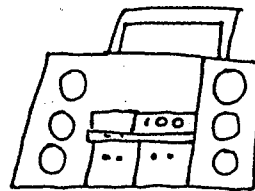
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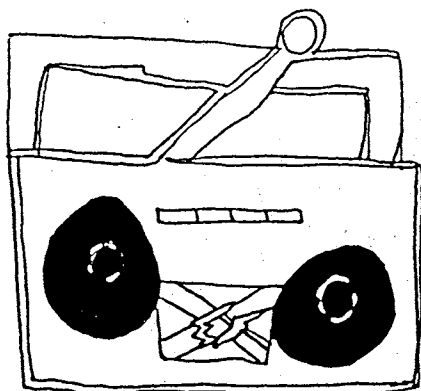
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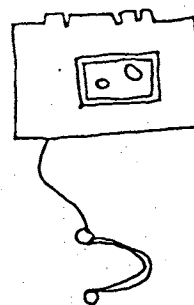
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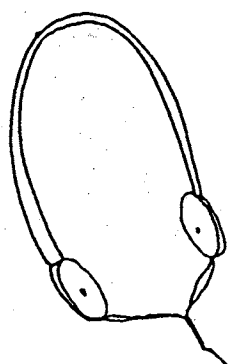
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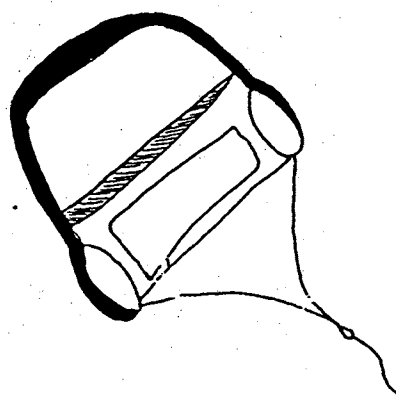
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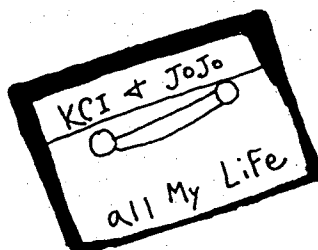
Figure 110

Figure 111

Joan described to me how one first grade class would periodically engage in a flurry of exchanging telephone numbers. One child would get the idea to start the commotion, others would start to join the sharing process, and soon the situation would snowball into a class-wide swap session. Then the alarm would sound, the children would line up and exit, leaving little paper scraps with telephone numbers, littering the tables and floor.

As far as drawing telephones, a handful of fifth grade girls did, but the boys did not. Several girls drew the traditional telephone with cord. The girl who drew figure 112 even placed dots in circles to portray the speakers in the receiver. Two girls drew cellular phones (figures 113 and 114). Again, like the boomboxes, the cellular phones looked as if they belonged to the children because of the detailing and difference in their drawings, phones that the children may even have carried with them to school.
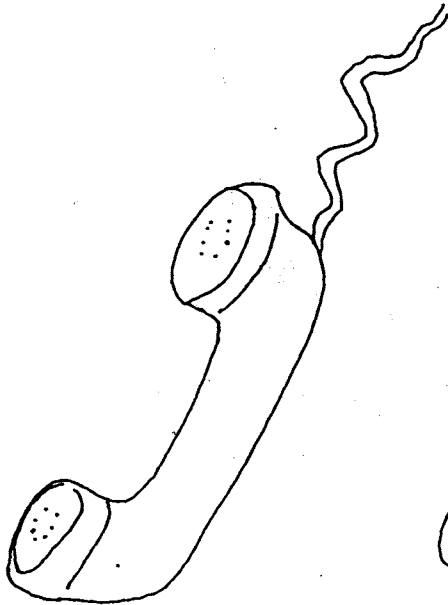
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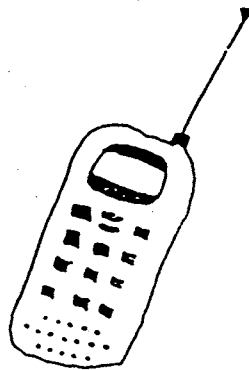
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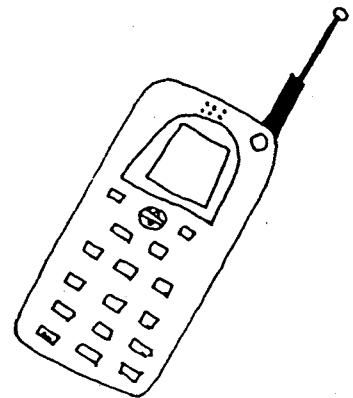
Figure 114

Popular Culture

I divided this category into three smaller subcategories based on how children ascribed gender meanings to popular symbols. Children labeled sports and lowrider imagery as masculine, whereas retro images (peace signs, smiley faces) and symbols such as hearts and flowers were granted feminine status. These divisions were based in children's drawings. Boys would draw hearts when in first or second grade, but I did not see boys draw a heart after third grade. Girls' repertoire of retro and "feminine" signs would accompany favored sports team logos (e.g. Dallas Cowboys star) and lowrider figures (e.g. the Joker) by about the fourth and fifth grades. A girl who held power in the class among both boys and girls would adopt these "masculinized" symbols, whereas if a girl chose to draw more "femininized" symbols, she would not gain any power among either boys or girls. These divisions were so striking that I had no trouble immediately identifying fifth graders' personality drawings by gender (figures 115 and 116). Some symbols seemed to be regarded as neutral, because both boys and girls drew eightballs, yin-yangs and aliens about equally in quantity.
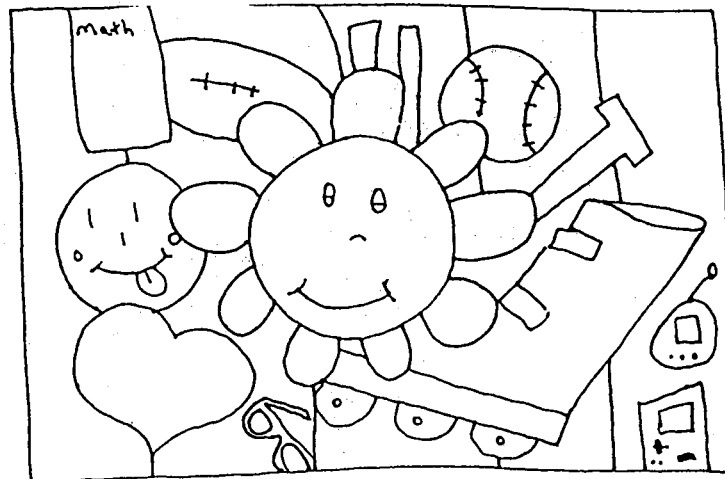
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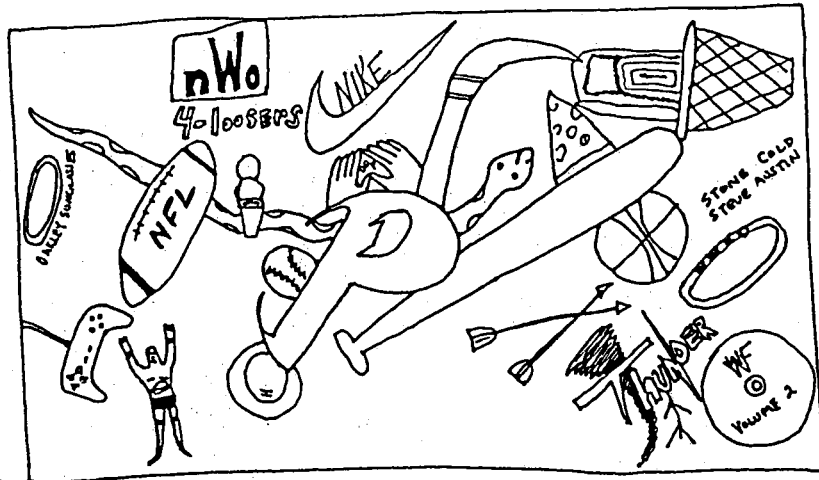
Figure 116

Masculine Symbols-Sports

Among sports symbols, those depicting team logos for football,
basketball and professional wrestling dominated, with Dallas Cowboys' star,
Green Bay Packer's letter G and the Chicago Bull's mascot being the choicest
of symbols to represent (figures 117, 118 and 119). I included figure 119
because this symbol was drawn by a fifth grade girl, not a common occurrence.
Also, one of her classmates added this car (figure 120) to her personality
drawing. The car's bright purple and yellow colors, with the letters E and D
(which could stand for driver Dell Earnheardt) suggest a race car. Girls rarely
drew cars. The abbreviations NFL (National Football League) and NBA
(National Basketball Association) were favorites for inclusion in art, and one girl
even wrote WNBA (the newly-formed Woman's National Basketball
Association) in her artwork.

Children's talk about football and basketball remained relatively calm in

Figure 117

Figure 118

Figure 119
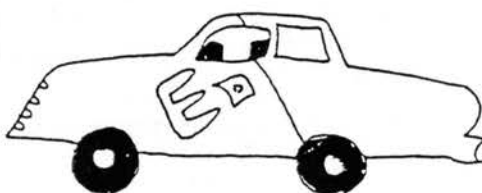
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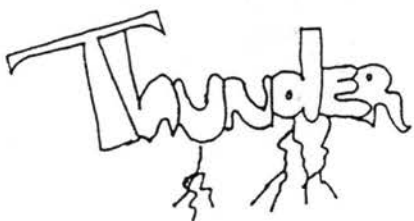
Figure 121

Figure 122

Figure 123

comparison to that I heard for professional wrestling. But regardless of the sport,

loyalties ran deep for certain teams and differences of opinion stirred up play

fighting:

> **I see you are wearing a Dallas Cowboys T-shirt.**
> B2:   Yeah. Number 22.
> **Who's number 22?**
> B2:   Emmett Smith number 22
> **Do you watch the Dallas Cowboys a lot? How long have you been a fan?**
> A2:   He's a Green Bay fan, he's just wearing that.
> B2:   No, I ain't........since last year.
> A2:   Cheesehead ****!
> **Guys, come on.** (the boys were obviously playing)
> B2:   Call me a cheesehead again and I'm going to beat you up.
> A2:   And in school too.

Unlike football and basketball, professional wrestling whipped up a

frenzy in both children's art and talk. Some children were aware of professional

wrestling being criticized as being too violent for them to watch:

> Z: I think, instead of wrestling, I think football should be the main sport.
> J: I'm sorry but wrestling...
> Z: Football or soccer. Not really. I really like hockey.
> J: But excuse me. Wrestling right now is the number one thing.
> Z: Wrestling isn't that good for people. I think people could get really hurt if, people could really get hurt.
> **So what you're saying is that you don't think wrestling is a really good role model?**
> Z: No it's not, cause someone's going to try it. They're going to screw up and they're going to really hurt someone.
> J: Yeah but what about football? They get hurt every day there too, so it's the same thing. Hockey, they, they fight all the time, so wrestling is good too! I don't get it!
> **Good point J.**
> J: I mean football is the same thing, you get beat up on it, so wrestling is the same thing.

Professional wrestling was totally new to me, so I depended on some fifth grade

boys to explain it to me:

> **NWO stands for what?**

both: New World Order.

New World Order?

J: That means uh......

E: I don't go for NWO. I go for WCW.

J: Yeah, me too, it's the same for me. Sting, I like Sting better.

E: Yeah, me too. NWO is um, they're world champions but they're not no more.

You said WCW, what's that?

E: Yeah.

J: WCW is...

E: World Champion Wrestlers.

World Champion Wrestlers, what happened to WWF?

E: Yeah, they had that. They just don't have that anymore.

(agreement among both that they don't watch WWF because it's on too late)

J: WCW is better for us.

Because what? It's not late at night or what?

J: It's on late at night.

E: From 12 to 1 o'clock but...

J: It's real late.

E: But WCW it's got like more action. I like it better.

J: The WCW....and the NWO they, they're like mean. They wanna take money away from the good ones!

E: But last night it was the best thing...

J: Sting got a hold of...um..um...

E: Okay Macho Man Randy Savage is on the NWO's Hulk Hogan...

J: The bad guys.

E: And they fought last night together and that's probably gonna drag off the NWO cause they fought together to see which one was the strongest. Macho Man Randy Savage won.

J: Did you see how the....

E: Macho Man Randy Savage won but...

J: And they were from the ceiling and um yesterday this uh net came down and it got 'em.

E: I know. A net came down and he Sting took a loop (?) like this and he...

J: Gots angry.

E: Yeah.

J: I do not believe that because he gets angry about everything.

(pause) **Alright, so....what is Hulk Hogan look like?**

E: Okay, you know know who...

J: Hulk Hogan.

You mean the cartoon character?

E: No no no!

J: He's a real guy.

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E: Okay. You know that guy that plays in like that that movie with the real fast boat?

J: Speed? Uh, Thunder in Paradise?

E: Yeah. Thunder in Paradise.

No. Never saw it (laugh).

E: Neither have I but....

J: I've seen it. I've seen it. He's like the strongest, he's like he broke the USA (record?) with this one.

Okay. So that is what Hulk Hogan is trying to look like.

J: Hulk Hogan? No. Hulk Hogan is...

E: Hulk Hogan, he's the one that makes the movie.

both: Yeah!

J: He' s like....

So Hulk Hogan is in that movie?

J: He's like a famous star and then he wrestles.

So does he have makeup, Hulk Hogan has makeup? On his face?

J: I don't think...

E: Some kind of...

(discussion turns to Sting)

J: Sting has like marks.

E: Sting has all the makeup. He has a white face.

J: And he has like black right here. (pointing to to his cheeks on his own face)

E: And then he has a sad face and he's got black stripes going down his eyes.

J: He looks better and right now they're going to go the SuperBrawl and see who wins the World Superweight of the ....that's about, they couldn't decide who should win it....

E: I think, I think Sting's gonna win it

J: Uh huh, me and him predict Sting's gonna win it.

E: Either that or Roddy Rodney Piper's gonna come in, and help Sting...

J: Uh huh. That's what they do!

E: Cause Roddy Rodney Piper said he's not gonna retire until Sting beats Hulk Hogan and gets the world title, and so so I guess if Sting loses Roddy Rodney Piper's gonna jump in and you know that's bound to be a disaster cause the NWO, the whole thing's gonna start jump in and beating up...

J: And then they'll need help and then DDP (Diamond Dallas Page) comes up, then other guests come up.

Dee Dee Pete?

J: He's the United States heavy title.

E: Yeah.

J: He holds it.

E: He's got the diamond tap. (holds hands so that opening created makes a diamond shape)

J: That everybody's gonna talk about.

I don't know what it is.

J: He goes like this. (demonstrating with hands)

Okay, that's like his symbol or something?

both: Yes!

J: A diamond. Yeah, he's one of the best ones of the wrestling.

E: Yeah, he and Roddy Rodney Piper are the world's greatest, and they're on the same team so they're not gonna wrestle each other.

J: And Sting...

E: Yeah, Sting might be one of the next ones. I betcha he is!

J: And the Giant too. They say he's one of the greatest ones....

E: The Giant got sued.

Sued?

E: He got sued cause he hit one of the referees.

Oh.

E: He picks them up and fights them and then just jumped on one of 'em like that.

J: Now Kevin Nash, he gots a big fight $50,000!

E: Yeah, cause he hurt one of them and broke one...

J: He broke Giant's neck. He stands like eight feet or something like that.

The Giant stands eight feet?

J: And then the other guy who broke his neck stands seven feet

E: Uh aah. (disagreeing) He only stands six foot five.

J: Who? Kevin?

E: Yeah. Kevin Nash.

J: I thought that Kevin stands seven.

E: Uh aah. (disagreeing) He is not tall. He's...he's short.

J: I know, but uh he got the Giant. They were like four hundred and something and they broke like his neck right now.

E: Is he in the hospital?

J: They don't know. They don't have any information right now about him. And if Sting gets hurt, they don't know anything about him either, he's like a mysterious guy.

E: Yeah, he uh, and he like never talks.

Does Sting have any movements like Diamond Cutter does (hands symbol) ?

E: Yeah Sting has Scorpion. He gets lots of 'em. I like Saturn. He's cool. I like when he does the Saturn rings.

J: Yeah.

What's the Saturn rings? Is that a fighting move?

E: Yeah, it' s like when you get him into a move.

J: It's like you put your arms back here. (demonstrating) He' s like

poking you real hard.

E: It's like he gets you in a move and you can't get out of it.

(K at the next table starts joining in the conversation from across the room)

E: (answering K) Saturn. Saturn rings.

J: Some people do get out.

E: Oh! Oh! Oh! Did you see that last night? That was cool!

J: Yeah the Steiner Brothers were going back to the (?).

E: Goldenrod, he got out of the...

Goldenrod?

E: Goldenrod is like an old football player. He he used to be a football player and he like just quit, now he's a wrestler. He's like real strong.

Is that his real name Goldenrod or is that his fighting name?

E: That's his last name.

Okay I was gonna say (laugh) that wouldn't make a very good fighting name, cause it's like a flower, goldenrod.

J: Does Sting, is that real? His real name, Sting?

E: No that's just his fighting name.

J: I didn't know they had fighting names.

E: He never, he doesn't talk to anybody.

J: Who? Goldenrod?

E: No.

J: Did you see it last night? Cause I didn't. I only saw one hour of it, that's all.

What channel is this stuff on?

E: 28.

J: 26.

Is that FOX?

J: 26.

E: 26 is TNT.

TNT? Okay it's on TNT.

E: Are you gonna watch it?

both: You should!

J: It's bad!!

I guess I'll have to. Research.

J: Channel 26 at 7 o'clock.

Is it on every night?

(both figuring it out)

J: Mondays.....

E: Mondays, Thursdays......

J: Tuesdays through Thursdays. Sometimes its weird. Sometimes they have it on pay-per-view.

E: Yeah, they have it. They have it every once and a while.

Okay.

E: But it's always on at 6 and 7.

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Okay. I got it.
J: The main thing, the main days that has it on is Mondays and Thursdays. This Thursday is gonna be Oklahoma City and I'm gonna watch it at... (hard to hear cause one boy at table starts singing, then says 'are you recording?' pointing to tape recorder. 'yes' I reply. Expression of oh-my-gosh. Boys start laughing)
K: My favorite television show is Thunder. It's a new wrestling program. Um. My favorite wrestler is Sting.
They (E & J) were trying to describe Sting to me and .....
K: Hulk Hogan is a major loser. Sting is the man of silence. He does not talk. (E shows up at table) He talked three weeks ago on the show Thunder, the very first time it showed it. Let's talk about the (?) (K makes sound like channel switching, his voice becoming like an announcer) Kevin Nash took out the Giant with his signature move, the Jack Knife Power Bomb. Have you ever seen that put on someone?
No.
K: Anyway, the Giant weighs some four hundred and fifty pounds.
They were telling me about the Giant.
K: And the Giant's like four hundred and fifty pounds and this guy that's seven foot-one tried to pick up a four hundred and fifty pound man, and he couldn't pick him up, and only picked him up halfway, and dropped him on his head.

