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EFFECTS OF MAINSTREAM MEDIA ON UPPER-MIDDLE-CLASS  
CHILDREN OF MIDDLE-SCHOOL AGE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

by  
Audrey Ricker

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the  
DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGE, READING AND CULTURE  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
In the Graduate College  
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entitled Effects of mainstream media on upper-middle-class

children of middle-school age: A Qualitative study

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SIGNED Audrey Ricker

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**DEDICATION**

I wish to dedicate this dissertation to two people. The first is Dr. Taralynn Hartsell. Her belief in, and knowledge of the theory on which this dissertation is based upon were invaluable during moments of doubt and uncertainty.

The second person is my granddaughter, Sophia, aged one and a half at this time, in the hope that she will have a choice about joining the commodity audience, and understand it for what it is.

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### ABSTRACT

This study shows the findings of a qualitative study undertaken in the homes of seven primary participants of middle school age in Tucson, Arizona, Southern California, and New York City. The purpose of the study was to determine whether mainstream media has commodified these children into saleable audiences who would consume its media products.

Findings show that all participants, at all levels, were ready to buy, and wanted to buy, at least one kind of mainstream media at any time. All participants with the exception of one, who did not seem to care about one form of media over another, pursued at least one form of mainstream media, usually more, during most of his waking hours and often. During the ninety hours of observation, at least two or more mainstream media products were used consistently. All participants expressed the desire to buy more specific products and wanted to have more than one title at a time. No regionally or locally distributed media were desired by any subject, only the mainstream media on forced-choice menus.

Limitations of the research included difficulty of finding parents and children willing to allow the researcher into the home. Another problem was the invasion of privacy that some subject felt during the study. These were the major two limitations.

Further research should be conducted on preschoolers' use of media. This study suggests that children aged one to five may already be addicted to Disney media in ways that preclude their enjoyment of other mainstream media. This study also suggests

that these children may be so affected cognitively by their constant use of mainstream media products that their placement in school must be reassessed. Another area that requires more research is the ability of students with diagnosed learning disabilities to concentrate on, and operate, interactive media and to read any manual, article or electronic text having to do with their chosen media, without any problem.

The conclusion is that participants in this study are, by their desire and willingness to buy, members of a commodity audience. Thus, the commodity audience actually exists.

CHAPTER ONE  
STATEMENT OF PROBLEM AND INTRODUCTION

Dallas Smythe (1977) says that the commercial mainstream media is created by its owners not to deliver messages but to sell audiences as actual commodities to advertisers. Eileen Meehan adds that the only audiences that count with advertisers are those of what she calls the consumerist caste, the upper-middle income earners who can afford what the advertisers sell (Meehan, 1984, 1986, 1990, 1991, & 1993a). Meehan further argues that radio and television ratings are also commodities manufactured not from among all broadcast audiences but from members of the consumerist caste. At least one radio station owner agrees ratings are manufactured. Tom Hassey, owner of KTUC in Tucson, said in a recent speech to a Media Arts class at the University of Arizona that he refused to pay \$8,000 monthly to be rated by Arbitron because he had found his station would only get rated highly if he paid the fee (T. Hassey, personal communication, September 29, 1995).

The question is, what makes human beings who presumably possess personal agency cooperate in their own commodification? The answer appears to lie in the findings of media research showing that people will, usually unconsciously, desire and emulate what they see on television (Fowles, 1992; Schramm, 1962; Smythe, 1977; Williams, 1986). By desiring what they see and hear, and by emulating behavior of people they see and hear, people are becoming audiences conditioned to buy what they see and hear. Audiences that are prepared to buy and who are able to

buy, are highly desirable commodities to advertisers (Graham & Hamdan, 1987; Smythe, 1977; Meehan, 1986, 1990, 1991, & 1993a). In this progression of events, which often occurs too quickly to be consciously realized, audiences become commodities to be sold.

#### Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate commodification by media of child audiences. Overarching research questions included the following:

1. Are children actually commodified by the media?
2. If so, what characteristics do commodified children possess?
3. Are upper middle class children heavy users of media, or do they care more about non-mediated activities such as gardening, traveling, charitable works, or tennis playing?

