

Peter D.

Media Literacy

SEDUCE ME CD-ROM:

BODY IMAGE NARRATION

1. Dior Addict

This ad by Christian Dior pretty much sums up how women's bodies are presented in mass media and fashion advertising. It tells you to "Admit it," you're an Addict. The ad works for both men and women. Men are addicted to skinny, sweaty women who have most of their breasts exposed and are pulling off their g-string panties. Women are addicted to becoming the fantasy image presented here, as if having this type of body and displaying it sexually would make all their troubles disappear.

People in the generation older than today's college students grew up with a different fantasy image. Please notice if you have the same type of reaction to this image.

[Show next slide.]

2. Marilyn

This is Marilyn Monroe. Many men consider her the "hottest" women in the 1960's. She was in Playboy. Guys grew up fantasizing about her. What's your reaction? Many students today tell me she's fat. In reality, she's not fat. No, she's not pregnant either. She's normal. In the 1950's the average model was 8% slimmer than the female population at large. Today, the average model is 23% slimmer. Model's today have to throw away a quarter of their bodies to be considered pretty. In fact, America fashion and media have a long history of asking women to be less.

[Show title screen and next slide.]

3. Miss America

For the past 30 years Miss America has weighed less. Only in the 1980's there was a brief blip during the aerobics craze when Miss America's weight went up for a couple of years. Other than that, we've seen less and less of Miss America. Stop for a moment and consider the political ramifications of women being less. Take up less space. Have less voice. Be seen less. Be worth less.

I'm going to focus on the lesson media teaches women about their bodies. Please keep in mind that when I say media, I'm talking about a corporate clique made up of a handful of companies. Eighty-five percent of all media--books, magazines, tv,

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movies, billboards, music, and radio stations--85% of all media is owned by six corporations. It's important to understand that these six companies have freedom of the press. The rest of us pay for it. When ever you see any entertainment program or mass media advertisement, please remember that it has been carefully crafted to sell you something. In the case of women and their bodies, it's designed to sell you self-hate. The more media can lower your self-esteem, the more it can create the need or desire to purchase products that supposedly make you better. It all starts by teaching women to become less.

(If anyone should ask, the six companies who own our media system are:

News Corp. -- Fox

Viacom -- CBS

Disney -- ABC

GE -- NBC

Time Warner

Vivendi -- a French company that will soon be owned by GE

--and world wide the only other significant player is Bertelsmann, a German conglomerate.

Please visit

<http://www.cjr.org/tools/owners/index.asp>

for up-date listings of who owns what media outlets.)

[Show next slide.]

4. Jennifer

Here we see how much less Jennifer Aniston became from 1996 to 1999.

[Show next slide.]

5. Heather

It only took Heather Locklear four months to become less.

[Show next slide.]

6. Calista

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And of course, the queen of less is Calista Flockhart. This article calls here the incredible "vanishing actress." She's shown here with less of Courtney Cox-Aquette.

[Show next slide.]

7. Dying To Be Thin

Quite literally, women in American are Dying to Be Thin.

[Show title screen and next slide.]

8. Fiji

Fiji is a great case study for the influence of television. It's an island, and prior to 1995, had no television. Culturally, in Fiji, like most Pacific Islands, big is beautiful. Big men are considered wealthy and powerful. Big women are traditionally viewed as beautiful. In 1995, cable TV came to Fiji. The whole island went from broadcast TV, to everyone being wired. In 1995, 3% of Fijian girls reported ever vomiting to control their weight. By 1998, that number increased to 18%. This is a 600% increase in bulimic behavior in only 3 years after the introduction of television. In 1998, 74% of Fijian girls reported feeling "too big" or "too fat," and 62% reported dieting during the past month. This is the power of television. We suffer from it just as profoundly in our country.

[Show next slide.]