After school let out for the summer I was finally able to sit and watch *Monday Nitro* (one of the wrestling shows-the other being called *Thunder*, figures 121 and 122). Before I watched *Nitro*, I could not understand why professional wrestling was so popular among children, but after I viewed *Monday Nitro*, the attraction made sense. Both *Nitro* and *Thunder* are loud, colorful social events. The audience is comprised of families, especially fathers and sons, and when the camera zooms across the audience, you can see children wearing their wrestling T-shirts, sometimes painting their faces to resemble wrestlers like Sting, making various wrestling symbols with their hands (the Wolfpac and Diamond Cutter both common), and screaming at the top of their lungs among the din. Spotlights weave in and out on top of the crowd. People in the audience hold posters, some with a message back home or others to show their allegiance to certain wrestlers. When *Nitro* night opens, the audience sits in the dark while sparks shoot out from the ring, and the seven Nitro girls come onto

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the stage to dance. The world of professional wrestling borders on the hyper real. The announcers describe every wrestling match as a "first in the history," each fight an event "the world watched," every wrestler "a phenomenal athlete." The wrestlers are part of an ongoing soap opera, that a male friend of mine described as " a man's soap opera." During the course of each *Nitro* and *Thunder,* wrestlers will shift loyalties, and the announcers speculate throughout the three hour show what they think might happen in the course of these vendettas. Here is an excerpt from *Nitro* night's broadcast on July 13, 1998 (on TNT):

> (Announcers: Mike Tenay, Tony Schiavone, and (ex-wrestler) 'Living Legend' Larry Zbyszko)
> **Tony:** ....And this week WCW Monday Nitro comes to you from the Entertainment Capital of the World, the City That Never Sleeps, the Land of High Rollers. Ladies and gentlemen welcome to Las Vegas and welcome to the WCW Monday Nitro and as we're going into the ring where the gorgeous Nitro girls, looking very lusty, wouldn't you say that 'Living Legend'?
> **Larry:** I'll bet on that
> **Tony:** (laughs) I'll bet you would. Oh ladies and gentlemen, what a week it has been. There's been no denying that this has been the biggest week in world championship wrestling. When you start it, you go back to the 6th of July all the way to a week later July 13th. After a remarkable run on the West coast including the phenomenal crowd last night at San Diego at the Beach Bash. What a week it's been and what a great program we have for you where we're enjoying the most beautiful women in cable TV, my friend......Reliving the historic moments from one week ago, the biggest Nitro, truly one of the most memorable nights ever, Goldberg becomes the world champ.
> **Mike:** The Living Legend (Larry) wasting no time (referring to Larry's wearing a Goldberg T-shirt). We hear the music, that means Hollywood Hogan's appearance is going to be imminent here. (NWO group comes out into ring). The former heavyweight champion.
> **Larry:** That means the former heavyweight champion of the world is going to come out and badly make some excuses.
> **Mike:** Remember without that heavyweight title belt, Hollywood Hogan is a more dangerous individual than we've ever seen before.
> **Tony:** Well, he's always dangerous being the leader of NWO Hollywood and ah as you look at this capacity crowd here at the MGM Grand Garden Arena, Hogan challenged Goldberg one week ago, but then last night at the Bash at the Beach, in one of the most talked about and anticipated

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tag teams ever, Hogan and Dennis Rodman prevail, thanks to typical NWO Hollywood maneuvering.

Mike: NWO at their worst. Remember they had a game plan and it involved that man, the Disciple.

Tony: Well they all come out together here. This bunch not as animated here, Mike, (Hogan) not showing all his pearly whites.

Mike: Maybe it has something to do with Hogan being the former heavyweight champion of the world. They can't take it here and I can't wait to hear them discuss THAT situation.

Larry: I can wait.

Tony: Well no, well we've been really waiting for this. First time we've really had a chance to hear Hogan talk about it.

Larry: Hogan tell the truth?

Tony: Well, when he doesn't have the belt there's only so much he can tell us. Maybe not. Say what you want to, we surely as announcers have said it all about the black and white NWO. But one thing, one fact is undeniable. They always have a plan.

The two main wrestling groups, the WCW (World Championship Wrestling) and its enemy, the NWO (New World Order, also called NWO black and white or Hollywood NWO) clash in a battle of good versus evil. The NWO, headed by Hollywood Hulk Hogan (Appendix E), represents the dark side. These wrestlers break rules, knock out referees and generally wreak havoc, gloating in defiance to the audience's hissing and booing. However, part of the drama comes from watching NWO's inner turmoil. Most of the children told me they despised Hollywood Hulk Hogan:

Z: ....Hogan's a chicken. Man! Hogan's a chicken!
(a boy at another table "No he ain't!")
Z: Uh huh! (yes)
E: Yes he is!
Z: Uh huh, man, cause Sting came flying out of the ceiling when the NWO started beating up this one guy and Sting took out the whole NWO
J: Yeah and now they're breaking up!
Z: I know man.
J: That's baddest, man! No more NWO!
Z: I wanna, I wanna see...
Are they really? They're breaking up?
Z: Yeah.
J: Mmm hmm. This guy from the NWO, they're supposed to be never to break apart and this guy barely made a commitment.
E: What I want see man, what I want to see, I want to see Hogan get

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the...

J: Crap...

E: Yeah, beaten out of him. (to J) I didn't want to say that in the microphone really. Cause then she has to type it.

I don't have to. I can always delete stuff.

E: Oh yeah. I wanna see it, I mean not fake but really with Sting.

Z: Man, the big men, they fake it all but, you know what on real life, on the street, that can get the mmmm out of them.

E: No they can't!

Z: Uh huh!

E: No they can't! They can sue!

Z: Says who?

E: They can sue on the street.

Z: Man! Man! Hulk Hogan, man, there's that one guy, what's his name, that movie star? He's really big. He was walking out and got kicked, his butt got kicked?

E: The Giant?

Z: Yeah! The Giant's butt got butt kicked off the street too.

E: The Giant sued.

Yeah, his (Giant's) neck got broken, right?

J: Yeah in the ring, on accident.

Z: Man, like in the ring, you know, it's all fake, but when they go, if it's a slip up, I'm pretty sure (it's real). This uh one guy, what's his name, well, you know, this one guy hit another guy right here. Split his head open and the guy went crazy. He went out in the crowd, the crowd threw someone else in the ring and the crowd started beating the you-know-what out of him, in the crowd...

Do you think the man was acting?

Z: That was real, because the guy, you know how they just go like that to hit (barely touching),The guy really hit him and split his head open right here and the guy went crazy, went out of the ring and threw up a guy out of the crowd, up in the ring and started beating the you-know-what out of him...

E: The crap.

Z: And that was real!

J: Don't say that!

Z: You really like to say that, don't you E?!

Living on the edge there, aren't you E.

Z: It's a microphone (right there).

J: What I really want to see is Sting beating up Hulk Hogan! (all getting excited and in agreement)

J: I wanna see Sting go crack!

Okay. Why is Hulk Hogan on the...?

J: NWO?

No, why is that you guys not like Hulk Hogan?

E: Cause he...

Z: Cause he's turned on us!

He turned on who?

E: Everybody!

J: I know!

E: He was on the WCW until he just turned!

J: I know!

E: He was on the WCW and now he's against the WCW!

J: He was like everyone's hero, he used to be but now...

That's what I thought, yeah.

J: But now he turned on all of us, so we hate him now. And then a new hero came, and his name...

Is it because he formed the NWO?

J: Yeah!

E: Yes! Because he paid for other people to come and gather up like that!

J: Yeah!

E: He can do anything he wants to them people!

He gets away with stuff.

J: Yes, but then then the WCW is getting madder and madder and paying fines and all of that stuff.

So why do you want Sting to...?

J: Kill Hulk Hogan! We want...

E: Because we hate Hulk Hogan!

J: Yeah, cause we hate him now!

You think that Sting is the best person to do that job?

J: Yes! He's the heavy weight right now.

Z: I think, I think Hulk Hogan shouldn't even be in wrestling no more!

J: They should kick him out!

E: He's getting too old.

How old is he?

Z: I mean he's fifty something years old. He's in his late fifties.

E: The guy's already going bald.

J: I'm sorry but he's getting too old so that's...

You can be bald and fight, right?

Z: Yeah, but most of the ones that are bald are not natural.

E: Yeah!

Oh? Cause they shave their heads?

E: Yeah but like Goldenrod, he shaved his head. But with Hulk Hogan, that's different!

J: I haven't seen that guy called Motor Notch (?).

E: He's that, he's that bald one.

Would you like to add something K?

K: (who has been working nearby at adjacent table, he drops by the table) What has he been saying to you?

They've been talking about Hulk Hogan and Sting and they think Sting should beat up Hulk Hogan.

J: Tell him!

K: He already has.

Okay. Well, looks like your dreams have come true.

J: No, kill him!

K: Macho Man and Hogan in a steel cage, and uncensored, anything goes. Just Macho Man and Hogan.

J: They say that that's going to break up the NWO up, big time.

So then they'll go back to the WCW?

K: You know who the referee should be for that match? It should be Roddy Rodney Piper.

J: Yeah. That'd be a nice referee in the middle.

E: I wanna see, I wanna see the NWO break up now. You know that would be, that would be bad.

J: I know. I mean I 've waiting for who knows how many months.

Z: I wish Hulk Hogan would get hit in the face and just...

And go back to the movies?

Z: Wait, then I'd hate myself.

J: That'd be a lot better, though.

E: Yeah, but still...

Z: Hulk Hogan in the movies, he' s been in so many? I've seen him in a movie, a movie where he's in a black boat

In this same episode from *Nitro* (broadcast on July 13, 1998), Hogan tries to rally support for the NWO, but at the same time sees the need to settle the score with NWO's Scott Hall. Scott Hall lost to WCW's Goldberg, who then beat Hogan. Hogan is angry because Goldberg took his Heavyweight Championship belt:

> **Hogan:** The propaganda is about to stop. Hollywood is sick of all the crap. After last night, when me an Rodzilla (Rodman) proved that the true colors of professional wrestling are black and white, that the true powers of professional wrestling are black and white. We stay true to our colors, we stay true to our NWOites and Hollywood stays true to his family. Goldberg, your days are numbered. I'm on the trail and I'm going to prove to the whole world that you're a flash in the pan. NWO brothers, on to Hollywood NWO-style family business. First off, Hollywood's got the family intact. When you love somebody, like I love the brothers in NWO, sometimes love really hurts. To stay on track, to prove that we're the most powerful force in wrestling, the NWO black and white, from this point on, will be bonded for eternity. But with bonded with eternity, comes a couple bumps in the road which I'm gonna straighten out for you right now. First off, brothers, Hollywood is all eyes and all ears. And if it wasn't for you Scott Hall (pointing to him in the ring, Hall looking very surprised) I

wouldn't be in this situation I am right now. If you didn't drop the ball, if you didn't let Goldberg mow you down, I would still have my belt. Yeah brother. I've heard the crap and I've heard the rap in the back. I've heard the rumors. I've heard the fact that you said Hollywood might not be the man, that maybe Scott Hall should start running the show. Well tonight it's gut-check time for black and white NWO, and I want to find out what you're made of and how loyal you are to the cause. I'm calling you out tonight in the center of the ring. That's the first order of business. You're mine.

Hall: (to Hogan) Hey you. (crowd cheers) You questioning my loyalty to the black and white? I did everything you told me to do. I (?) with the belt like you told me to. I done everything you said, because, honestly, I need the money. You want some of Scott Hall right here in Vegas in front of the whole world in Nitro? (Hogan whispers to Bishkoff) and ah, by the way, by the way, Goldberg beat me, that's true, and then right after that, he took your belt.

Tony: Oh boy.

Mike: The fingers are pointing in all directions.

Hall: So ah, so ah so ah Hollywood, you want some of Scott Hall? Don't sing it, bring it.

Hogan: You got it brother. Guess we draw the line tonight so wax up your pigtail little Bo Peep, cause I'm the big bad creep tonight. And you know something? What the hell are you laughing at Bishkoff?!

Bishkoff: I'm not.

Hogan: No I'm not goofing out. You're snickering, man. You think it's a big joke. Well, you know something? I got a problem with this whole Goldberg thing around the horn. You know something? That match should have never happened. I want to find out where you're coming from brother and I'm going to put you in between me and the beloved one. You're gonna referee tonight.

Bishkoff: I can't be a referee! I don't know how to be a referee!

Hogan: You're gonna be the referee cause you're gonna call it black and white down the middle, who rules and who drools.

Hall: Hey! Hey Eric! When I get done with him (Hogan) all you gotta do is count one, two, (audience joins in) three!

Bishkoff: Don't put me in the middle of this!

Larry: Well, the decision is ----plain the New World Order. They be ------ grilling excuses just like I said. They're pointing the finger.

Tony: They've clearly put Eric Bishkoff right squarely in the middle.

Hogan: (to Hall) Brother, you've got a choice to make tonight. And you're not going to have all these people round here to pull me off you, so you'd better go back and get ready big man. And, by the way, all these other problems that haven't been taken care of, there's a reason this man (the Disciple) is with me, and you should watch how this brother handles business. So brother, (Hall) better take heed cause he (Disciple) is here for a reason....The way it goes, it's real simple. NWO black and white

rules. We're going to find out whose for what it is tonight. I've got a date with you little Sleazy (Hall).

Tony: Never before in the history since the formation of the New World Order, NWO Hollywood, have we seen such a separation, such a vicious Hollywood Hogan. With Bishkoff in the middle, he'll referee when Scott Hall meets Hollywood Hogan tonight.

The first time I saw this drawing (figure 123, p. 169), I was clueless about its meaning, assuming that the portrait may be that of controversial rock singer Marilyn Manson, based on its face makeup, but it also reminded me of the Bruce Lee's character in *The Crow* movies. This is actually the wrestler Sting (Appendix E, figure 124) from the WCW, a favorite among the children. The children did comment several times on the similarity between Sting and the main character in *The Crow*. The symbol for Sting is the scorpion (figure 125) which which appears as well in a child's rendition of Sting transformed into an owl (figure 126). Sting's fight move is also called his Scorpion Deathblow.

Another favored wrestler from the WCW is Diamond Dallas Page (or called by his initials DDP, Appendix E). DDP's fight move, the Diamond Cutter (figures 127 and 128) decorates his own wrestling costume, and fans form the Diamond Cutter with their hands when DDP comes out into the ring, which he returns like a greeting. I hung up a DDP poster in the art room, one that I had torn out of my WCW/NWO magazine. When one first grade class came in, a boy noticed the poster, pointed it out to his friend, who made big eyes of shock and fell to the floor in mock surprise. They each put their hands together to form the Diamond Cutter as they walked over to the poster. Similar reactions happened throughout the grades, with the exception of the fifth graders, who saw the poster, made a few perfunctory Diamond Cutter signs while seated, and then resumed work on their art assignments (although all the wrestling symbols drawn came from fifth graders). When a third grade class came to art, a throng of boys saw the poster immediately and started to pester Joan, wanting to know

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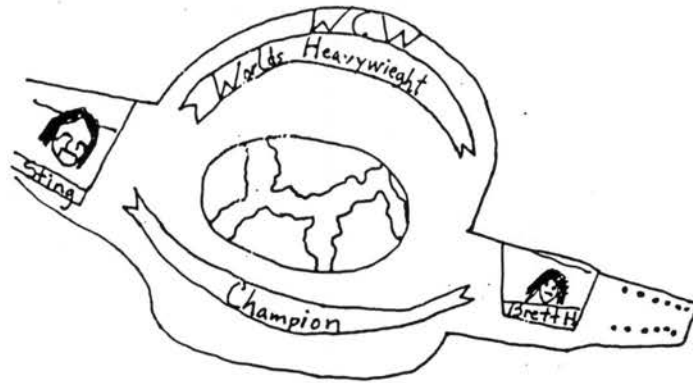
Figure 124

Figure 125
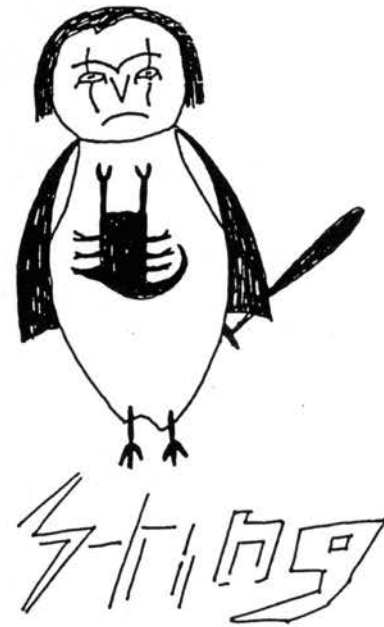
Figure 126

Figure 127

Figure 128

if this poster was hers, and could they have it. Joan signaled to me, and the

boys came en masse, begging to see my wrestling magazine. When I refused

(because Joan was getting ready to start the art lesson) the boys went back to

the poster, one saying " I wish I could spend the night here." Then in groups of

three, they imitated DDP's Diamond Cutter sign, yelling "Bang!" as they thrust

their hands down (exactly what DDP does when he makes his entrance in *Nitro*

and *Thunder*). This same group of boys talked with me about wrestling:

> I just want to say one thing about DDP. Me and (friend's name) can only
> say one thing about DDP (addressing friend), what were me and
> (another friend's name) saying about DDP? DDP rules!
> **Okay. Now, you guys aren't getting paid by DDP to ah**
> Yeah we are
> Deeeee....Deeeeee.....Peeeeee
> Uh huh , he pays us fifty bucks an hour plus....

Joan left the poster up during my absence the following day, but had to take it

down because the children became too rowdy when they saw DDP.

There are a few female wrestlers in the NWO, WCW and WWF

(Worldwide Wrestling Federation). When I asked some boys about them, this is

all the comment I received about women wrestlers:

> **Are there any female wrestlers?**
> (several)Yeah.
> Yeah! I got magazines of them. Some of them are, some of them are
> pretty, some of them...
> **So there are female wrestlers in the NWO**
> Yes!
> **as well as the WCW?** (one boy says "the WCW" in unison with me)
> (several) Yes.
> **What are the names of the female wrestlers?**
> Sunny, Sable, and Luna

The boys did not discuss Sunny, Luna or Sable's feats as wrestlers, instead

only distinguishing them by their looks. The women glamorized were the Nitro

Girls (Appendix E), who are dancers. On the flip side of the DDP poster is a

poster of the scantily clad Nitro Girls. At one point, the bottom thumbtack fell out

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of the poster, so that the poster flapped up from the wall. A fourth grade girl, curious as to what was on the other side, flipped it over, gasped, and drew it to the class' attention, prompting a flock of boys over to see it. They made obnoxious sexist sounds. The girls just looked at each other, shrugged, and one jokingly referred to the Nitro Girls as the "Nacho Girls."