Using these research questions for direction, the study investigated how upper-middle class, middle school children behave and respond to mass media products.

#### Importance of the Study

My hypotheses are that children are commodified by the media into people not understood by most adults. The characteristics of these children are so unique they have yet to be fully observed and comprehended. In addition, the upper middle classes pursue mediated rather than non-mediated activities because the mainstream media have now become the American culture. These classes can afford most manifestations of the culture. Findings of this study should either support, or fail to support, these hypotheses.

### Background

The remainder of this chapter will include descriptions of the ways in which the media forms the American culture. An economic overview of the American media industry will also be provided to establish the rationale for using the age bracket, income level, and research methods for this study. A discussion of research categories will also be furnished.

#### Ways in Which the Media Forms the American Culture

Dewey (1934) has said that the work and fortune of a living being depend largely on its interactions with its environment. I believe the American mainstream media now form a major part of Americans' environment. The availability of these media in Americans' lives is unprecedented. Also, the breadth and depth of the media's reach into all Americans' lives is unprecedented and deliberate. Media analyst Michael J. Wolf explains that such overarching growth is necessary for the industry to survive and grow (Koselka, 1995).

It's no longer sufficient to make a good movie and have it do well at the box office. You've got to be able to exploit every piece of revenue that you possibly can, because the cost of creating and marketing the product is so great...[v]arious facets of the business can generate others...for example, a film can fuel big record sales..[and] record sales can pull in a movie audience. (p. 254)

This exploitation of revenue causes mainstream media products to be processed and perceived in many ways simultaneously: book, music, film, television, color pictures in

magazines. Many theorists have suggested that this kind of multisensory, overlapping and intersecting of messages forms a comprehensive, overarching meta-media that shapes and legitimizes culture (Althusser, 1971; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Giroux, 1992; McLuhan, 1966). Almost everyone has access to visual and aural forms of mainstream media (such as television and radio) 24 hours a day (Lowery & DeFleur, 1988). Rather than referring to the media culture, this chapter assumes that the media is the culture.

This culture affects children in ways that are not understood by most teachers and other adults nor by the children themselves. Graham and Hamdan (1987), authors who refer to themselves with enthusiasm as "youth market consultants" to business people, describe this kind of manipulation frankly and ingenuously with their statement in Youthtrends, Capturing the \$200 Billion Youth Market. Graham and Hamdan (1987) explain this exploitative relationship between consumers and media: "We have often been described as being both in the business of selling young people to corporate America and of selling corporate America to young people" (p. 1).

The importance of this statement is illustrated in the following statistic: As consumers of products and services, young people were responsible for \$132 billion of business in 1991 and are now most likely responsible for a great deal more business. But not only are the young a market, they are also a selling tool at the same time. According to Graham and Edmondson (1987), young people have become a way of commodifying advertising space and/or time. They argue that "The trends and

attitudes of today's youth have a pervasive effect on American society. This influence extends beyond the 20 percent of the population that is young to an even larger, 'youth oriented' or 'youth conscious' adult market" (p. 2). While written almost nine years ago, this statement has proved to be valid today in ways the authors may not have foreseen. It has been demonstrated vividly in the 1995 advertising campaign of Calvin Klein showing adolescent children in various states of nudity and/or suggestive poses who are selling jeans or underwear or Klein's "cK one" fragrance. For an example of these advertisements, see the September, 1995, issue of Elle. The Klein advertisement in this issue consisted of three unnumbered pages beginning opposite the Contents page. The fact that Klein was forced by public outcry to withdraw the advertisements apparently did not lessen his profit. The Klein jeans line products, supposedly stalled in sales before this advertising campaign, were soon "jumping out of the stores" as a result of it (Carlson, 1995). At least two magazines, one of which was also the September, 1995, Elle, printed positive articles on Klein during the controversy. In both articles, the authors appear to agree with Klein that the public was not yet ready, or not yet sophisticated enough, to understand the photographs (Egan, 1995; Kaplan, 1995).