9. USA Today

No one is keeping national statistics about body image and eating disorders for colleges in America, so I have to show you statistics from high schools. This slide from the USA Today summarizes the 2001 YRBS--Youth Risk Behavior Survey. The YRBS is taken by tens of thousands of high school students each year. You'll notice that by 12th grade, just over 6% of girls are actually overweight, while nearly 36% of them think they are. This means that 1 out of 3 women enter college believing they are fat when they are not.

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The problem is so bad on some campuses, that if you were to visit the women's restroom next to a cafeteria, in many cases you would find a box of rubber gloves, a bucket, and a sign that says "Please clean your own vomit."

What's really horrible, is that our media system not only cultivates low self-esteem and eating disorders in women, but then it goes on to ridicule women who suffer these maladies.

[Show title screen and next slide.]

10. Gucci

This ad is from a recent Gucci campaign. I've cut off the slogan because I wanted you to guess at what it says.

The slogan for this campaign is: "Please buy our clothes so we can afford to feed our starving models." Now Gucci could afford to feed the whole world for a couple of days if it wanted. But instead, Gucci chooses to attack the very women it has conditioned to purchase its products. You see, the more the media can lower your self-esteem, the more it can create the perception that you "need" their products to be liked and feel better about yourself. This ad accomplishes this task by shifting the blame for the models' malnourished conditions onto the models, totally ignoring the fact they are being paid to look this way.

Of course mass media always attempts to go as low as it can. That's why it's media for the masses. It has to be low. This next example shows that there is no limit to how much hatred the media system shows towards the women it conditions into living a consumer lifestyle.

[Show next slide.]

11. Pasta

This ad reads: "Supermodels love our pasta. It comes up as easily as it goes down."

What is truly unfortunate is how powerfully American women are already conditioned to hate their appearances purchase consumer products in a vain

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attempt to supposedly improve their looks. The average women in America holding a clerical position such as secretary or administrative assistant spends 50% of her income on beauty maintenance. That's like being a half time slave to fashion. Imagine half of everything you earn being spent on clothes, hair, make-up, breast implants, etc.

The good news, what little of it there is, is that every single image you see of a women in the media is fake. Take a look at this photo shoot for Cosmopolitan to see how a woman's clothes are altered.

[Show title screen and next slide. Play movie.]

12. Cosmo

(Jokingly say in a young women's voice) "Mom, I'm going over to Pep Boys to get some car clamps for my big date tonight."

Imagine the amount of work it takes to film a scene from the front, unclamp the actress in the back and move them to her front. Then re-shoot the scene from the back. This is what takes place over and over in movies and TV shows. That's just what they do to a model's clothes. Here's what they do to their bodies.

[Show next slide and play movie.]

13. Reshaping

I figure all that tape and stuff has got to hurt.

What really troubles me is how the fashion designers say "We can make anything perfect." It's bad enough that they call the women they're photographing "things," but what do they mean by making them "perfect?" The designer in the last clip I showed you defined perfect. It's the first thing she said. Let's listen.

[Reverse to the previous slide--#12. Cosmo. Replay the movie until the woman being interviewed says: "It has to look perfect on the page so that every girl who sees that outfit will want to go out and buy it." Pause the movie by clicking on it]

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Do you understand what the media system's definition of perfect is? Perfect is when you buy things. You perfectly do what they tell you. You perfectly buy what they sell you.

We've seen what they do to a model's clothes and body. Now let's look at what is done to a model's picture after they take it.

[Advance ahead to slide #14. Cindy. Play movie.]

14. Cindy

Even the announcer, Joan Lunden, is lying to you in this piece. She says they were removing the "wrinkles" on Cindy's dress, when they were really trimming her waistline, leaving each of the wrinkles exactly where they were. And then, after taking the photo with her legs spread wide open, they complain about what we see, and cut several inches off her legs, saying it was a "bad camera angle." What do you think the bad camera angle was? That she had a thigh?

I hope you understand that every time you see a woman in the media--in movies, TV, magazines and billboards--she has been made fake. Every single time.