The children were very surprised I had a wrestling magazine (which I used to get children to talk). One second grade boy spotted my wrestling magazine, to which I replied, "Yeah, I'm studying it for my dissertation." He excitedly walked back to his table of friends, exclaiming "She studies wrestling!" A fourth grade boy came up to me once while I was writing in my fieldnotes. He too saw the magazine to which he inquired. "You read those?" "I have this one, why?" I asked. He replied, "Well, I thought you were a teacher." When I told another child that I had the magazine for my research, he approvingly said, "Good research!"

Girls reacted differently to the wrestling magazine than the boys. Boys, for the most part, spent time looking at wrestlers' fighting moves, commenting on who beat who, prompting spontaneous physical demonstrations. I had to take four fifth grade girls outside to talk on the playground, to ensure that boys would not interrupt the conversation. Two of the girls were not really into wrestling but had wrestlers that they said they liked, whereas the other two girls were very involved with the sport, both rooting for rival sides. The girls did not make the Diamond Cutter or any of the other hand symbols, though they did demonstrate these when explaining what the boys did. They spoke calmly, unlike the boys who became louder and more unruly the longer they had access to the magazine. The girls made comments about which wrestlers "looked hot," who was married, and who had children. While looking at child photos of wrestler Chris Jericho, the girls cooed "aaahh...cute." When we reached a page showing

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the Nitro Girls, the girls negatively reacted, saying "disgusting" and "sexist."
When I compared the Nitro Girls to the Dallas Cowboys cheerleaders, one girl
admitted that she had been a fan of the Dallas Cowboys since she was two, and
wanted to be one of their cheerleaders someday. She could not explain to me
how Dallas Cowboy cheerleaders were different from the Nitro Girls.

Lowrider

I was already a bit familiar with lowrider imagery, having seen it when I
taught art near Houston. I saw my Hispanic students cart lowrider magazines to
class and draw lowrider symbols in my art room, especially this one (figure
129), which some children told me then to be a gangster symbol.

Lowriders (Appendix E), are old cars crafted to set low on the ground.
Their exteriors are spray-painted with elaborate designs and their interiors are
ornate and lush. Most lowrider cars use hydraulics, that the driver can use to
make the cars bounce as they drive. Lowrider bikes (Appendix E) are decorated
in a similar fashion. Often in lowrider art, women are represented as either the
Madonna or a seductive and shapely woman in a state of undress. In lowrider
magazines, which advertise car parts and car shows, women wearing bikinis
and high heels drape themselves over the cars. Although I can see how this
female imagery could be deemed disturbing, as in the case of a classroom
teacher who banned lowrider magazines in her classroom replacing them with
a more Caucasian magazine HotRodder (Dyson, 1997, p. 174), I did not see
children drawing the women at all. Instead the lowrider images that fascinated
children were the lowrider man (figure 129), lowrider cars (figure 130, 131 and
132), the smile now-cry later duo (figures 133), the joker (figures 134, 135, 136
and 137) and the wizard (figure 138). These images were also available on
cards, dispensed at a vending machine (for 50 cents each) at store entrances.

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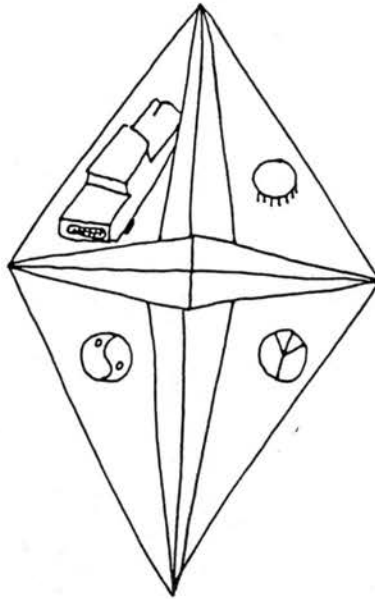
Figure 129

Figure 130
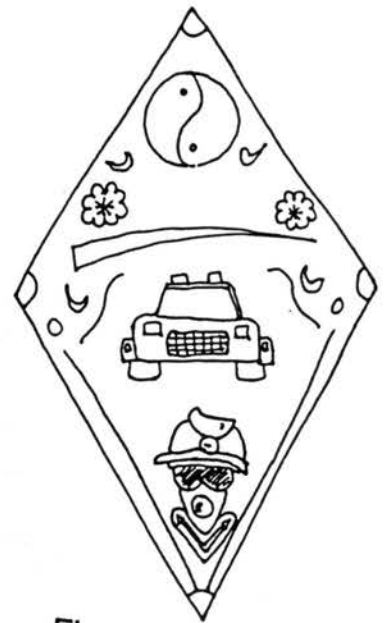
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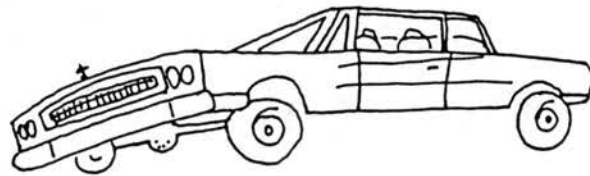
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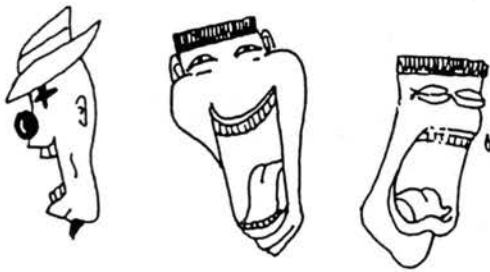
Figure 133

Figure 134

Some children collected these cards and copied these images.

Children even wore lowrider shirts (with the above mentioned imagery). One day, as soon as I arrived at the art room, some third grade boys signaled me over to see one boy's lowrider shirt. The shirt depicted a conglomeration of images that I saw in the Lowrider Arte magazine; Jesus Christ, a fully clothed woman wearing a sombrero that read Aztec/Mexico, a Mayan temple, a muscled Hispanic male yelling in frustration inside prison walls (his hands balled up into fists, his wrists in chains), a man wearing a bandana and flannel shirt standing behind and clutching a wire fence (to be deported?), and a semi-naked woman with bikini top and unzipped pants. A ribbon scrolled the bottom with all words in Spanish. I recognized two words-*raza unida* -and guessed that the images had to do with the unification and pride of the Chicano race. I asked the boys to translate (two were enrolled in the bilingual class). At first one boy said that the words were all the names of everyone shown in the shirt design. When I asked if "race unite" could be a possible meaning, the boys just nodded. Concerning the half-dressed woman, the boys kidded amongst each other that the woman was one of their girlfriends. I later showed this group of boys my Lowrider Arte magazine. Most of the women have some clothing, but one scene with an almost entirely nude female (a scene with an Aztec god and goddess) prompted one boy to say in disgust "Why do they have stuff like THAT in here?"

Lowrider Arte magazine compiles artwork drawn by people around the country. The art featured varies from jokers and other previously mentioned images to those hearkening to Native American roots, the African-American community (which also has its own lowriders), portraits of family members, the Mexican flag, crucifixion scenes, clowns, masks, downtown scenes, Guadalupe Madonna and Aztec deities.

Figure 135
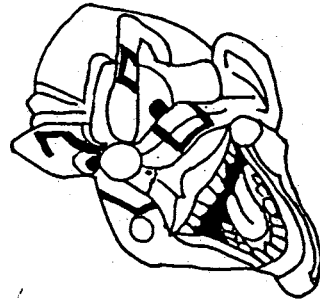
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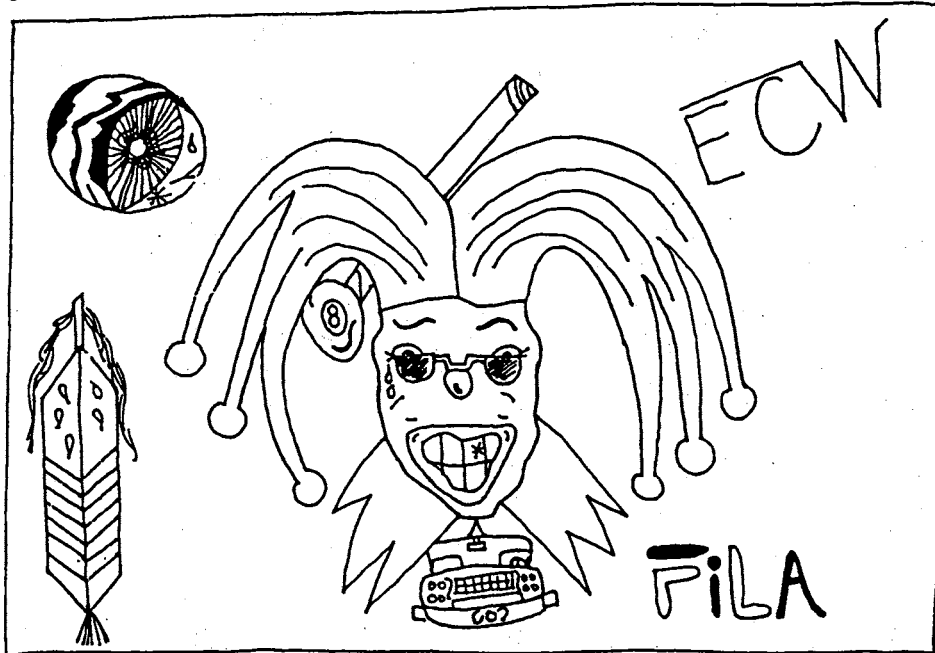
Figure 137

Figure 138

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I asked one boy to talk with me about some of these images as we flipped through a lowrider magazine he had brought to show me (with figures coming from the cards children collected to illustrate):

E: See this is usually for Chicanos, cause and all that, they usually draw it, cause I'm Chicano and (friend's name) is Chicano, cause it says Chicano pride. And look, like all Mexicans drew this, they're Mexicans, see that's got the Mexican flag. That symbol's for Mexico. (figure 139)

What does that mean? Is that raza?

E: Raza, yeah.

What does that mean? Is it like something unite?

E: Is it, it's like (thinking) like they get married, or something.

Oh okay.

E: See that's like a girl's hand, and that's a man's hand.

Okay.

E: See how the girl's hand is small?

So what's this with the joker symbol? (figure 140)

E: The Joker? The Mexicans just like drawing Mexican stuff, like Jokers and all that. Cause there's this gang called Jokers, it's weird.

So there's a gang called Jokers?

E: Uh huh. (nodding yes)

So there is one here, one like in Oklahoma?

E: Yeah, Oklahoma, one down there in (another city). And see here they like draw like Chicanos with their fancy cars, lowrider cars, look at those, and they like those hydraulics like that.

Oh yeah. Lowriders? Is that what the ones that the Lowriders are, the hydraulic cars?

E: Yeah. Also lowriders are cars like that, they have things like that over their tires and they ride real low.

Okay, it has it where the car sits very very low to the ground because the metal's going very close to the ground. Okay, so what does SLAM mean? What's SLAM? (figure 141)

E: Slam is just like a word they put on it just to make it look it good. See it says "Party from the Past" and "Back in the Days," that kind of thing. See these are shirts, you can order them.

What magazine is this?This is real interesting.

E: Have you seen one of those, have you seen those Lowrider magazines?

No. I haven't.Where can you get a Lowrider magazine?

E: You can get them almost everywhere. At the bookstores.

Okay. Cause maybe I could get one. I'd like to get me some to look at for my research.

E: You can them from (name of bookstore). I think they have them.

Is that here in (city?)

E: (name of store) is over there on the highway, the street where

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(another store) is at.

I know where that's at. All right. Good. Cause I can go over and get me some, cause I'm real interested in the artwork.

E: See my brother draws this stuff. We have this big old poster, it has stuff like that, it has a woman and a man like that and, he drew it in a minute and thirty seconds, he's a really good drawer. I'm look up to draw like him, so I'm trying my hardest to take after him. If I asked him, I could probably bring his poster. He's like this really good artist. At church he won first prize out of three states for having the best self-portrait.

That's excellent. Sounds like he's doing really good. I'd like to see those. If I'm here and you're able to bring them and all that stuff. What is this with the mask? Cause I noticed that somebody in the class has that shirt, with a sad mask and a happy mask. (figure 142)

E: That means uh Good Times and Bad Times, Laugh Now Cry Later

Yeah, that's what her shirt says... (girl in class) Laugh Now or Smile Now. What is that? Smile now? I was looking at your shirt. Sorry about that.

E: There are three things that I like the best, I like, there's more than three. I like those, and I like that one especially because of the lowrider bike and the kid...

The kid is even a Joker.

E: Uh huh.

The kid is even in a Joker outfit. What about the woman? Looks like she has some makeup on, some makeup like a Joker, and she has the striped pants...

E: He has striped pants too.

Yeah the kid does, but the guy (man) doesn't.

E: Yeah. They like to wear black and white.

Okay. Black and white outfits.

E: And that's...

That looks like an Aztec sign. (figure 143)

E: That's just somebody's dream. They just....see I like that one, that one, that one, that one, that one and I like the car, with the hydraulics back here.

What's this right here on the Chicano Pride? Is that like Aztec or Mayan?

E: That's just like a symbol or something, with the silver eagle.

With the snake, like is on the Mexican flag?

E: See my brother's friend, well it's all of our friend, his name is (name). He has a necklace with that symbol on it.

Oh.

E: It's pretty cool.

I wonder if it means anything, you know? I'm thinking that it probably comes from Aztec art and it has a certain meaning behind it...

E: Yeah. I think it has a certain meaning but I don't know. (friend in class) has that on his picture, have you seen it?

While the elementary teacher that Dyson cites (1997, p. 174) was offended by the way women were portrayed in the lowrider magazines, I question Hispanic children's sparse knowledge about the rich meaning underlying lowrider imagery, especially as it relates to Chicano pride. To offer them a Caucasian-based HotRodder magazine instead seemed highly insensitive to their cultural connections.
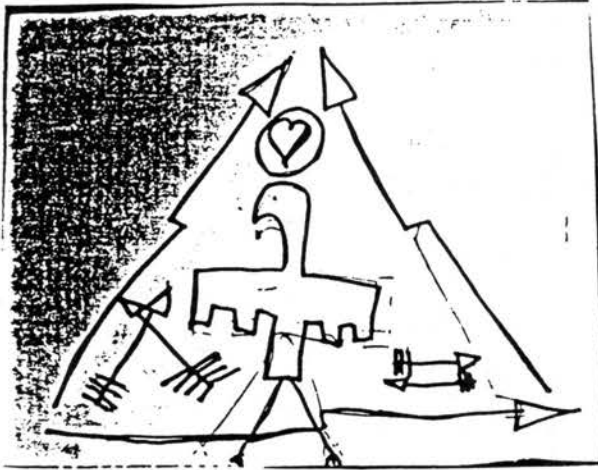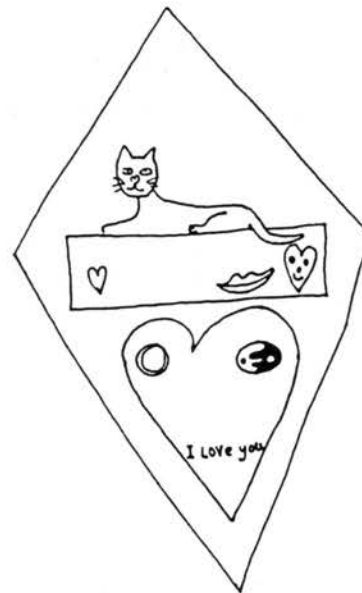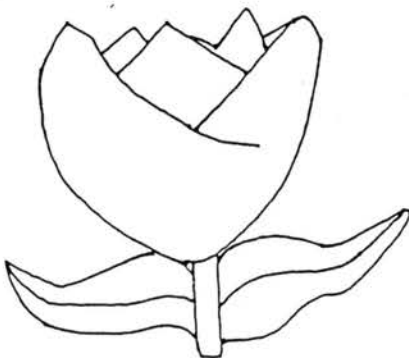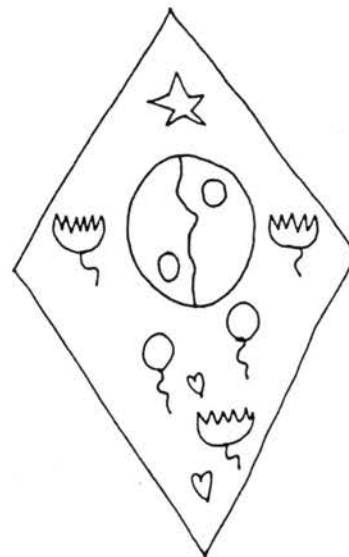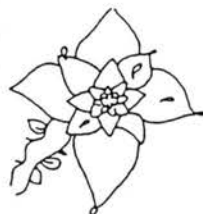

Figure 139

Figure 140

Figure 141

Figure 142

Figure 143

Feminine Symbols

Any visit to a retail store that sells girls' and women's clothing and accessories exposes symbols attributed to be appropriately "feminine," specifically hearts and flowers. Even girls' school supplies, such as notebooks and other study tools, are heavily inundated with these symbols as well as rainbows, unicorns, teddy bears, balloons, puppies, kittens, and more recently, the return of the yellow smiley face and peace sign. Lisa Frank, a school supply brand marketed to young girls (Appendix E), mixes these symbols in glossy, bright colors.

I include these symbols because these symbols are prevalent in girls' artwork and in their clothing and toys. However, these symbols have been used for an extended period of time as decoration for girls' clothing and toys to the point of becoming trite, stereotypic and passive. I feel that these symbols have invaded the market instead of coming from the marketplace, because of their unchanging and static nature. These "feminine" symbols evoke innocence, cooperation and sweetness, whereas "masculine" symbols emanating from sports suggest power, ability and potential. Feminine symbols do not conjure images of real and active girls, girls who explore, who create, who think. No, instead these symbols are adult-constructed signs of "acceptable" girls, who are polite, sweet and all-obeying. It is no wonder that these same feminine symbols are so strikingly similar to those featured in Carson-Dellosa.

In the art room, I perceived these "girl" symbols to be quiet and mostly secretive, i.e. these symbols did not issue much response or discussion from anyone, and were apparently drawn without much ado. Whereas when the boys drew sports team logos, they would often get into heated discussions and debates. When girls drew hearts, e.g., their conversations remained quiet and

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were about other topics, possibly secret conversations voiced in whispers.