With this understanding of the consumer-commodity role of young people in our economy, we can now begin to look at the position of mainstream media in the American culture. Media affect the culture by imposing a cycle upon it that tends to preclude escape by those caught within it. In the first half of the cycle, the mainstream media shape the American people by

providing what Meehan (1986, 1990, & 1994) calls forced-choice, (i.e. artificially limited) menus to viewers and listeners. The ratings thus show not actual choice but the forced choice made among programs on a menu determined mostly by market conditions, production costs and changing conditions in the general economy (Meehan 1993a, 1990, 1986, & 1984). In other words, the choices available to broadcast and film and other mainstream media audiences are not the result of artistic expression but of economic production constraints. For instance, the large number of pilot programs submitted to the networks never reach the public; they are winnowed to a very few by the networks (Hirschberg, 1995).

Audiences, in turn, shape the media by choosing certain songs, shows and other products from the forced-choice menu; thus determining which of the few media choices presented will survive. A television actor's agent quoted anonymously in a recent issue of New York Magazine (Hirschberg, 1995) assumes that the success of television shows is entirely dependent on the audience.

Nobody knows what will work...no one could have predicted America would fall in love with Friends. Or that George Clooney, who had been on, like, twenty other shows, would suddenly become a big star in ER. You can never tell. It's all a guessing game. And that's what makes it interesting.  
(p. 29)

But this agent fails to mention that such shows as Friends and such stars as George Clooney were chosen for production and for presentation on the mainstream media menu most likely because of

their similarity in narrative and visual coding to other successful shows and stars. Once the Friends format proved successful, it led to new shows with similar formats (Ballafante, 1995; Jennings, 1995).

Qualitative research methods such as observation may provide ways of understanding how these forced choices in media shape audiences. Instead of looking at all ages, however, I observed children of middle school age between 10-13. Members of the commodity audience since birth, they seemed to be developing in directions not foreseen. As Marx and Engels (1946) have said, a commodity has the potential to outgrow its commodifiers; to become "an objective power above us, growing out of control, thwarting our expectations..." (p. 53). Children aged 10-13 are unique in American society in that they are products of what educator Edward J. Gordon (1964) calls a "world mad with dichotomies" (p. 52). It is a world in which "Tipper" (Mrs. Albert) Gore can write vehemently and conservatively on the evils of mainstream rock music (Gore, 1987), then publically praise and eulogize Jerry Garcia, a rock star who was a known heroin addict, at his funeral (Pagnozzi, 1995). Another example are real-life heroes such as New York police officers who work together on a difficult, dangerous case and become bitter enemies in their struggles to make the first book and movie deals about the case (Pooley, 1992).

Children of middle school age are also unique in that, according to American Demographics, they have been influencing their families' decisions since they were old enough to choose what they want to see, eat, wear, read and hear (List, 1992;

McNeal, 1992). Children of middle-school age are starting to think in abstractions (Piaget, 1977). In other words, "The ability to think about thinking is a characteristic of this age group" (Skelton, 1991, p. 3). Although the children of middle-school age in the present study did not choose to articulate feelings about media in ways that included metacognition and reflection, observation revealed the meaning to them of the media they used. As Todorov suggests, we cannot judge anyone's use of anything (much less children's use of media), until we understand the meaning that use has for him or her, and to believe we know enough without knowing others' stories is anti-intellectual and allows possibilities of hurting others (Todorov, 1984).

#### Dissertation Explained

To get at the meaning of mainstream media to children, this dissertation will show the results of case studies conducted during a total period of about 80 hours that examined the use of mainstream media by seven middle school-aged children living in upper-middle class income brackets in Tucson, Arizona; a community in Southern California; and New York, New York. By media I mean television, radio, compact disks, videogames, computer games and programs, and other non-print electronic and film media, and media-related products such as clothes and interior decor, selected by students on their own in their spare time with little or no guidance from teachers or parents. By upper-middle class, I mean homes with an income at or above the median income for their area.