[Show next title screen]

Unfortunately, many women have spent so much of their lives comparing themselves to these fake images that their self-esteem is very low. I want to show you a picture to make you feel better. If you've a woman who has ever thought you weren't pretty enough, or if you're a guy who has ever been so lame as to cut down a woman because she didn't live up to your standard of fakeness, this picture is for you. It's Barbie.

[Show next slide.]

15. Barbie

This ad from the body shop reads: "There are 3 billion women who don't look like super models and only 8 who do." Are you going to hate yourself because you're one of 3 billion women the media has labeled as ugly?

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(Say jokingly in a young woman's voice: "Me and 3 billion ugly women! If only I was one of those 8 anorexic ones, I'd be so beautiful.")

Women have grown up playing with Barbie, learning the lesson that her body type is beautiful. The problem is it's not real. Her proportions are totally messed up. Stand up for a second and put your hand where the bottom of your rib cage is. If Barbie were your height, this is where her legs would end. Imagine, if your crotch were sitting where your hand is, how tiny and shrunken the rest of your body would be.

Thank you, please relax in your seats again. Now let's imagine for a moment that Barbie was seven feet tall. That's a nice round number to work with, even though she'd be a big woman. If a 7 foot tall woman had Barbie's proportions, her waist would only be 19 inches. Her chest would be 70 inches. And because of her small waist, her back could never hold her up, she'd have to crawl around on the floor like a dog. She would also have a shopping bag at her side so that there'd be room for her kidneys and her guts to go somewhere.

Is this what you think is beautiful? This is what Barbie and our media system have been selling to you. And of course, they ridicule you when you buy into it.

[Show next slide.]

16. Moschino

The woman in this Moschino ad lives her life like a Barbie doll. And she's made to look like one too. Notice how her legs have been stretched out. Look at how long her arms are. She wouldn't even have to bend over to touch her knees.

[Show next slide.]

17. Do Anything

These images trouble me. The ad on the left is for liposuction. The one on the right is for collagen injection. One ad asks you to suck it out, while the other, using the same model, tells you to put it back in. Both are very sexual. On the left she's holding the needle next to her crotch while her thumbs gently lift her panties. On the right she's got the needle in her mouth,

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There are two points I'd like to make about these ads. The first is to question the whole notion of surgery as a solution to woman's low esteem for her body. I can't help but wonder how all the focus media places on a woman's body affects a woman's spirit. Let's face it, if I were lying on this stage dead, my body would still be here. But my spirit would be gone. Do you think that any changes I've made to my body would have changed my spirit? Personally, I think that the media system is designed to destroy a woman's spirit. And it accomplishes this by getting women to treat their bodies like they are things that can be cut and reshaped to fit into whatever trendy fashion mold is being sold that day. It's the spiritual equivalent of saying, "God made me to be junk, and now I have pay a lot of money to get fixed."

I've seen a lot of these TV shows that popularize surgery by calling it a "makeover." In every one of them the person having the surgery says the same thing--"I have so much more confidence now." I can't help but think they're lying when they say that. If it's true that surgery gives you confidence, then why is it that the women being interviewed never stop at just one surgery. Did their confidence wear out or something. First it's their breasts, then their lips, then their nose, then their cellulose, etc, etc. You see, once you play the comparison game, you're destined to always lose. There will always be some part of you that is not perfect by mass media standards. And the more you compare yourself to these fake images, the worse you will feel about yourself. Advertisers have it down to a science now. Research has found that a woman who looks at a fashion magazine for just 3 minutes feels worse about herself than before she looked at the magazine.

The second reason why these images trouble has to do with the type of body the model has. Please don't think I'm being homophobic, but the body shown here is typically found on a prepubescent boy. The image of female beauty sold in mass media is a little boy's body with huge breasts tacked on. Young girls have baby fat until their late teens. Real women have curves. This woman has a body that mimics a little boy's. What's being sold here is a kind of transsexual homoeroticism. The image is impossible to live up to in real life. You would need to be both young and old, and both male and female to have this type of body. That's part of the reason why advertisers sell us this image of beauty, because no one can fully obtain it. You'll always need to buy another surgery to be fashionable.