Though boys in the lower grades occasionally drew hearts, flowers and rainbows, girls drew these symbols throughout all grade levels, portrayals not decreasing even by the fifth grade. Sorting girls' art into categories was difficult, for girls mixed them all up in their artwork, each symbol possibly being more meaningful because of its conjunction with the others (figures 144 and 145).
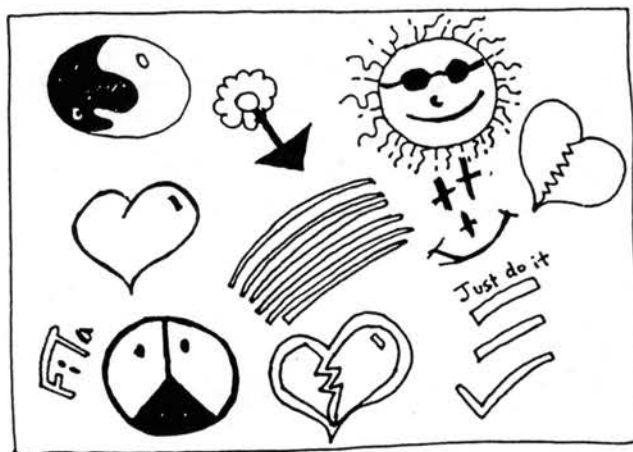
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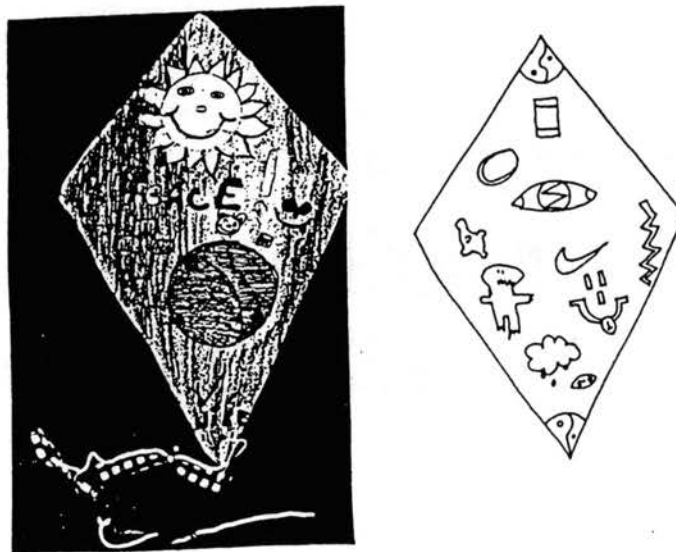
Figure 145

Hearts

The fifth graders came in and Joan directed them to line up against the back wall so she could reassign their seats. I sat near the end of the line. A girl stood next to me. While she was waiting for Joan to talk, she spotted tempera paint near the sink in front of her and said aloud to herself, smiling, "I hope we can finger paint." She tentatively touched the orange paint bottle and continued, "I could do hearts." She then fingered a heart on the countertop, each hand moving in unison to create half a heart. She eagerly anticipated creating this symbol, bouncing up and down on the balls of her feet. I found it surprising since the heart symbol, being utterly cliche, could be a symbol that the child could derive much pleasure in re-creating.

Children's struggled with reproducing the symmetry of this symbol (figure 146), but early on they played with the heart as they did with any of the other symbols (figures 147, 148, 149 and 150), assimilating it into assignments using symbols from other sources (figure 151), and trying it out, like Nike's swoosh, when exploring with other media (figure 152).

Common heart variations consist of highlighted hearts (by adding a small rectangle to one lobe of the heart), broken hearts (with jagged line separating the heart into two) and Cupid's heart (heart shot through with an arrow). Girls also played with the heart as a design, making concentric hearts in reds and blues (figure 153), or by adding a smile face or yin-yang to the heart (figure 154), or even adding wings, horns and a devil's tail (see figure 9). Another variation has curlicues inside the heart, which a second grader showed Joan, and told Joan, "That's the way my mom draws it." Once a third grade girl came up to me to show me her construction paper heart that she had cut out to decorate her Valentine's Day bag. She had folded the heart in half, used pinking shears to gently cut the middle, and created small holes that perforated

the heart. She said, "See my lingerie."

Figure 146
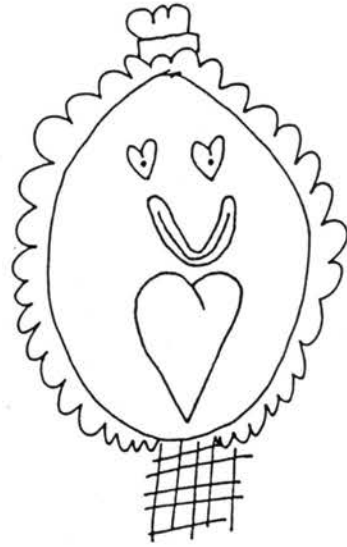
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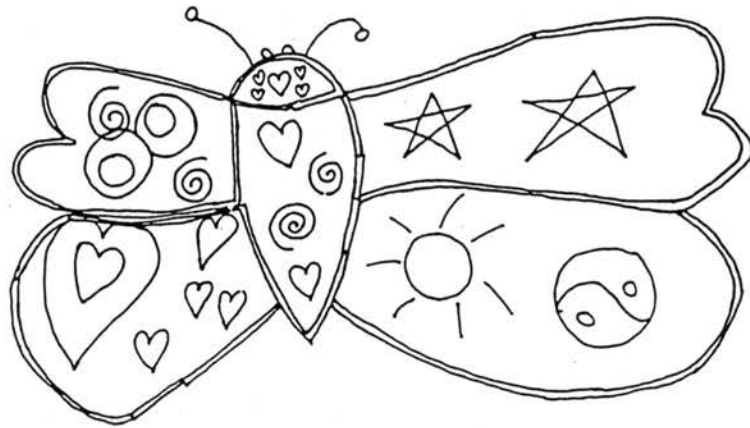
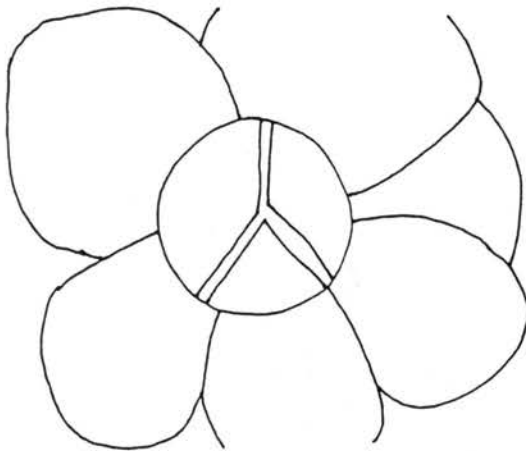Figure 148
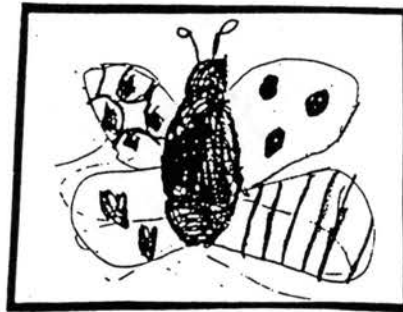
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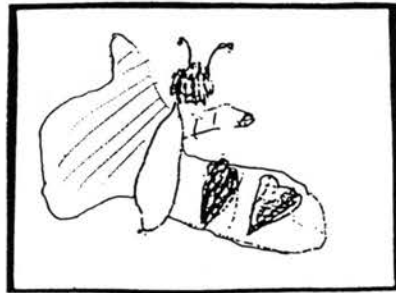
Figure 150

Figure 151

Figure 152
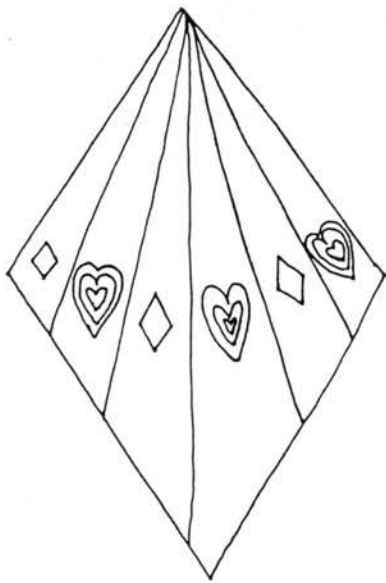
Figure 153

Figure 154

Flowers

Girls construct flower symbols in several ways, with the most common flower types being daisies, tulips and roses, flowers which often decorate girls' clothing. A looped line enclosing a circle, which then sits on top a line for a stem, comprised most early daisy representations (figure 155). Rosebuds are indicated through a spiral placed on top of a U-shape (figures 156 and 157).

Tulips may be made of a few triangles (figure 158), or many (figure 159), or may have a zigzag line drawn at the top to represent the petals (figure 160). Unrealistic flowers could be created by reducing the petal to a U-shape, or a bracket ({) or points (figures 161 and 162) repeating these in layers to form the flower. Flowers were also mixed with smiley faces (figures 163 and 164) and peace signs (figure 165).
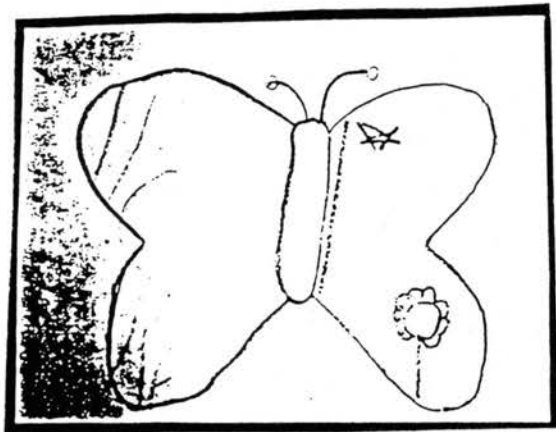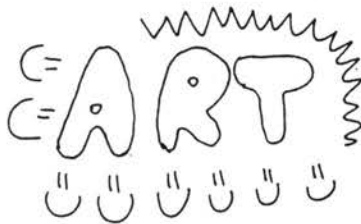
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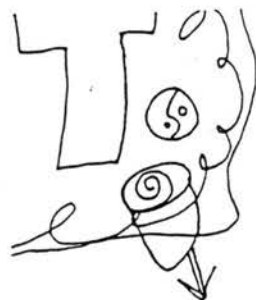
Figure 156   Figure 157

Figure 158

Figure 159

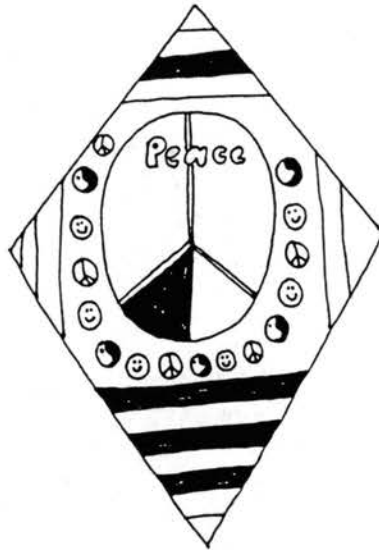Figure 160
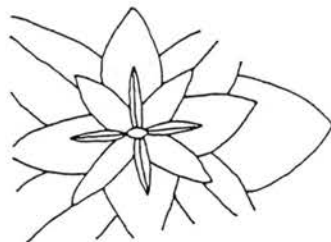
Figure 161

Figure 162
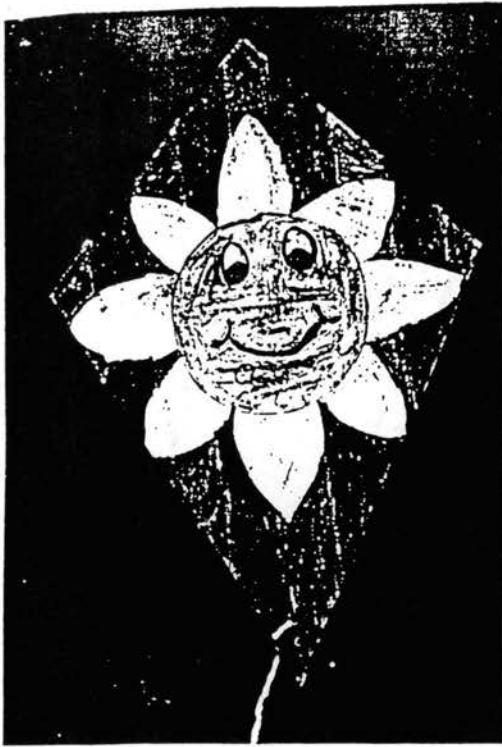
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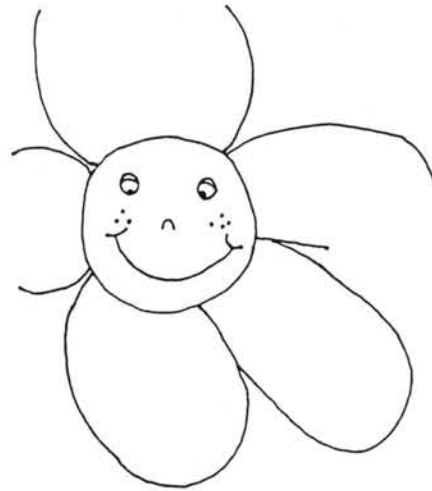
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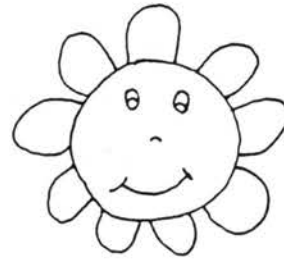
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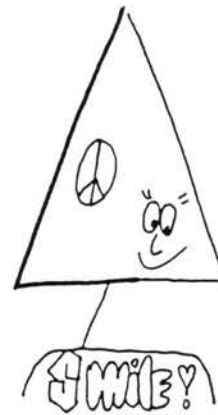
Figure 166

Balloons and Rainbows

It seemed to me that every single time I gave my students free time to draw, girls would inevitably choose to depict balloons, either shown tied in a

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bunch, with a bow to secure the strings together, or several shown floating solo into the open sky, with strings dangling. Sometimes the balloons, like the hearts, were adorned with a small rectangle at the top of the balloon, to suggest a highlight on a shiny surface. I saw only a few rainbows and balloons in girls' artwork at Madison Elementary, but not as many as I had expected (figure 160) and (figure 176), and I did not see much play with these symbols, although I did once overhear a fifth grade girl exclaim to her friends at her table, "I'm painting rainbows!"

<u>Smiley Faces</u>

Smiley faces and admonitions to smile (figure 166) abound in girls' artwork. Some chose to use the standard yellow happy face which was so popular in the sixties (one pops up behind the cat in the can, figure 167), in conjunction with peace signs (figure 175), and replacing the dots in a yin-yang (figure 168). One girl altered the smiley face in this black construction paper/tissue paper "stained glass" design (figure 169), making the eyes blue and green, the mouth red, and placing green, yellow, red violet and violet in each corner.

The oval eyes of the smiley face can be transformed into mere slits (figure 170), or complete with pupils, some with half-closed eyes (figure 171). One girl divided the bottom happy face in half by using contrasting black and white, suggestive of the yin-yang (figure 172) which she drew above the face. Some smiling faces stick out their tongues, implying a goofy, silly and dimwitted state of mind (with one drawn inside the letter D for this girl's name (figure 173).

Smiley or happy faces were often reduced to the word "smile." In figure 174, the word replaces the eyes of the face, juxtaposing the word with the representation of the act of smiling. Children also seem to find this 'S' symbol

pleasurable to draw, a pleasure akin to producing a five-pointed star with one swift continuous line. Both are drawn step-by-step. Children start out drawing the "S" by putting down two sets of three parallel lines, which they set up as a basis to draw the rest of the letter. Children will occasionally omit the rest of the word "smile," instead letting the "S" signify the word (figure 20).

Figure 167

Figure 168

Figure 169

Figure 170
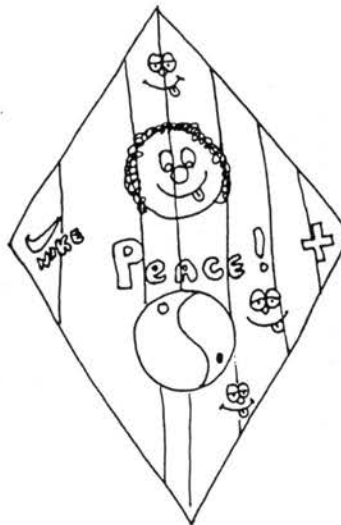
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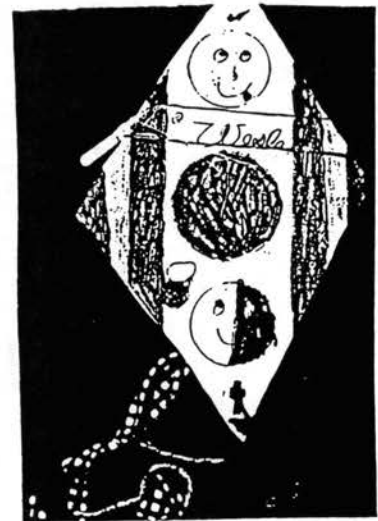
Figure 172

Figure 173

Figure 174

Figure 175

Peace Signs

I can only speculate why older boys tended to not draw peace signs, but girls did; the only possible reason being the association of the peace signs with the Spice Girls. Girls were more likely to write the word 'Peace' alongside the symbol (figure 175), but the retro three-pronged peace sign was not that common, at least not in its unadulterated state (figure 176). A second grader filled in some of the spaces with cross-hatching and gave the symbol two dots, echoing the yin-yang nearby (figure 177). A fifth grade girl, in her Pennsylvania Dutch assignment, constructed this elaborate piece (figure 178), using cool colors blue, green and purple. Girls also preferred changing the peace sign to be that of a Y inside a circle configuration, decorating the three parts with hearts, flowers and other symbols (figure 179).
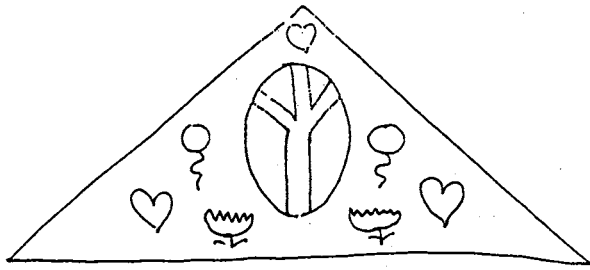
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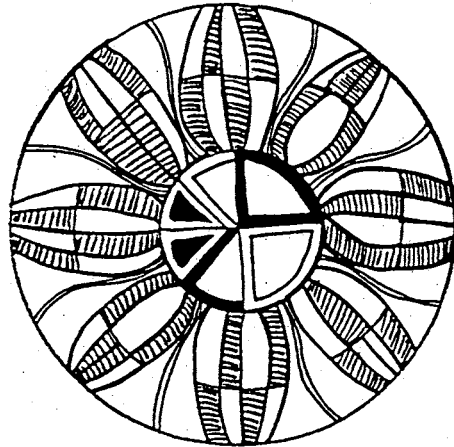
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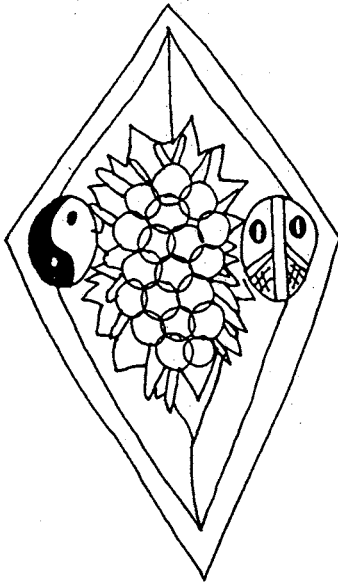
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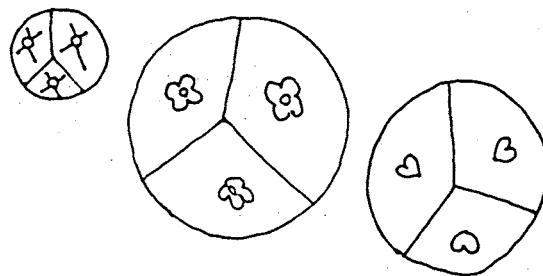
Figure 179

Neutral Symbols

Eightballs, yin-yangs and aliens sprung up in both boys' and girls'
artwork. I looked around on television and in stores to determine why these
symbols were deemed important by children and why they were also
considered neutral territory, not being used to show femininity or masculinity.
When I taught near Houston, the eightball stood for a local gang, so I had to ban
its use in my art classes. Magic eightballs have returned to store shelves,

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eightballs creep up in lowrider art, and even wrestler Diamond Dallas Page sports a tattoo of an eightball on his arm. Yin-yangs are frequently seen in martial arts (also currently popular among children) and in children's television (in *The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: The Next Mutation* uses a yin-yang in its logo) and in video games (like Mortal Kombat). The yin-yang has become so faddish that one leading clothing pattern manufacturer sold a Halloween costume pattern for children to wear a large black and white yin-yang. Aliens have been prevalent in the mass media for several decades, but recent movies such as *Space Jam*, *Independence Day* and *Mars Attacks* have fueled the current interest.