#### Economic Overview of the Mainstream Media Industry

Unlike local folk art and independently produced media,

mainstream media are products produced by businesses that are intended to sell nationally and internationally (Barnouw, 1978 & 1990). Mainstream media that began as local expressions of artistic talent have been reshaped by national media companies for national distribution (Meehan, 1991). For instance, rap music was largely non-violent when it became popular in inner cities. But Time Warner decided that gangsta rap, which was just one minor strand among the many types of rap music, was the type it would promote nationally (Nelson, 1993). This decision was instrumental in associating all rap music with violence, abuse and degradation of women (Landler, 1995). While Time Warner has now apparently changed its policies on rap music as a response to recent public and political criticism, its legitimization of gangsta rap cannot be changed so quickly in the public consciousness (Landler, 1995).

All the major entertainment conglomerates have the capability of shaping national media because all are vertical monopolies with the capability of synergy; a term meaning, roughly, the ability of a company to buy what it produces (Wasko, 1991; Koselka, 1995). A description of the five largest entertainment conglomerates' structures will show how they create, centralize and control national media. An illustration of this power in action will then be provided by the case histories of a film, The Lion King, and its CD-ROM animated storybook adaptation, and two books produced by Disney.

The Walt Disney Company. The Disney company owns, among other businesses, three movie production companies, one cable channel and three theme parks, as well as hundreds of retail

stores and several magazines. A movie Disney produces can be merchandised through products sold at its retail stores, promoted through rides in the theme parks and publicized through shows on the television channel and articles in its magazines (Wasko, 1994). Now Disney owns its own multimedia production division (Rose & Turner, 1995) and controls a television network, ABC, through its recent acquisition of Capital Cities/ABC (Andrews et al., 1995). Mike Ovitz, an actor's agent who helped raise star salaries from a few million to the 10 to 15 million dollar range and who changed the role of agent from that of hustler of jobs for clients to packager of complete movie deals, was recently hired to replace the Number Two man Jeffery Katzenberg who is now with Steven Spielberg and David Geffen in their new company, Dreamworks (Auletta, 1995). Number One at Disney is still CEO Michael Eisner (Rose & Turner, 1995). Ovitz left Disney in December, 1996.

Time Warner Inc. This company owns 30 magazines and six publishing companies, as well as the largest music company in the world; 12 labels on Warner Bros. Records, seven labels on Atlantic Recording Group, six on Elektra Entertainment and 12 on Warner Music International (Wasko, 1994; Andrews et al., 1995). In filmed entertainment, Time Warner owns Home Box Office, a cable system and film production facilities. Music that did well on a Time Warner music label is often recycled into music videos, films and television shows (Wasko, 1994; Meehan, 1991 & 1993). A book published by one of the publishing companies could become a film in theaters and/or on HBO. Now that Time Warner owns Turner Broadcasting, it has access to the entire MGM film library, two

film companies, three cable services including the Cable News Network, plus all the other TBS production resources (Koselka, 1995). Also, Time Warner now has corporate ties with TBS' biggest stockholder, Tele-Communications Inc., whose owner John Malone now is said to have enough power to determine what does and does not get shown on cable (Corliss, 1995; J. Malone, Dateline, NBC).

Viacom (Paramount Communications Inc.). Besides its film production capabilities, this company owns over a thousand theater screens and many educational publishing companies including Simon & Schuster, Prentice Hall, Silver Burdett & Ginn, Allyn & Bacon, as well as sports teams and music companies and MTV. The theaters alone guarantee success of at least the films produced by this company (Wasko, 1994; Andrews et al., 1995). Owned by Sumner Redstone, who started his media empire from a few drive-in movie theaters inherited from his father, Viacom is one of the largest cable system distributors in the country (Auletta, 1995).

News Corporation/Twentieth Century Fox. The Fox Television Network is just one of the centralized media outlets owned by Rupert Murdoch, who built the News Corporation into a multibillion dollar empire from one newspaper he inherited in Australia. Murdoch also owns Twentieth Century Fox films, many newspaper and book publishing companies and entertainment magazines, such as TV Guide and Premier (Wasko, 1994). The advantages of being able to publicize one's television shows in TV Guide should be obvious. As of this writing, Murdoch operates a new 24-hour cable news service, Fox News Network, consisting of

many interview shows on which stars of Fox television and films have another means of publicity (Burrough & Masters, 1996).