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[Show next title screen.]

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In order to get the most money out of us, advertisers start selling these images of beauty to girls when they're very young.

[Show next slide.]

18. Target Dolls

These dolls from Target have all the fashion elements the media wishes to sell you--lots of make-up, no neck, toothpick arms, huge breasts, trendy clothes. No girl is too young to begin to learn that her place in the world of consumer fashion is to hate her body and present herself sexually at all times.

Another interesting thing you'll find at Target is the Tinkerbell line of cosmetics that Disney sells. They're made for girls aged seven and up. What kinds of family values is Disney now selling--that seven year old girls need to get made up for their big date?

[Show next slide.]

19. Buffalo

This ad for Buffalo jeans appeared in Teen Cosmo. Teen Cosmo bills itself as a magazine for girls 12 to 19 years old. I guess they're OK with 12 year old girls slutting themselves up this way. She's heavily made up. Her pants are undone. Her g-string panties are showing, and her hand is in her crotch. I'm not sure she's being sold fashion items, or the lifestyle of being sexually available to older men. I can't help but believe that fashion advertisers intend that young girls believe their self-worth and self-esteem is tied to men wanting them sexually.

[Show next slide.]

20. Bongo

This Bongo ad, also in Teen Cosmo, exposes the model's breasts, along with the slogan, "Let me b."

(Say jokingly in a young girl's voice: "Mom, let me show my breasts, guys like it!")

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The fake rebellion this ad teaches disgusts me. Girls subscribing to this ad are only being themselves when they do that the ad tells them. But the prize for crudity in advertising to girls far and away belongs to Abercrombie and Fitch.

[Show next slide.]

21. Abercrombie & Fitch

This ad from their teen clothing catalogue shows the pleasure teenaged girls can get from being naked while a guy helps them stroke a violin.

In last year's catalogue, Abercrombie and Fitch featured g-string panties for 8 year old girls that had slogans on them like "eye candy." It's a not so subtle reminder to young girls of what their bodies are and how they're supposed to present themselves. It destroys their spirits.

[Show next title screen.]

Because media and fashion all settle around profit, it wouldn't be economical for marketers to sell one set of values to girls and a different one to boys. In order to maximize profits, advertisers need to train little boys to grow up lusting after little girls who hate their bodies and compensate for their low self-esteem by acting out sexually.

The next slide I'm going to show you is a Pepsi commercial from 1992. It ran in the Superbowl, and was recently voted the best Pepsi commercial ever.

[Show next slide and play movie.]

22. Cindy Pepsi

The boys in this commercial look like they're about 10 years old. I'm not exactly sure how 10 year old boys act around women today, since they've constantly been exposed to sexual stimulus. But I know how young boys used to act towards women. It didn't matter how beautiful or sexy a women was either. Ten year old boys, when they saw a girl, the first thing they thought about was catching cooties from her.

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What's disturbing about this commercial is that the boys haven't reached puberty. Their plumbing isn't working yet. And Pepsi shows them being come onto sexually by Cindy Crawford. What kind of disconnect do you think happens to boys when their physical bodies are not yet able to perform, yet their mental and emotional bodies are being sexualized? What kinds of relationship do you think guys sexualized at age 10 are going to be capable of having when they're adults?

At best this commercial is emotional incest. At worst, it's child abuse.

Of course, Pepsi has such success using sex with little boys to sell its product, that in 1997 they remade the commercial. Only this time, the male actor was even younger.

[Show next slide and play movie.]

23. Pepsi Baby

In this commercial, the baby is still in an incubator, and Pepsi shows supermodels coming on to him sexually. Of course, we laugh when we see it. It's funny to see a baby wink and kiss back. But think about the message we're taking in along with the laughter.