Eightball

I saw only a few eightballs in children's art at Madison Elementary, and when children chose to depict it, they did not alter it, but did place it in different contexts. A fourth grade girl added an eightball to her art notebook cover design (figure 180), affiliating it with a peace sign and a yin-yang, whereas a fifth grade boy's eightball emerges out of a can (figure 181). It is also with a yin-yang, but accompanies an alien, Dr. Seuss' Cat in the Hat and a Nike swoosh.
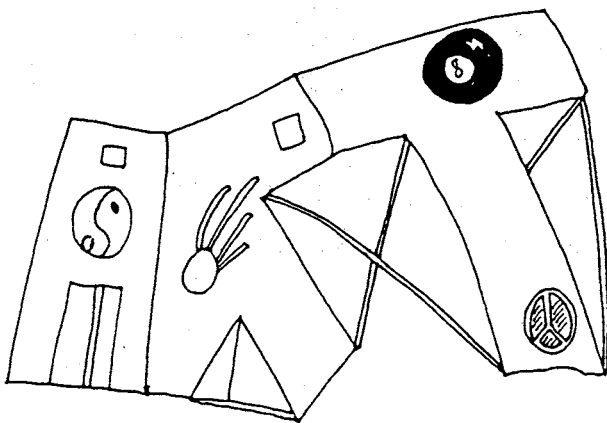
Figure 180

Figure 181

<u>Yin-Yang</u>

Unlike the eightball, children refashioned yin-yangs, placing them out of

context or reworking them into a design. During my first day at Madison, Joan

pointed out fifth graders' artwork pertaining to Pennsylvania Dutch designs. I

counted no fewer than thirteen pieces which children had used yin-yangs as

their central focus in their art. Two girls had converted yin-yang dots into stars

(figure 182) and hearts (figure 183). The girl who drew figure 183 talked with me

about her design:

> Y: Well, we were doing this Pennsylvania Dutch project and I just
> thought it might be neat to do a whole bunch of different stuff and so I
> made stars, and hearts, and tulips and yin-yangs and stuff and I just
> kinda played with it.
> **Okay. And I noticed that you put the yin-yangs, you put hearts
> in the yin-yang.**
> Y: Well, it's just kind of a different thing, I thought, and it would be
> kinda neat to do that instead of just the regular o's.
> **Do you have yin-yang jewelry or...**
> Y: I have some pink and blue yin-yang earrings and I have a few yin-
> yang pogs.
> **Pogs?**
> Y: Pogs...they're like the milk cap things.

Yin-yangs manifested themselves in other art assignments, several for a first

grader's design for a "crazy sun" activity (figure 184), one for a construction

paper/tissue paper "stained glass" project (figure 185), four merged in a Native

American symbols design (figure 186), and another to become the letter D to

spell a girl's name (figure 187). Other yin-yangs were turned into hearts (figure

188), people (figure 189), and even a T-shirt design for a cat (figure 190).

Some children retained the black and white yin-yang and placed it on

different backgrounds. In figure 191, the child reverses the black and white of

the background with that of the yin-yang, and likewise in figure 192 another

child emphasizes contrast in a black and white yin-yang by placing it against a

contrast of black versus gray (a contrast of values) and red versus blue (a

contrast of warm and cool colors). The yin-yang in figure 193 rests against a purple background, but in each corner, the child alternates two complementary colors, orange and blue. Both yin-yangs in figures 194 and 195 sit on top of color bands, but the yin-yang in figure 195, instead of being black and white is now blue and red with green dots, and it blends in with the blue, red and purple stripes residing in the background. Four of the five yin-yangs in figure 196 remain stark black and white, however the central yin-yang is red and black, and all lie in a field of light red, with bright red used to accentuate the curved lines, suggesting movement as seen in comics, possibly shaking, twitching yin-yangs.
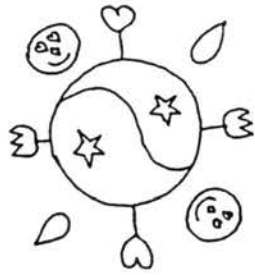
Figure 182
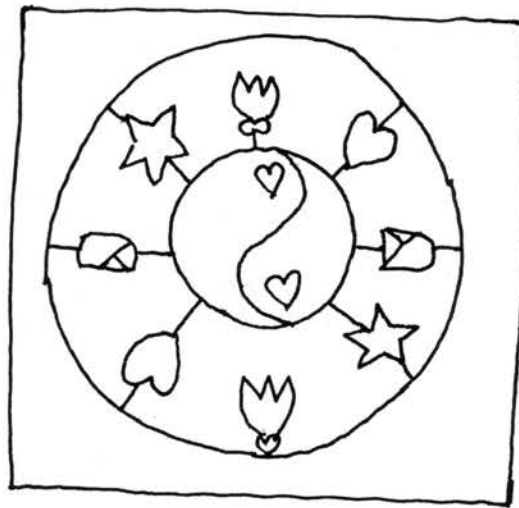
Figure 183
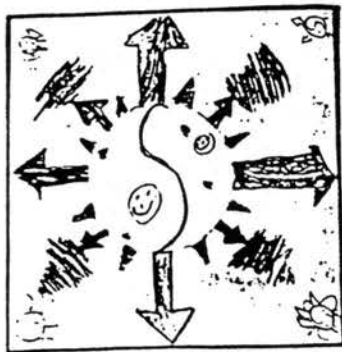
Figure 184

Figure 185

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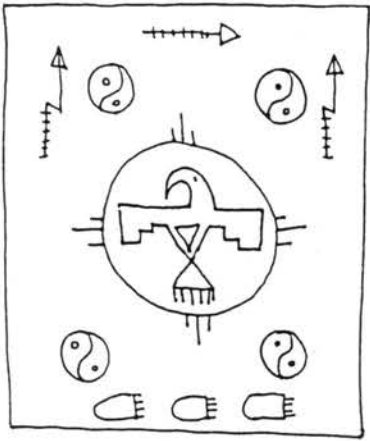
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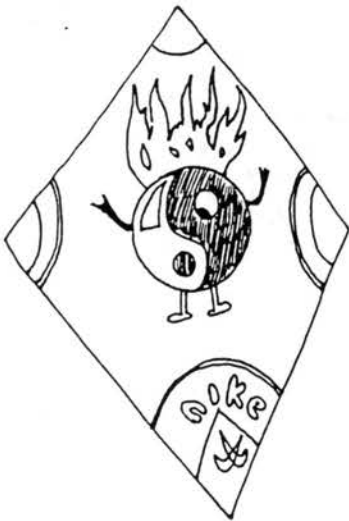
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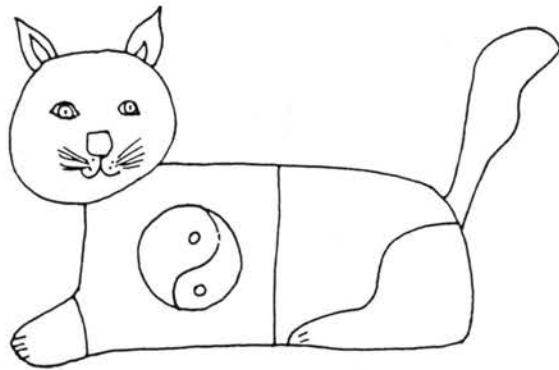
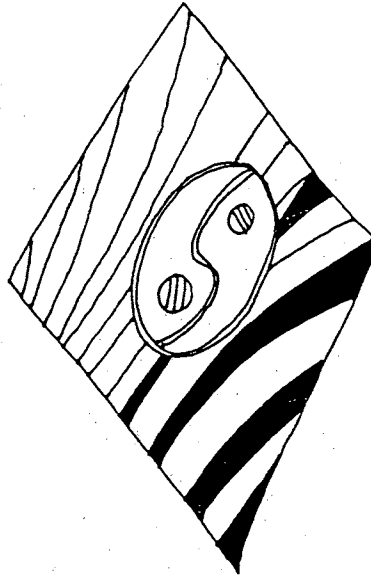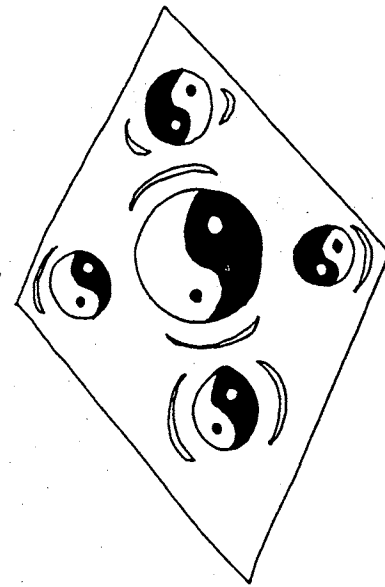

Figure 190

Figure 191

Figure 192
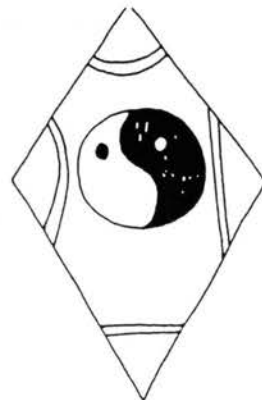
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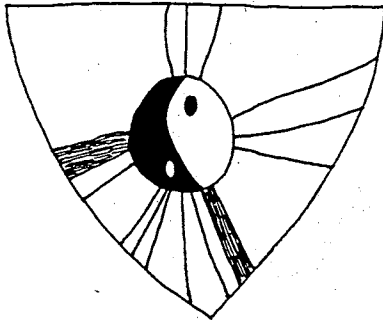
Figure 194   Figure 195   Figure 196

Aliens

Along with Nike's swoosh, children became preoccupied with aliens, in part from aliens' prevalence in the mass media and popular culture, and in part due to alien images on commercial products, from fruit roll-ups, alien-shaped pasta, to pencils and clothing (figure 197):

And that's what's on your T-shirt "I come in peace". So do you collect alien stuff?
A2:   No. I have this little alien that you put in a jar and he grows and...
Does he look the same, only tiny?
A2:   He's tiny but you put him in water and he grows bigger. And then I got a king-size one about this big, and then I put him in the jar, and close it, and put it in the water, and it popped the lid off the jar!
Does he have a mean expression on his face or does he look like?
A2:   He looks like a Rambo dude. He looks like Rambo.
Rambo?
A2:   He has a pack of bullets right here, and a gun in his hand and then on this side he has missiles that he loads his bazooka with.
Where did you get this?
A2:   My grandma gave it to me. She didn't know she bought it, she just got it in her bag and she didn't know, and so she gave it to me.

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So it's...
A2:   She didn't know she paid for it.
**So does it like dry out and then you are able to re-wet it
and...?**
A2:   You have to dry it off. (to rewet it)

Joan assigned outer space scenes to the third and fourth graders. Each fourth grade class constructed a large outer space mural where this sole alien (figure 198) and ship (figure 199) appeared. The third graders, on the other hand, made individual outer space drawings, using oil pastels on black construction paper. I listened in to Joan's presentation of this lesson. Some third grade classes immediately suggested aliens as a possible topic, with spontaneous discussions among the children contemplating the existence of extraterrestrial life forms. I later saw these particular pieces displayed out in the hallway, all drawn by boys (figures 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, and 206). These all had representations of alien ships, but no aliens. Some of these are peaceful, with alien ships hovering through space (figures 202, 203 and 204), while others co-exist in harmony with humans (figures 201, 205 and 206). Only one (figure 200) depicted war between the two.

At about this time, I came across some fourth grade girls' freetime drawings in their class folders. In these, girls drew both aliens and their ships. Unlike the boys' alien ships, these girls let the viewer see the alien sitting inside, one in profile (figure 207), one octopus-like (figure 208), most friendly saying "Hi!" (figure 209) and "we're landing" (figure 210), one even being a combination alien/space ship (figure 211). Also, unlike the boys, girls included alien ships abducting (figure 212), even if the abduction was done in a friendly manner (figure 213) with the alien saying "Take me to your leader." Other alien drawings by these fourth grade girls continued the theme of friendly, lovable and innocuous beings (figure 214), composed of heart shapes (figure 215), with hearts as noses (figure 216), most smiling (figures 217 and 218), one with a
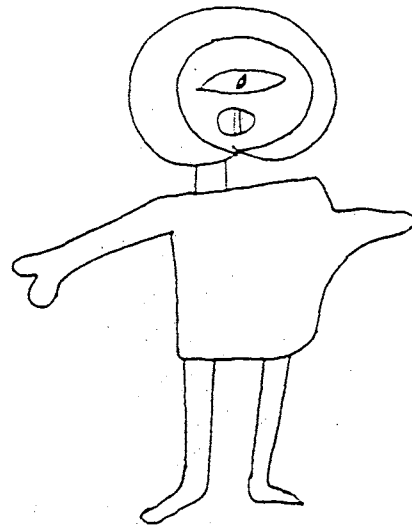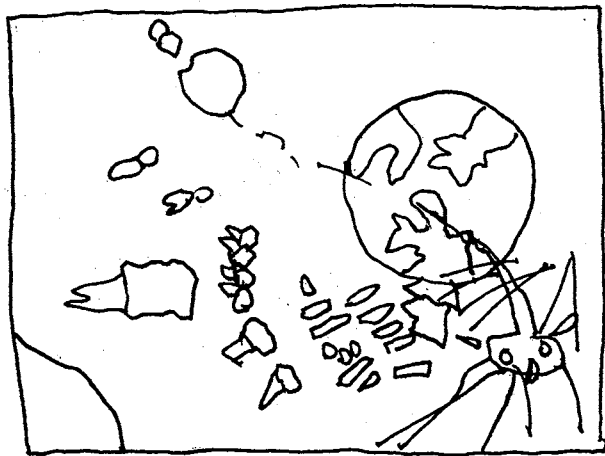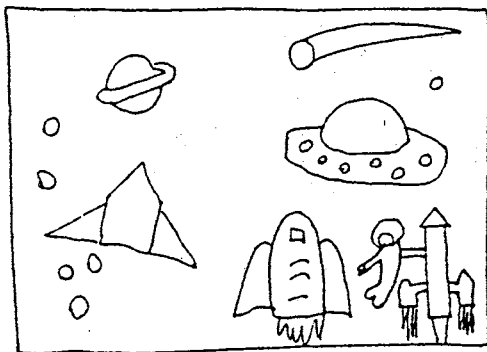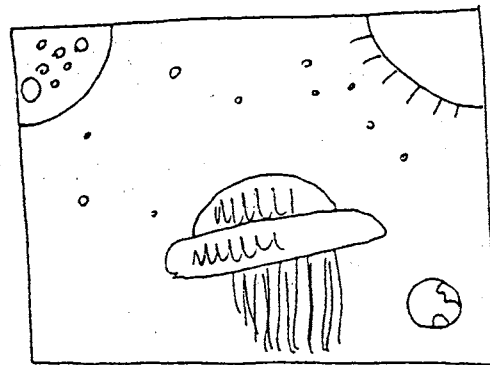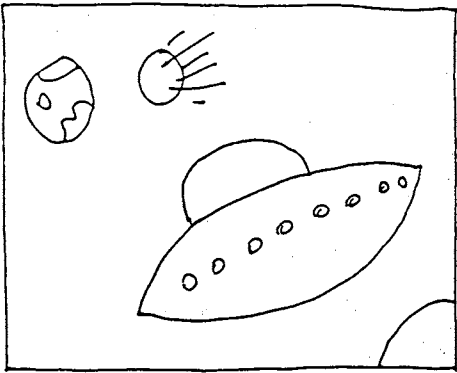
Figure 197