MCA/Universal. Recently sold by Matsushita to Seagram's, MCA/Universal controls publishing, film, television, retail stores, restaurants (Hard Rock Cafe), cable outlets (such as USA Network) and recreation services, such as Universal Studios in Hollywood and Florida.

As is evident from their structures, these companies have the power to create, produce, show, sell, buy, publicize, and in some cases, distribute their entertainment products. Thus, they have the power to shape not just what the public sees, but what it thinks it wants. I argue that because certain commodifications such as stars, violence, romance, sex, and other instant gratifications are routinely added to conglomerates' media as extra insurance of sales, these commodifications have become expected among some mainstream audiences. One result of this commodification by instant gratification is a steady increase in sex, violence, and similar instant gratifications in mainstream media (Ricker, 1993 & 1994).

Disney's The Lion King is a useful example of the ways in which the major entertainment conglomerates use their power to shape the audiences' taste in more than one medium. Released in late June, 1994, the film was an immediate success. Only Jurassic Park had made more money in a shorter time after opening (Hofmeister, 1994; Rose & Turner, 1995). This immediate popularity with the public may be the only step in the Lion King's synergistic cycle not strictly controlled, preplanned and manipulated. While success was expected, this much success

proved overwhelming even for Disney. Burger King ran out of Kids Meals much sooner than expected and was forced to give disappointed children Lion King trading cards, instead. Mattel, Nestle, Kodac and Payless Shoesource, the other businesses licensed to make Lion King products, all experienced unexpectedly huge increases in sales (Hofmeister, 1994).

In order to capitalize on this success, Disney rushed the CD ROM animated storybook version of the Lion King into production in time for Christmas, 1994. The result was a product with many glitches and malfunctions, according to hundreds of irate buyers who called Disney to complain on Christmas day (Frook, 1995). However, children did not mind. The following micro case history may help explain why.

My observation of a student in the Spring of 1995 illustrates children's loyalty to Disney products of any quality. This student, assigned to me in a laboratory reading class, was a sixth grader reading at the second grade level. He was given a choice between the Lion King animated story book and Broderbund's Arthur's Teacher Troubles CD ROM animated story book. The former has an average of about eight "hot spots" on every screen (areas which, when clicked upon, provide special effects). The Broderbund product has at least 15 hotspots per page, some of which are double and triple acting. A fish in a tank, for instance, will suddenly begin swimming wildly on the first click; jumping on the second click; and jumping and singing upon the next click. Despite the technical disparity, this student chose the Lion King animated story book every time because, he told me, he loves the Disney characters, the Disney visual images and the

Disney story. Though delighted at the Broderbund CD ROM animated story books, he never developed the same loyalty to them. The reason why is articulated by software producer Vincent Desiderio. "Kids won't buy a program about a character who is not famous" (V. Desiderio, personal communication, 1995). This micro-case history suggests that Disney has found representation methods for its products that, because of familiarity rather than aesthetics, are more desired than other artists' representation methods. The children may have internalized the Disney artistic style to the point where they are uncomfortable with other kinds (Barber, 1995).

This kind of internalization is encouraged by Disney via a constant stream of products that not only naturalize the company's artistic style but have multisensory appeal. For instance, the Lion King Mask Book (Ingoglia, 1994) provides actual cardboard masks of the film's characters that can be admired visually and worn on the body. Masks of generic animals, such as a hippopotamus and a zebra, are included. These generic animals, however, are rendered in the same Disney style as the film characters.