Ask a psychiatrist what happens when a male infant is sexually abused. You'll find out that in most cases, the baby will never be able to have a functional sex life. Those who overcome the physical dysfunctions, still have to deal with deep seated fear whenever they are intimate with a woman.

Have you wondered why so many guys are withdrawn or violent in their relationships? This generation of men has to cope with they psychological damage inflicted on them as children in order for Pepsi and other companies to sell products. Advertisers don't care about the people they're selling to. They want women to hate themselves, and if guys grow up unable to perform or feel safe while having sex, then advertisers are happy because they know their commercials are working.

This billboard from Boise sums it up nicely.

Peter D & Company, Inc., 2079 Camino Lado, Santa Fe, NM 87505
Tel.(505)471-8437/Fax(505)471-8859/www.medialiteracy.net/peterd@medialiteracy.net

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[Show next slide.]

24. Friends

To advertise the program "Friends," this television station used the slogan: "Cute Anorexic Chicks." Apparently their disease is supposed to make these woman attractive. After all, it takes damaged men to desire damaged women.

[Show next slide.]

25. Coors Slight

This billboard shows how other commercial products ride the body image wave sold to women. Coors shows a model who looks all of 15 years old. She has a little boy's body and huge inflated breasts that appear to be painted over. The suggestion here is that if guys drink Coors then they can get themselves a 15 year old with a pouty look on her face. The implication for women, of course, is to compare yourselves so that you can see how over weight and unattractive your are.

I apologize in advance for the next slide I'm going to show you. It's pornographic. I want you to see it because I want you understand that there is no limit to how demeaning mass media is.

[Show next slide, briefly, then move on.]

26. Babyface

This is an ad for a Babyface video, called "Skin and Bones." It shows four hours of anorexic women having sex for your viewing pleasure.

[Show next slide.]

I believe this commercial has distilled the essence of every point I've covered so far in this presentation.

[Play commercial.]

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27. Are You Hot

So what if you're a talented musician or athlete? Who cares how smart you are? This program ran on ABC, which is also owned by Disney. It does everything possible to destroy a person's spirit by focusing only on one's body. Given what I've shown you earlier, do you believe for a moment that any of the bodies show in this commercial are real? So what is this show really about? Who is most effective at using steroids or who paid the most for their surgery? Is this what you think is hot?

[Show next title screen.]

I've tried to make the point in this presentation that every time you see someone's body in the media, it's fake. I want you to leave here understanding that these fake images are designed to destroy your spirit. I'm asking you to lift the veil and see what's really going on.

[Show next slide.]

28. After

Here is Jamie Lee Curtis after a photo shoot.

[Show next slide.]

29. Before

Here she is before it.

[Show next slide.]

30. Love

This Adbusters cover shows an idealized image of a woman who has been enhanced using anime. The label on the image is "Love."

[Show next slide.]

31. Hate

Here is the real woman before her image was altered. She is labeled "Hate."

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Do you think you'll even be able to have a relationship if your vision of beauty doesn't even exist in the real world?

[Show next slide.]

32. Slim Jim

Both these ads ran in the same issue of Men's Fitness. The both use the same model and the same before and after photos. In the ad on the left, the model is said to have gained 28 pounds using Meso-Tech. In the ad on the right, he's said to have lost 30 pounds using Hydroxycut. And since weight loss is more prized in the world of advertising, Jim is shown with a blond hanging on to him in the ad where he's supposedly 30 pounds lighter.

Please remember that every time you see actors in TV programs and movies, or models in bill boards and magazine ads, they have been made fake.

[Show next slide.]

33. Kate

Here Kate Winslet is shown standing next to a life sized blow-up of an image of herself on the cover of GQ.

If you buy into these images its certain that you're going to hate your body and be sexually unfulfilled, if you're able to be sexual at all. These ads are carefully constructed to create this kind of response in you.

[Show next slide.]

34. Stop Thinking

Advertisers want you to stop thinking. I don't.

Thank you.