Figure 198
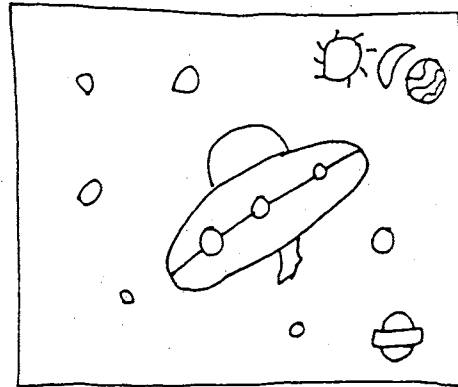

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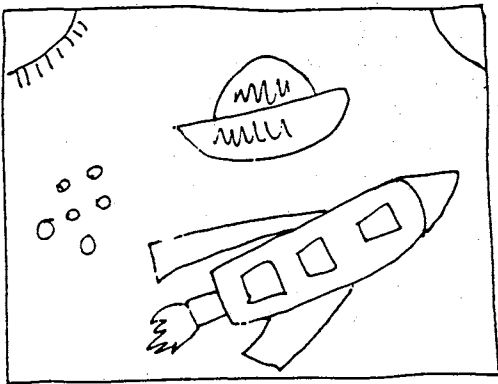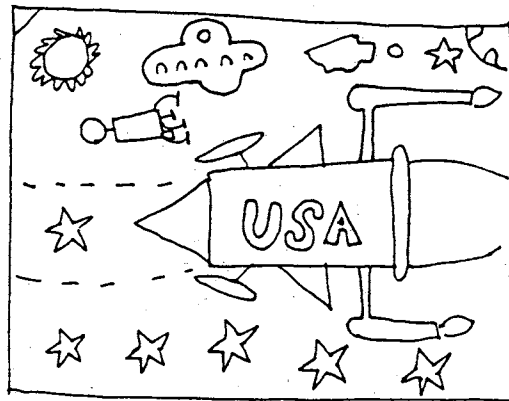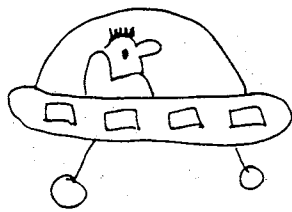
Figure 200

Figure 201

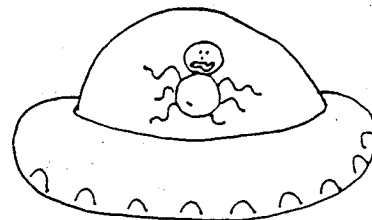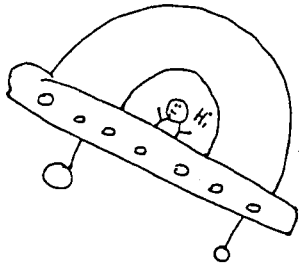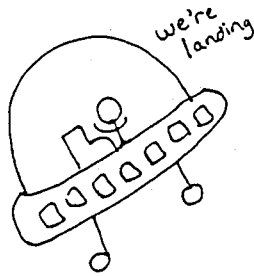Figure 202

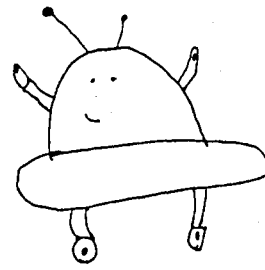Figure 203

Figure 204

Figure 205

Figure 206
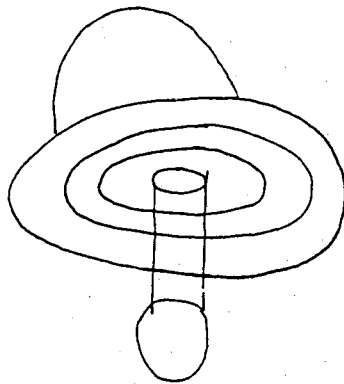

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Figure 208

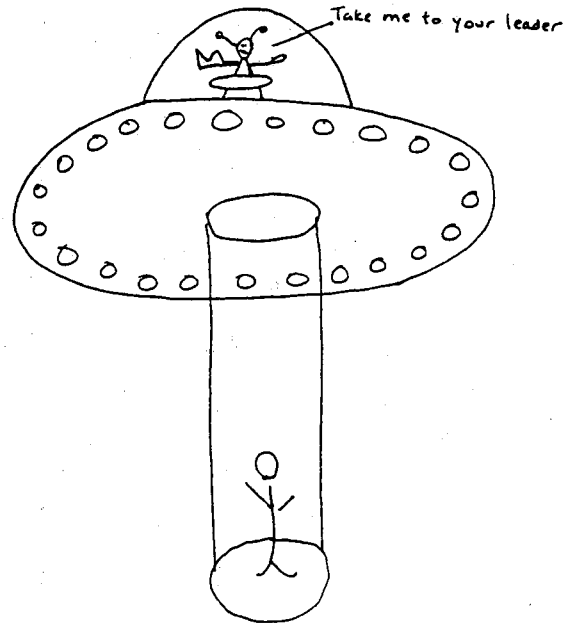Figure 209

Figure 210

Figure 211
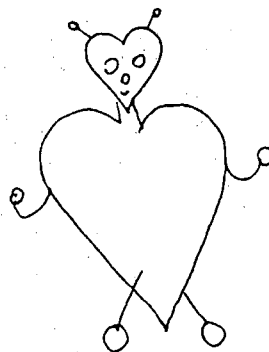
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Figure 213

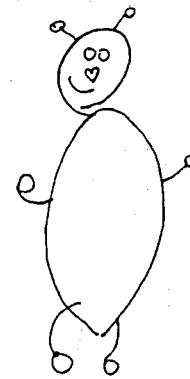Figure 214

Figure 215

Figure 216

Figure 217

Figure 218

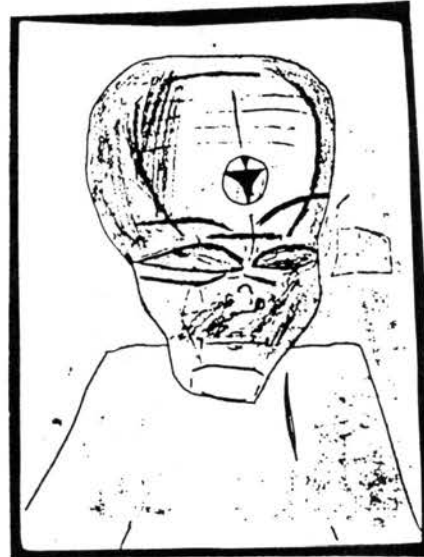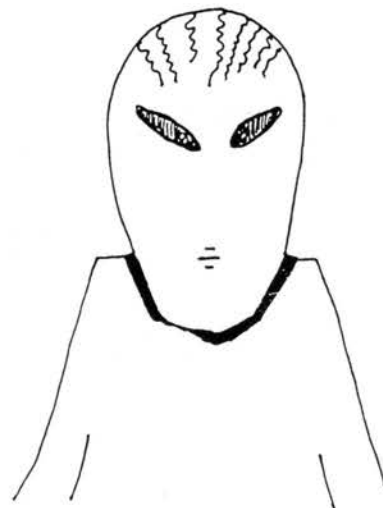
Figure 219

Figure 220

Figure 221

Figure 222

Figure 223

goofy smile (figure 219) and another with multiple arms (figure 220).

But what really set off an explosion of alien artwork among the children started with one alien drawing by a fourth grade boy (figure 221), who gave Joan this piece. She hung it up on the wall behind her desk. At around this same time, the third graders were engaged in kite designs. One boy incorporated figure 221 into his kite design (figure 222). He excluded figure 221's triangular insignia on the alien's forehead, but borrowed the eyes and the forehead wrinkles. Other fourth grade children started to draw aliens during their free time, and hung up their art on another wall. Figure 223 inspired this third grader's kite design (figure 224), but the third grader added a M.I.B. tag on the alien, referring to the sci-fi movie *Men In Black*. More alien drawings cropped up and were added to the display, a few using the standard tear-drop shaped green alien face (figure 225), but most varied from this symbol: an alien wearing a cape like a superhero (figure 226), an alien with a forked tongue like a snake (figure 227), one wearing a goatee (figure 228), one with a mouth reminiscent from a heart monitor (figure 229), a yellow alien with a light bulb-shaped head (figure 230), another with waving arms (figure 231) and one with a single earring (figure 232), being an alien up on contemporary youth fashion.

Third graders continued work on their kites, where standard alien symbols predominated, even when mixed with goofy faces (figure 233) or placed against a striped background (figure 234). A group of third grade boys, who sat at the same table, produced similar kites, adding Nike's swoosh and yin-yangs to their kite designs (figures 235, 236 and 237). Another child added Nike swooshes as well, but deviated in the alien symbol, who now had red hair sprouting from its head (figure 238).

Two aliens also were drawn with guns, one as an insignia on his uniform (figure 239), and another, wearing a gold chain, either chasing or fleeing, runs

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Figure 224

Figure 225
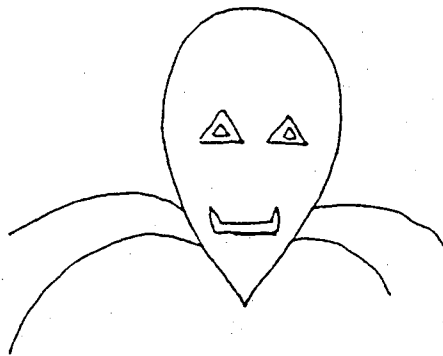
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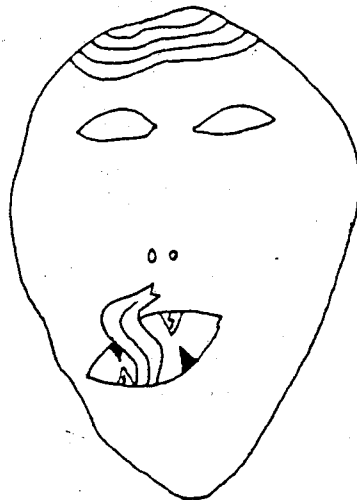
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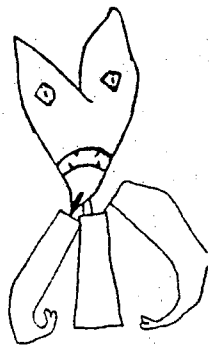
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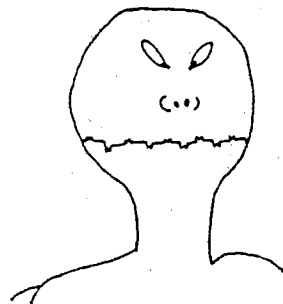
Figure 229

with a gun while firing it (figure 240). He appears to have been shot, for some fluid oozes out of his neck.

Alien bodies were not drawn very often, but when they were they were human-like. Two girls gave their aliens three legs instead of only two (figures 241 and 242). A boy's alien stands on knobby knees with two big toes protruding out of each foot (figure 243). Possibly in sync with the concurrent interest in professional wrestling, this fifth grade boy depicted his alien to be muscular, a weight lifter with superhero strength (figure 244).

While fourth graders were adding their aliens to the wall, and the third graders were incorporating aliens into their kite designs, fifth graders were busy placing them in their "critters in the can" assignment. Figure 245's alien peers out tentatively behind some pencils. The snake coiled around the can is drawn to be far more sinister than the timid alien. Aliens and alien ships (figure 246) are repeated both outside and inside the can. The aliens stand stiff and motionless. In fact, fifth graders's aliens deviated less from the standard alien heads than in the younger grades.
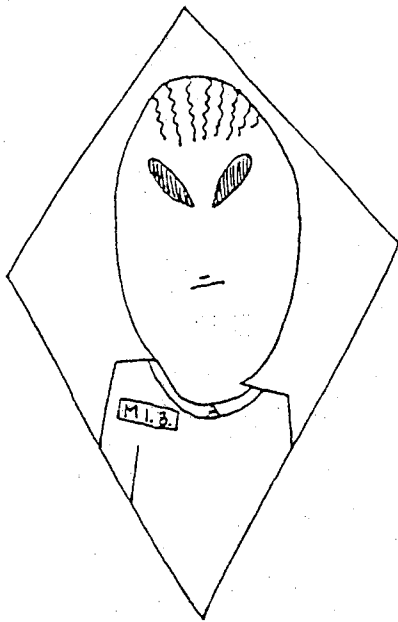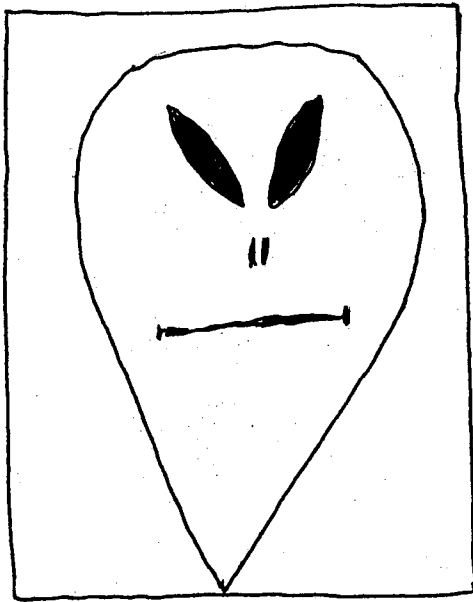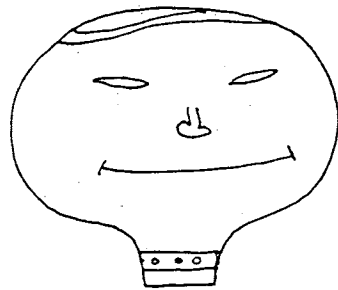

Figure 230

Figure 231
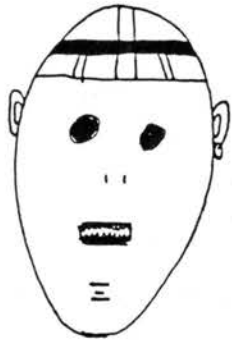
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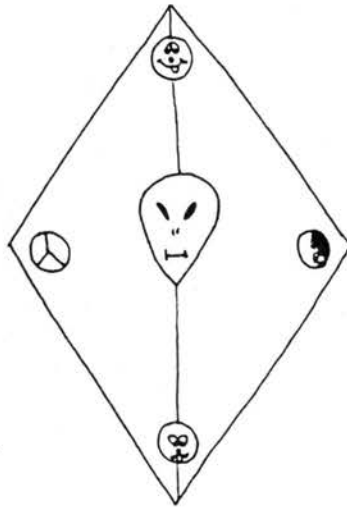
Figure 233

Figure 234

Figure 235

Figure 236

Figure 237

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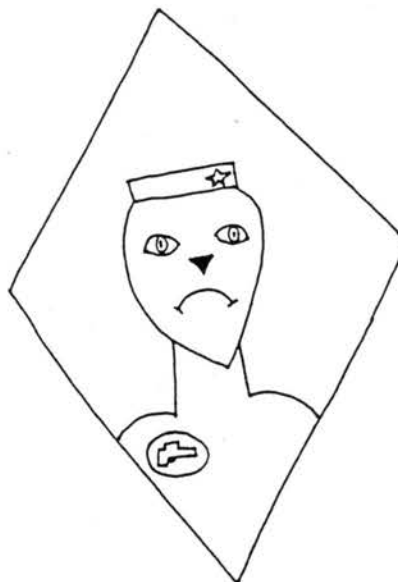
Figure 239

Figure 240

Figure 241

Figure 242
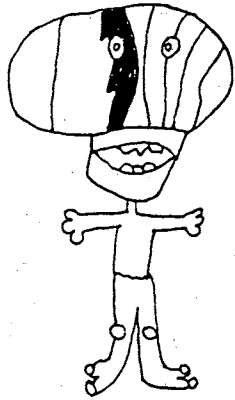
Figure 243

Figure 244
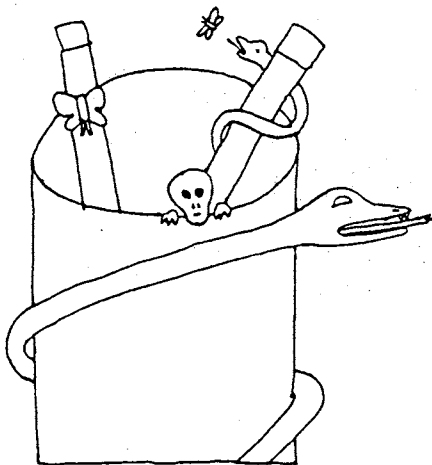
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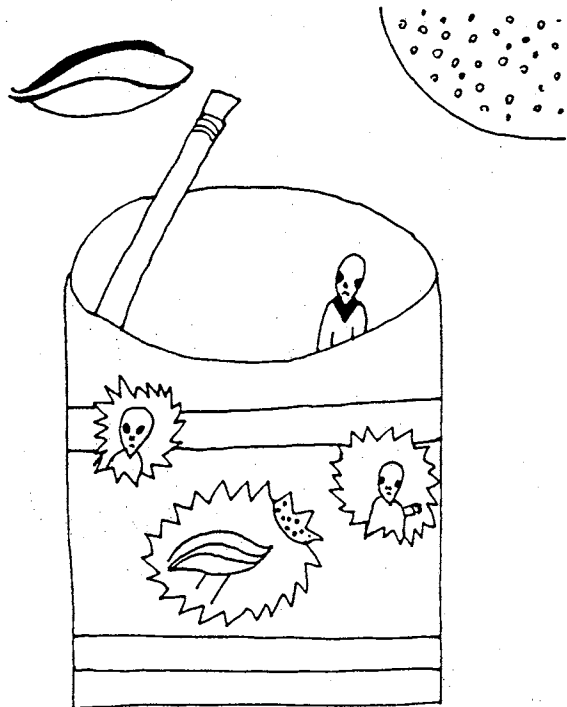
Figure 246

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter I address the research questions posed in Chapter One. I also give suggestions for future research and implications the findings for this study have for art education specifically and for education in general.

Research Questions

I found that despite the plethora of children's television shows, movies, video games, toys and food products, children tend to choose from a limited range of symbols to portray in their artwork. Children's selection of media symbols seemed to challenge the notion that these depictions were mere mindless endeavors. I asked these questions:

* Why are certain symbols more powerful to children than any of the other media cultural symbols that are available to them?

* Does the use of media symbols differ by grade, gender, socioeconomic class and ethnicity?

* Are there any symbols that seem to be trans-gender and trans-class?

* Why do female students tend to not select corporate symbols to place in their artwork (unlike the male students) but instead choose to use more universal popular culture symbols like smiley faces, peace signs, hearts, balloons and rainbows?

* What is the relationship between the media producers, marketers and children?

For the children in this study, some symbols seemed to be more important to them and they drew and played with certain symbols more than others. These symbols included Nike swooshes, yin-yangs and aliens. Nike's swoosh and yin-yangs appeared to be deemed especially visually interesting by children, and integrated easily into their designs, both symbols being abstract. Aliens, however, were fascinating to children more because of the possibilities of imaging and creating never-before-seen creatures. Their depictions of aliens varied tremendously.

Other symbols besides Nike swooshes, yin-yangs and aliens showed up in children's artwork, but to a lesser degree. These symbols were often drawn by older children and then would be copied by younger children. Younger children spent their free time studying older children's work that was displayed in the art classroom to learn which symbols were important to older children and how these symbols were to be drawn. Also, children who held power among their peers frequently influenced which symbols would crop up in their classmates' art.

