A case study of at-risk young adolescent females' interpretations of heterosexuality in magazine advertisements
by Linder, Roberta A., 2006

Abstract

Young adolescents are able to access a larger number and wider array of media than ever before and, as a result, the time they spend engaged with the media is on the increase. Embedded within these forms of media are advertisements, and due to the explicit and implicit messages contained in print media and their advertisements, students need to develop reading skills that enable them to be more critical readers as they encounter these texts. The purpose of this study was to examine how at-risk seventh-grade females respond to images of heterosexual relationships depicted in advertisements before, during, and after instruction involving the deep viewing technique.

Participating in this case study were seven young adolescent females identified as at risk. They participated in individual interviews preceding and following a media literacy intervention involving the researcher's seventh-grade reading students. Additional data were gathered from the girls' work samples, projects, field notes, and postinterview follow-up responses. The media literacy instruction involved 15 lessons occurring between Thanksgiving and Christmas of 2005. The follow-up responses were obtained from the girls in April 2006.

The results of this study documented increases in the females, understandings of advertising concepts as a result of participation in the media literacy instruction. Although all the participants demonstrated gains in their understanding, those girls who were able to read the advertisements more critically were also the students who were the more strategic readers in other types of classroom literacy activities. This investigation demonstrated that skills involved in the analysis of media texts were analogous to effective comprehension processes utilized with nonmedia texts. These results support the inclusion of media literacy instruction within middle school literacy classes due to the fact that the skills utilized in media analysis enhance the instruction of effective comprehension processes. Literacy educators and teacher educators must then respond with expanded views of texts and the literacies needed to decipher messages in contemporary texts, both media and nonmedia.