Some of these symbols were important as a means to display "masculinity" and "femininity", e.g. hearts were labeled by children to be feminine in that they were drawn predominately by girls and were ignored by boys. Sometimes children copied another child's unique approach to a symbol, especially if a child made the symbol out of material it would not normally appear in (e.g. a Nike swoosh made out of clay as opposed to being printed or stitched on fabric). Children especially enjoyed seeing another child place a symbol in a different context, particularly if it was done for humorous effect (e.g. an alien with a Nike swoosh for a mouth). Children excitedly shared these re-creations of symbols among each other.

Brand logos adopted by children were those with which they either had

daily contact (such as shoe logos) or those which they could purchase on their own (such as soda and candy brands). Showing brands in art displayed children's consumer savvy to others, and hence their maturity and independence. Corporate logos that children saw at the school, and that were useful to children, such as a soda vending machine, were also borrowed by children to include in their art. Some brand logos, particularly those on sports equipment, were one way that children could imaginatively identify with a sports hero.

Children were also selective with what they chose to depict from the mass media. They drew cartoons, mostly those intended for children, as well as Nickelodeon, a cable channel developed for children. When children drew images from adult media (such as sports), these images were related to their experience with these televised events and their associations with friends, family and good times.They often drew instruments used for the transmission of the mass media such as television, video games, compact discs, boomboxes and Walkmans. Children's drawings of Nintendo 64, Playstation and SEGA video game systems were by far drawn in more detail that their drawings of television sets, which were usually portrayed in a more stereotypic fashion. Children were intrigued by the visual qualities of iridescent compact discs, and played with the colors seen on them. Their depictions of boomboxes and Walkmans were highly individualized, attesting to children incorporating their personal experiences with the mass media and their daily use of devices used in transmitting it.

These symbols children drew differed by grade, gender, socioeconomic class and ethnicity. Younger children indiscriminately used symbols which older children distinguished as feminine and masculine. In fact, which symbols were considered to be masculine by first graders was unclear. Younger children

also seemed less aware of brand logos than older children, and drew brand logos less, with the exception of Nike's swoosh. The older children included brand logos from other clothing apparel, snack foods and restaurants and also drew more symbols from the mass media than younger children. Professional wrestling symbols were initially considered to be a sign of lower class status, but soon was granted entrance into mainstream symbol use by children. Likewise, lowrider imagery was considered to be tied to the Hispanic population, but it too became mainstream, and appeared in the work of non-Hispanic children.

A few symbols, Nike swooshes, yin-yangs, and aliens seemed to be deemed trans-gender and trans-class. These were also the same ones that seemed to be the most powerful to children, being both used the most and artistically manipulated the most. Symbols drawn predominately by girls, such as hearts, flowers, rainbows, smiley faces, balloons and peace signs, also seemed to be trans-class, being drawn by girls regardless of socioeconomic background. None of these feminine symbols indicated wealth, prestige nor power, but instead suggested cooperation, togetherness, kindness and friendship.

Unlike the boys, girls tended to not select corporate symbols to place in their artwork. This may be in part because the brands denoting power and independence, such as the shoe brands, were not distinguished as being strictly feminine brands. Girls instead chose to use more universal popular cultural symbols like smiley faces, peace signs, hearts, balloons and rainbows. Some of these symbols, in particular hearts and smiley faces, were also seen in Carson-Dellosa imagery, material often purchased by elementary classroom teachers to decorate their classrooms. Girls may adopt these symbols to show their allegiance with female teachers. This may be one way girls can use these

symbols to show power over the boys. Walkerdine (1990) posits:

> It may be the similarity between these discursive practices, both sites of
> female power, that allows girls to take up positions of similarity with the
> powerful teachers. Indeed, the girls who are considered to be the
> 'brightest' by the teacher do in fact operate as subjects within the
> powerful pedagogic discourses. Within that discourse they take the
> position of the knower, they become sub-teachers (p. 13).

However, older girls often incorporated masculine symbols (i.e. those from
sports and lowrider imagery) along with their feminine symbols to gain power
among both boys and girls. Drawing only more feminine symbols did not seem
to give girls power among each other.

Because children were selective in their media symbols, altering and
playing with the symbols, as well as the importance of peers' reactions and
interactions, suggest that media producers, marketers and children are
engaged in a relationship that is fervent and active, and that this relationship is
deeply embedded within postmodern society. Children do hold power in this
relationship sense they see these images as subject to their selection and
manipulation. In a sense, this process of playing with media symbols may help
children to feel power over their lives. If denied this process, children may feel
powerless. Rushkoff (1996 a) says "As long as people feel they have no power
over the images presented to them over the media, they will feel they have no
power over events in the real world" (p. 24).

Contemporary children's media encourages this playfulness, and the
media directed for young adults and children is becoming increasingly self-
referential (Rushkoff, 1996 a, b). The media now also places media references
out of context, similar to the manner in which children manipulate the media
symbols in their artwork, often in a playful way. When children use a brand

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symbol in another context, such as placing Nike's swoosh in a different context than that of shoes and athleticism, the symbol loses its power as an advertisement for Nike and becomes yet another toy for children to use to make sense of their world.

Instead of viewing the marketer/media producer and child relationship as simply one of cause and effect, we may need to re-think this relationship as more of a symbiotic one (jagodzinski, 1997). Some theorists such as Featherstone (1995), Rushkoff (1996 b), Giddens (1991) and others have speculated that children use these symbols as signs to signify a new type of tribal membership, which they call "neo-tribes," tribes formed in part by the ownership of commodity items for leisure and play and in part from an emerging global-technological media culture. While this may be more applicable for adolescents, given the nature of their consumer savvy and access to more disposable income, younger children, as Nespor (1997) notes, have a "much more fluid relationship with media culture" (p. 184).

Further Research

This study is only a start in understanding children's interactions with media culture. In most research, the media has been viewed from a psychological standpoint than that of group dynamics and interaction. Also the media has been perceived as monolithic and unchanging in structure, with exceptions being an increasingly violent content. The media has not only changed in its content but also in its form. More research needs to be conducted to understand how people relate to the media, especially children. Educational research tends to ignore the media and popular culture. jagodzinski finds that "on the whole, educators-including art educators-have not embraced popular

culture in any *critical* way to provide insights as to how these labels are being played with" (p. 200). How children from rural, suburban and urban areas, and from diverse ethnic backgrounds relate to and use the media, needs to be investigated. Walkerdine (1997) notes an absence of research concerning pre-teen girls and popular culture (p. 2) as well.

Implications for Educators

I wish to discuss implications that this research has for art educators specifically and elementary educators in general. First and foremost, I think that as educators we need to reconsider our attitudes concerning media culture and children. We need to see media culture as a site for children to learn about their world.

Rushkoff (1996 b) says that children watch television for questions and not for answers. Likewise, according to Fiske (1989), things that are popular in the mass media are so in part because they share an aspect of incompleteness. Fiske writes "all popular texts have leaky boundaries; they flow into each other, they flow into everyday life" (p. 126). Fiske also adds that people derive pleasure from the mass media precisely because of these same leaky boundaries, because of its incompleteness. Fiske continues, "popular meanings are constructed out of the relevances between the text and everyday life, popular pleasures derives from the production of meanings by the people from the *power* to produce them. There is little pleasure in accepting ready-made meanings" (p. 126). In this process of making meaning from the popular, from the mass media, people feel that these meanings are theirs, that they own them (p. 126).

Second, we need to re-examine our notions about the dichotomy

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between personal experience and social interaction. Social interaction is personal experience. To force children to separate media culture from their personal experience is to deny their expressions and thoughts about their lives in contemporary society. To do so is to send a message to children that art is not about their ideas, that art is not about their society, and that art has little to do with everyday life. Instead art becomes for children an arbitrary and mindless activity.

This research does not suggest that we as educators should develop activities to teach media culture and popular culture to children. As has been discussed throughout this study, children will discuss media culture as it concerns them without our guidance. We need to allow children's opinions about media culture to emerge on their own, in part because this would be most meaningful to children and in part because of the complex nature of understanding media culture. To quote Norverr (1998), the President of the Popular Culture Association:

> ...This is not to say that popular culture products or activities do not reinforce cultural, racial, ethnic or gender stereotypes or carry negative social baggage. They can and do, and these have to be understood, analyzed and deconstructed. But what is important to note is that the users, choosers and consumers of popular culture absorb popular culture in complex, individual and personal, gendered and culturally influenced ways.

Just because something is popular does not mean that its message is simplistic and that the message means the same to everyone.

Possibly the most important thing that we as educators can do is to listen to what children have to say about media culture and acknowledge the meaning that this interaction has for children. We also need to recognize the

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value of children's interactions with the media as it transpires in their visual

representations. When we choose to listen to children, it is then that we find that

they are not the mindless and passive consumers who are victimized, but

instead, are active and thinking beings who can manipulate the media for their

own purposes.

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APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: January 20, 1998

IRB #: ED-98-057

Proposal Title: MORPHIN'! TRANSFORMIN'! MUTATIN'!: THE DYNAMIC INTERACTION
BETWEEN MEDIA AND CHILDREN'S CULTURE

Principal Investigator(s): Sally A. Carter, Nadine S. Hawke

Reviewed and Processed as: Expedited w/Special Population

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

ALL APPROVALS MAY BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT
NEXT MEETING, AS WELL AS ARE SUBJECT TO MONITORING AT ANY TIME DURING THE
APPROVAL PERIOD.
APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR DATA COLLECTION FOR A ONE CALENDAR YEAR
PERIOD AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE
SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL.
ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.
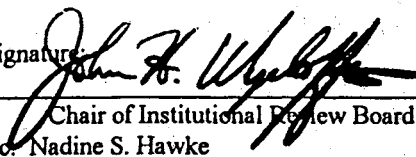
Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Disapproval are as follows:

Signature [signature]

Chair of Institutional Review Board
Co: Nadine S. Hawke

Date: January 22, 1998

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APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORMS AND SCRIPT

LETTER OF CONSENT

January 5, 1998

Dear Art Teacher,

The study in which you are invited to participate will be used to examine children's art that borrows images from the mass media, and their conversations about these images from the mass media, especially from television shows, movies, advertisements and video games. This study will take place in the art room from January 12th through May 22nd, during regular art classes. Your regular art instruction will not be interfered nor altered in any way. Your participation is completely voluntary.

As a participant, your students' artwork will be photographed and your students will be audio tape recorded, if and only if artwork and conversations are about images from the mass media. Neither your students nor your students' names will appear in the photographs. Your students will be asked to not use their real names when being recorded. Any personal names will be deleted from the study during the transcription process. The only ones who will have access to the data will be the investigator, Nadine Hawke, and her advisor, Dr. Sally Carter. All information will be held in the strictest confidence.

You are free to refuse to participate in this study and may withdraw at any time. Your decision will in no way be held against you.

Your participation may help your students to become more critically aware of the mass media's impact in their daily lives. Also little research has been conducted in education that explores what children have to say about life in a mass media-saturated society.

If you have any questions, you may contact Nadine Hawke or Dr. Sally Carter at (405) 744-7125, or Gay Clarkson, IRB Executive Secretary, 305 Whitehurst, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078 at (405) 744-5700.

I have read the above information and understand the purpose and procedure of this study. My signature below indicates that I give consent to the researcher to be present in my art room for this study.

_____

Signature of Art Teacher   Date

_____

Signature of Program Director   Date

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LETTER OF CONSENT FROM THE SCHOOL

December 10, 1997

The nature of this proposal "Morphin! Transformin'! Mutatin'!: The Dynamic Interaction Between Media and Children's Culture" has been discussed. We are aware that the researcher/program director will be interacting with the children, photographing their artwork, and audio tape recording their conversations in the art room. We are willing and interested in participating in this study pending IRB approval and approval by the central administration of (town's name) schools.

_____   _____
Signature of School Principal   Date

_____   _____
Signature of Art Teacher   Date

_____   _____
Signature of Researcher/Program Director   Date

LETTER OF CONSENT FROM THE DISTRICT

December 19, 1997

    The proposal "Morphin! Transformin'! Mutatin'!: The Dynamic Interaction Between Media and Children's Culture" has been discussed with principal (name) and art teacher (name) of (school's name) Elementary. They are aware that the researcher/program director will be interacting with the children, photographing their artwork, and audio tape recording their conversations in the art room. All information will be confidential, parental permission will be secured, and students and/or the school may withdraw from participating in the study at any time. The study will not interrupt the normal curriculum or classroom routine. Pending IRB approval, the central administration of (town's name) public schools is willing and interested in participating.

_____   _____

Signature of Assistant Superintendent   Date

_____   _____

Signature of Researcher/Program Director   Date

Nadine Hawke

For "Morphin'! Transformin'! Mutatin'! : The Dynamic Interaction Between Media
Culture and Children's Lives
IRB # ED-98-057

SCRIPT FOR SECURING THE VERBAL ASSENT FROM THE CHILD PARTICIPANTS

Hello children!

     My name is Nadine Hawke and I would like to talk with you about who I am and why you will be seeing me in the art room till the end of the school year.

     I am studying how you all use what you see and hear from television shows, movies, advertisements and video games in your art. I especially want to learn what you think about these things. I will be taking what I learn from you and using it to write a research paper.

     If you would like to be a part of this study, I have a paper that must be signed by your parent or guardian. If you choose to participate, that means that if you want, I will be able to photograph your artwork and audiotape record what you have to say about television shows, movies, advertisements and video games as well as any art that you have that shows what you think about these things. If I have this paper signed by your parent or guardian then and only then will I be able to photograph your artwork, audio-tape record you, and ask you questions. If you do bring this paper back to me, and it is signed, but you decide at any time that you do not want to be audio tape recorded and / or you don't want your art to be photographed, that is not a problem. You can say no at any time. Also, I will not be recording any of your names when I photograph or audio tape record. I will ask you to not use your name if I audio tape record you, but if you forget, that is not a problem. I will not use your name when I write my paper.

     I will be in the art room all day, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. you won't need to do anything differently. You just come to the art class and do the assignments that the art teacher gives you. You won't miss any classes, and you won't receive a grade for participating. It is completely voluntary.

     What I have just told you is what this paper that I need signed says.

     I would like you to bring these back to me the next time you come to art class.

     Is there anything you would like to ask me about this?

LETTER OF CONSENT

January 27, 1998

Dear Parent or Guardian,

The study in which your child is invited to participate will be used to examine children's art that borrows images from the mass media, and their conversations about these images from the mass media, especially from television shows, movies, advertisements and video games. This study will take place in the art room from February 3rd through May 22nd, when your child is in the art room for art class. Your child's regular art instruction will not be interfered nor altered in any way. Your child will not be missing other regular classroom curricular subjects such as reading, math, science, etc. in order to participate. Your child will not receive a grade for participating. It is completely voluntary.

As a participant, your child's artwork will be photographed and your child will be audio tape recorded, if and only if artwork and conversations are about images from the mass media. Neither your child nor your child's name will appear in the photograph. Your child will be asked to not use his/her real name when being recorded. Any personal names will be deleted from the study during the transcription process. The only ones who will have access to the data will be the investigator, Nadine Hawke, and her advisor, Dr. Sally Carter. All information will be held in the strictest confidence.

You are free to refuse to participate in this study and may withdraw at any time, your decision will in no way be held against you. If you choose to grant permission for your child to participate in this study, your child will still maintain the option to not participate at any time.

Your child's participation may help your child to become more critically aware of the mass media's impact in his/her daily life. Also little research has been conducted in education that explores what children have to say about life in a mass media-saturated society.

If you have any questions, you may contact Nadine Hawke or Dr. Sally Carter at (405) 744-7125, or Gay Clarkson, IRB Executive Secretary, 305 Whitehurst, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078 at (405) 744-5700.

I have read the above information and understand the purpose and procedure of this study. My signature below indicates that my child

_____   may participate in this study.
child's full name

_____   _____
Signature of parent or guardian   Date

_____   _____
Signature of program director   Date

HOJA DE PERMISO .

27 de enero, 1998

Estimado padre o compadre/guardián:

La investigación para la cual se solicita la participación de su hijo/a propone examinar ambos el arte juvenil que incorpora imágenes de los medios comunicativos populares, y las conversaciones de los niños sobre estas mismas imágenes, en particular las que se ven en los programas de televisión, en las películas, en los anuncios publicitarios y en los juegos de vídeo. La investigación tomará lugar en la sala de arte a partir del 3 de febrero y hasta el 22 de mayo, mientras su hijo/a está en su clase de arte. No se interrumpirá por nada la instrucción regular de la maestra, ni se alterará el programa de arte de ningún modo. Además, su hijo/a no perderá ninguna parte del programa educativo (lectura, matemáticas, ciencias, etc.) para poder participar en la investigación. La participación es completamente voluntaria y por eso su hijo/a no recibirá ninguna nota de calificación.

Siendo participante, las obras de arte de su hijo/a serán fotografiadas y sus comentarios grabados solamente si sus obras y conversaciones tratan de las imágenes procedentes del "mass media." Ni su hijo/a ni su nombre aparecerá en la fotografía. Se pedirá que el estudiante no use su nombre en el momento de grabar sus comentarios. En el proceso de transcribir a forma escrita la grabación, se omitirá cualquier nombre de estudiante. Solamente la investigadora, la señorita Nadine Hawke, y su directora de tesis, la doctora Sally Carter, tendrán acceso a la información, la cual se mantendrá en confianza

Usted puede negarse a su hijo/a la participación. Además puede dejar de participar en cualquier momento, sin perjudicarse. Si Ud.elige a dar permiso para que participe su hijo/a, él/ella mismo/a también tiene la opción de participar o no.

Puede ser que por su participación su hijo/a llegue a ser más atento al impacto de los medios comunicativos en su vida diaria. Hasta ahora hay pocas investigaciones que exploran lo que los niños piensan de la vida contemporánea en una sociedad saturada por el medio.

Al tener preguntas, llame a la señorita Nadine Hawke o la doctora Sally Carter (405-744-7125) o póngase en contacto con la señora Gay Clarkson, Secretaria Ejecutiva, Oficina de IRB, 305 Whitehurst, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078 (tel. 405-744-5700).

He leído la presente y comprendo ambos el propósito y el procedimento de la investigación. Mi firma a continuación indica que le permito a mi hijo/a
_____ participar en la investigación.
(Nombre de pila)   (Apellidos)

_____   _____
Firma de padre o compadre/guardián   Fecha
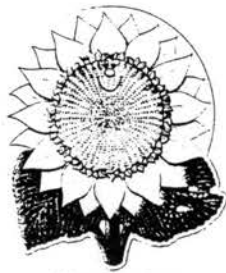
_Nadine Hawke_____   _1/27/98_
Firma de director/a de programa   Fecha

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APPENDIX C

CARSON-DELLOSA

Two-Sided Decorations

CD-4115 Sunflower

ALL NEW!

TURN ME OVER

Perfect for window display or hanging!

$1.49 each

CD-4116 Heart

Back of Design

CD-4114 Easter Egg

Back of Design

CD-4112 Bee

Back of Design

CD-4113 Butterfly

Back of Design

CD-4110 Snowflake

CD-4107 Christmas Ornament

CD-4109 Santa

For fastest service, visit your local school supply store.

Carson-Dellosa Faces

(*Carson-Dellosa Instructional Materials-CAT02-0198.*, 1998)

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Bulletin Boards

NEW!

NEW!

CD-1753 Big Kids Set 1

CD-1754 Big Kids Set 2

NEW! CD-1755 Big Kids Set 3

Each **Figure** 42" Tall!

Each **Big Kids** set features two adorable classroom companions, a girl and a boy, ready for the school day. These culturally diverse kids offer a uniquely upbeat and colorful touch to virtually any of your classroom displays, and with only two pieces per Big Kid, assembly and storage have never been easier! Figures are approximately 42" tall. **$7.95 each**

12 characters and 12 labels!

NEW! CD-1756 Big Kids Set 4

Coordinating Border!

CD-0111 International Flags $3.25
See pg. 30

CD-1710 International Kids
A set of 12 Carson-Dellosa kids in the traditional dress of different countries. Each 14" character has a separate label (7¾" x 2") showing the country's flag, name and map. Includes a six-page resource guide. **$7.95**

CD-1715 Cinco de Mayo
Celebrate Mexico's spectacular fiesta of food, flowers and fireworks with this brilliant 13-piece bulletin board set! Your six-page resource guide contains background information and suggestions for display and use. Largest piece is 22½" x 12½". **$7.95**
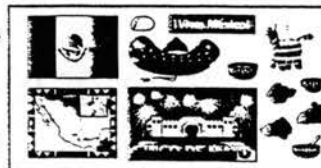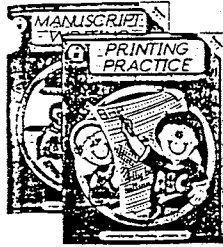
For fastest service, visit your local school supply store.

Carson-Dellosa Depictions of Children

(Carson-Dellosa Instructional Materials-CAT02-0198., 1998)

CD-0897 Printing Practice—Carson-Dellosa Manuscript Alphabet™ (P-1)
CD-0899 Printing Practice—Carson-Dellosa Manuscript Alphabet™ (K-2)
One page for each letter of the alphabet, in uppercase and lowercase, with humorous art and an alliterative sentence for students to copy. 32 pages **$5.95**
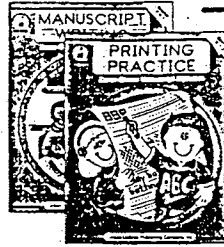
CD-0896 Printing Practice—Zaner-Bloser Manuscript Alphabet (P-1)
CD-0898 Printing Practice—Zaner-Bloser Manuscript Alphabet (K-2)
One page for each letter of the alphabet, in uppercase and lowercase, with humorous art and an alliterative sentence for students to copy. 32 pages **$5.95**

CD-2350 Making Books: A Collection for All Seasons (K-3) This book contains step-by-step directions and patterns for accordion books, pop-up books, shape books, motion books, movable character books, and more! Includes phonics and journal writing activities 352 pages **$21.95**

CD-7312 Science Journal Writing (1-4) Students will gain an appreciation for science through journal ideas, individual and cooperative activities, and bulletin board tips Encourages drawing and other mediums as pre-writing substitutes. 64 pages **$8.95**

CD-0109 Daily Journal Activities with Related Bulletin Boards (1-4) Contains patterns, writing activities, word lists, instructions, ideas, and awards for 17 seasonal and thematic writing bulletin boards 64 pages **$8.95**
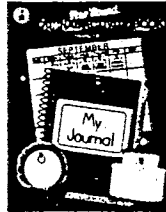
CD-8065 Year 'Round Journal Activities (1-4) This lively collection of writing ideas and patterns offers pertinent themes for every month of the year A great way to make writing fun and rewarding! 32 pages **$5.95**

CD-0955 350 Comprehension Boosters (K-4) Activities from the Read and Comprehend series include following directions, sequencing, drawing conclusions, vocabulary development, and main idea—all categorized by grade level 352 pages **$21.95**

CD-0895 Crazy Creative Writing (1-4) Each topic includes introductory sentences, a word bank, room to write, and an illustration Also provides a vocabulary supplement 32 pages **$5.95**
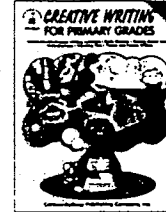
CD-0894 Creative Writing for Primary Grades (1-3) This compilation of writing ideas and techniques covers independent and formal writing, ways to utilize writing centers, and whole-group exercises. Provides directions, material lists, and patterns 48 pages **$6.95**

CD-7082 Quilt Connections (1-4) From a springboard of literature pieces, students are guided toward quilt-themed activities that integrate with math, language social studies, geometry, and art Includes directions, activity suggestions, and patterns 64 pages **$8.95**

CD-0046 Introducing Word Families Through Literature (K-3) Round out your literature program with this resource that uses a variety of literature selections to study over 50 word families. Includes word-family lists patterns and a title index 112 pages **$10.95**

CD-7081 Exploring the U.S. Through Literature (1-4) Enjoy a tour of the U S with more than 75 pieces of fictional and nonfictional literature complemented by summaries anticipatory information discussion topics, and much more 192 pages **$15.95**

CD-0970 Thematic Units Collection (K-2) This reproducible workbook offers 24 themes (general, seasonal, and storybook) explored through cross curriculum hands-on activities in writing, reading graphing sorting, and more 384 pages **$21.95**
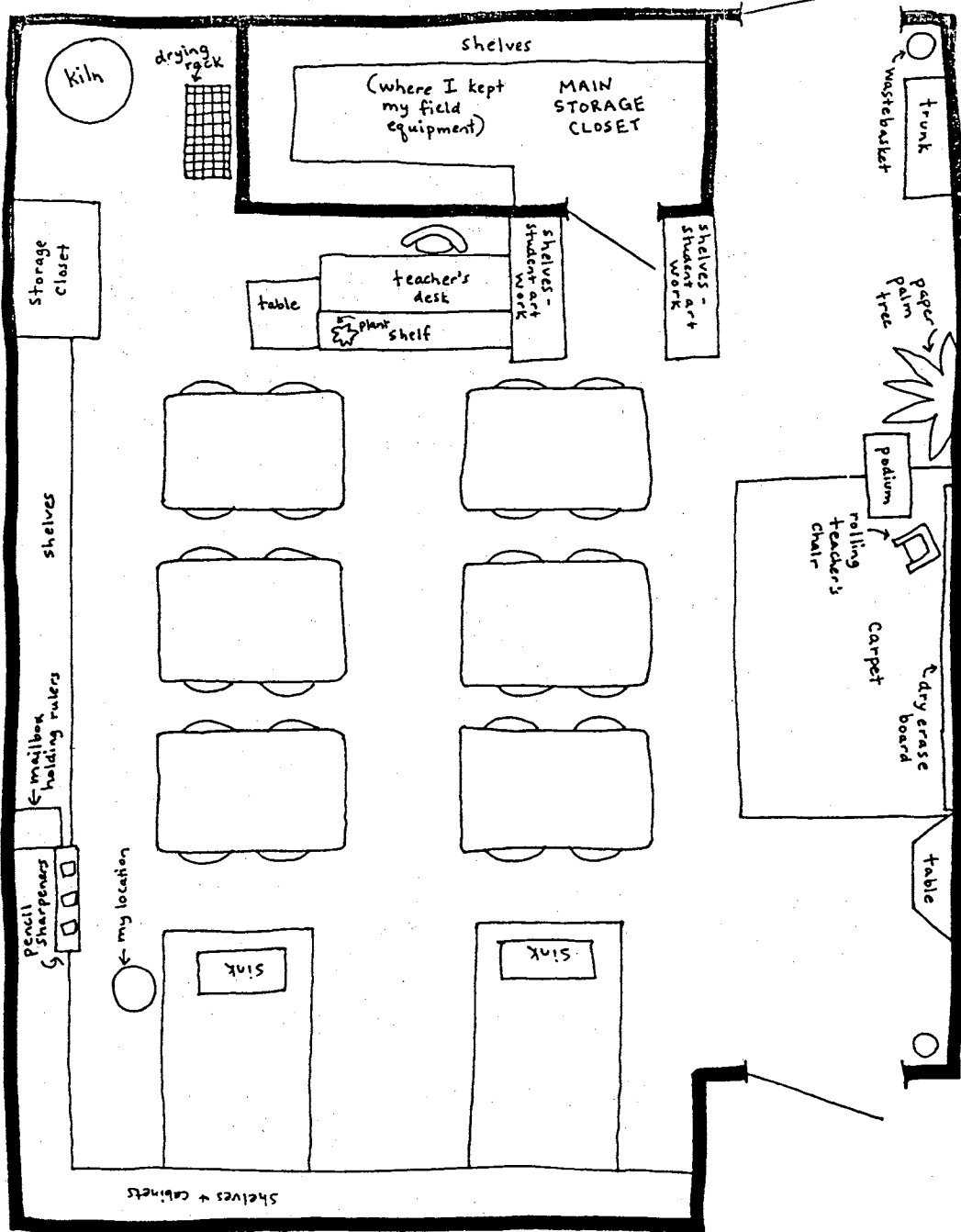
For fastest service, visit your local school supply store.

Carson-Dellosa Curriculum Resources

(Carson-Dellosa Instructional Materials-CAT02-0198., 1998)

APPENDIX D

MAP OF THE ART CLASSROOM

Kiln

drying rack

shelves

(where I kept my field equipment)

MAIN STORAGE CLOSET

Storage closet

shelves - student art work

table

teacher's desk

plant shelf

shelves - student art work

shelves

mailbox holding rulers

Pencil Sharpeners

← my location

sink

sink

Shelves + cabinets

wastebasket

trunk

paper palm tree

podium
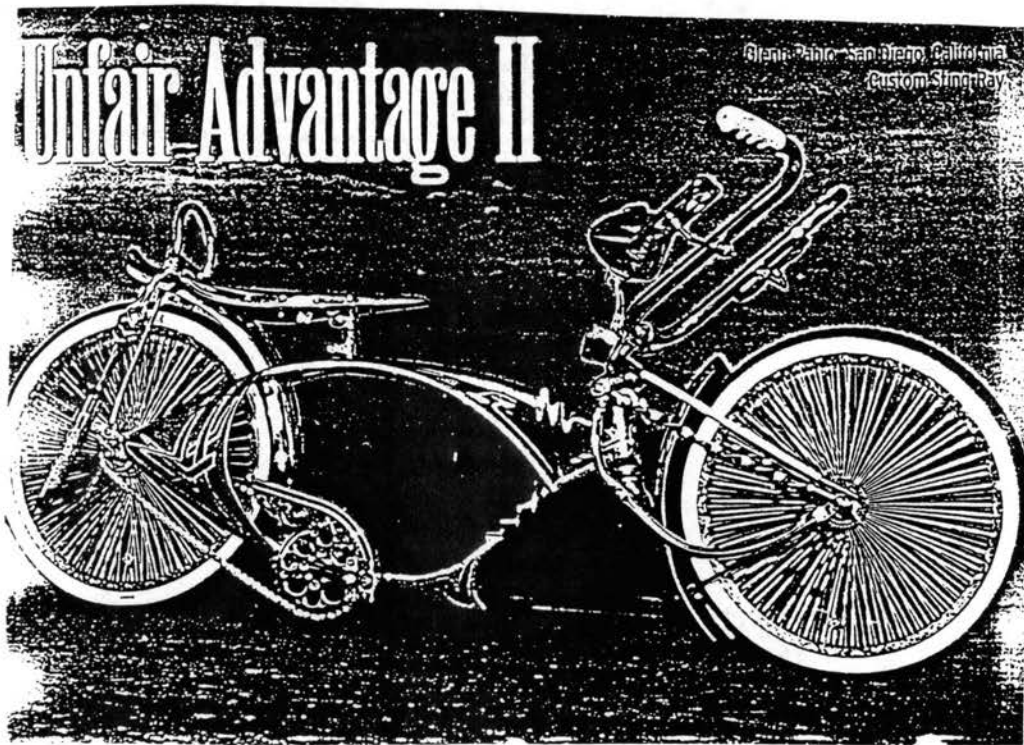
rolling teacher's chair

Carpet

dry erase board

table

APPENDIX E

MEDIA REFERENCES

Spice Girls

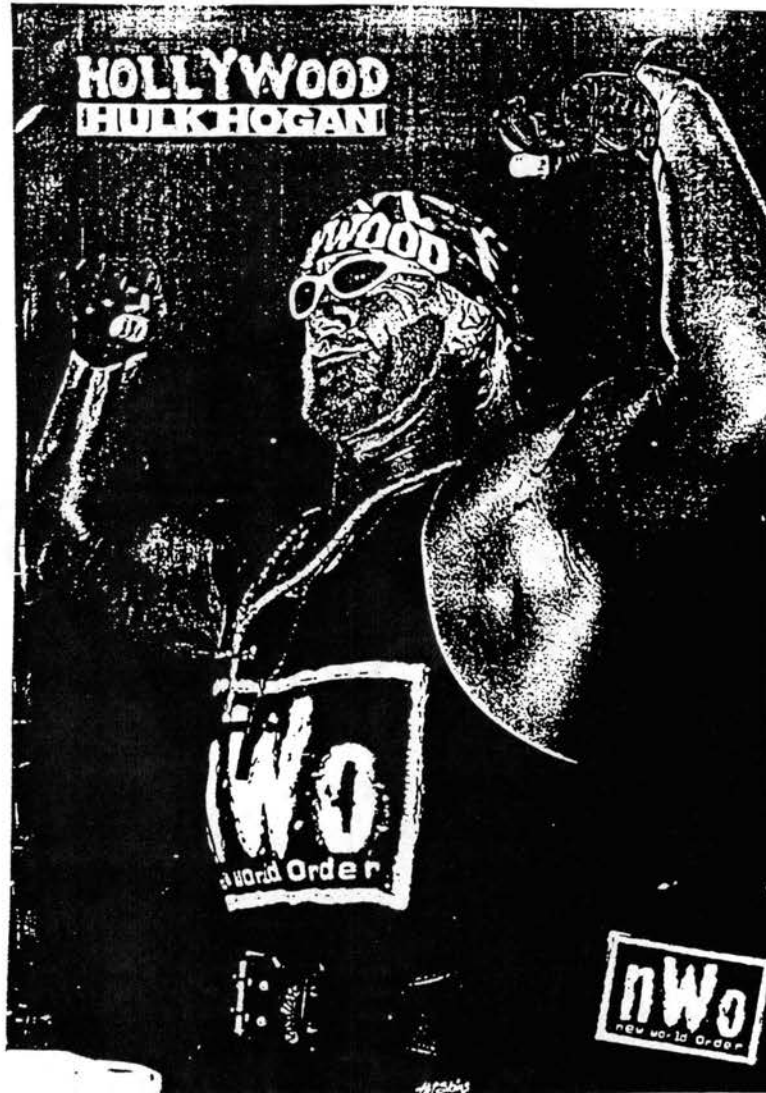(*Tiger Beat*, November 1997)

Lowrider Bike

(*Lowrider*,   May 1998)

Sailor Moon

Selena

(*Lowrider Arte,* April/May 1998)

Hollywood Hulk Hogan

(*WCW/NWO: The Official Magazine of World Championship Wrestling and The New World Order,* May 1998)

Sting

(*WCW/NWO: The Official Magazine of World Championship Wrestling and The New World Order*, November 1998)
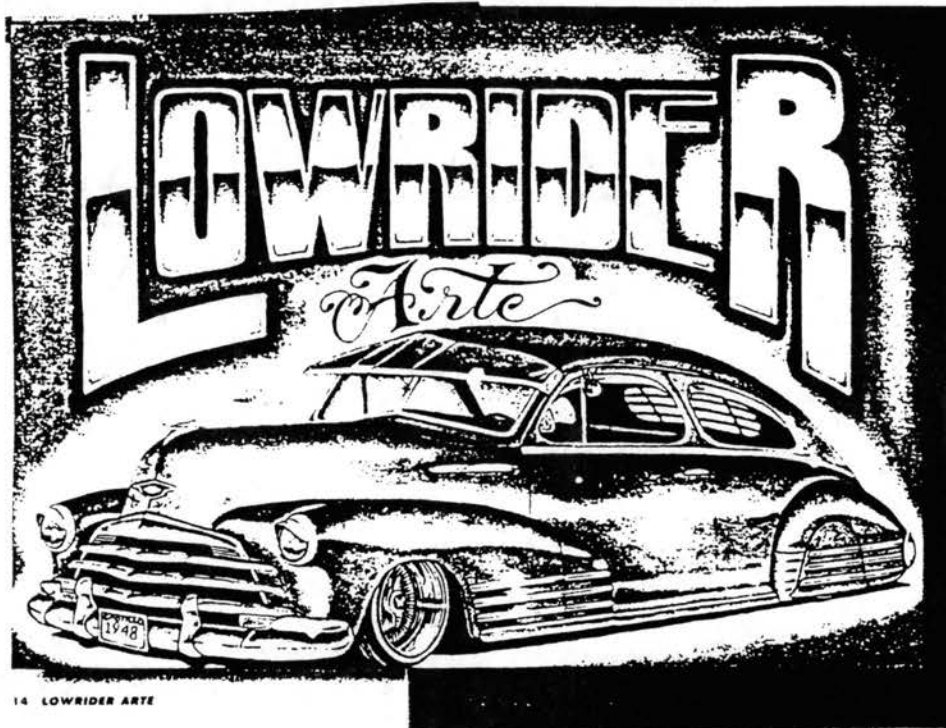
Diamond Dallas Page

(*WCW/NWO: The Official Magazine of World Championship Wrestling and The New World Order*, May 1998)

Nitro Girls

(*WCW/NWO: The Official Magazine of World Championship Wrestling and The New World Order*, May 1998)

14 LOWRIDER ARTE

Lowrider Car

(*Lowrider Arte*, April/May 1998)

Lisa Frank Merchandise Example

VITA

Nadine Sue Hawke

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: MORPHIN'! TRANSFORMIN'! MUTATIN'!: THE DYNAMIC INTER-
ACTION BETWEEN MEDIA CULTURE AND CHILDREN'S LIVES

Major Field: Curriculum and Instruction

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    Professional Memberships: National Art Education Association,
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