Another way Disney has demonstrated shaping of media and the audience is the rewriting of the Little Mermaid story for the Disney film of the same title. Instead of the self-sacrifice of the little mermaid, which occurs in the original version, the Disney version has the little mermaid marrying the hero and living happily ever after. That version has been recycled into Walt Disney's Classic Movie Treasury of Favorite Stories, which nowhere acknowledges that "The Little Mermaid" was collected and

interpreted by Hans Christian Anderson. Other "favorite stories" included in this anthology include "Bambi," "Snow White," "Lady and the Tramp," "Peter Pan," "The Jungle Book," "Cinderella," "The Aristocats," "101 Dalmatians" and "Pinocchio"; a mix that fails to make any distinction between old stories and new; implying all are Disney creations and/or that the Disney stories are also among the classics. Pocahontas involves a similar trajectory in that Disney Publishing has issued the Disney film version of the story of Pocahontas and John Smith in the form of a print book which is, as of this writing, a best seller. Differences between historical accounts of Pocahontas' life and the Disney version are too numerous to describe here (McNichol, 1995).

#### Rationale for Choice of Geographical Area and Age Range

While practical considerations influenced my decision to conduct this research in Tucson, Arizona, Tucson is an appropriate place in which to conduct research on middle-school (10 to 14) aged children because it is one of the few states projected to see a growth of population in this age range in the next decade (Ambry, 1993). Southern California and New York City were chosen because families permitted access in these cities and a grant made the research in these areas possible. The age range was chosen for three reasons. One is that children of middle-school age still tend to reflect their families' values; they have not yet made a complete break with their background (O'Hare, 1992). A second reason is that they have nevertheless begun to think for themselves and, thus, are able to use elements of their family background independently (List, 1992; O'Hare, 1992). They

are, in other words, able to make many of their own buying decisions while using the families' money (List, 1992). The third reason is that, (as already mentioned) at this age, thinking processes are going from concrete operations to abstract thinking (Piaget, 1977). Hence, students aged 10 to 14 might be able to utilize metacognition in explaining their feelings about media. As will be seen in Chapter Four, however, this assumption was proved wrong by all but one of the research participants in this study.

#### Rationale for Socioeconomic Bracket

Meehan has said that ratings of commercial media are taken only from members of what could be called the consumerist caste (people with enough income to be regular consumers), because those are the only audience members whose opinions of shows matters to advertisers (Meehan, 1990 & 1993). This study assumed that if children in the consumerist caste could be observed in their daily use of media, they might reveal to what degree members of the consumerist caste actually display enough personal agency to live a full life outside the mainstream media's influence. The findings suggest that degree of personal agency is surprisingly small.

It would appear that the financial brackets of the consumerist caste are not clearly defined and tend to be relative. In this study, I am assuming membership in the consumerist caste requires an income level at or above the median income level for the geographical area of the study. In Tucson, the median income is \$28,047 (Lifestyle Market Analyst, 1994), The study included children from families having incomes of that

amount on up; I am saying \$30,000 for the sake of rounding up numbers.

Though ratings companies once chose audience members to poll by their ability to subscribe to a telephone (Meehan, 1993a, 1990, & 1984) they make that determination today on the basis of whether or not those rated have cable television subscriptions. Thus, people below an income level sufficient to buy subscriptions to cable services are automatically excluded from ratings measurement (Meehan, 1984). In Tucson, cable subscribership reached 58.2 per cent of households by 1994 (Lifestyle Market Analyst, 1994).

#### Rationale for Choosing a Non-academic Setting

Students' ability to choose media is an important variable in this study; students do not have this choice in the school setting. I do not mean to imply that school media are not commodified; most school media are sold by commercial producers and distributors and are highly commodified. The school media buyers, however, are not the children but a relatively few adults acting as gatekeepers for teachers and children (P. Holzmilller, personal communications, 1993 & 1994).

#### Rationale for Conducting Qualitative Research

If media is the environment or the culture of the environment, it can best be understood through qualitative research in its natural setting (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1987). This research requires description and explanation rather than prediction (Merriam, 1988) because cultures can be understood through description and explanation (Lofland & Lofland, 1984; Seidman, 1991). Merriam (1988) says that the aim of descriptive

research "Is to examine events or phenomena" (p. 7). The events and phenomena to be examined in this study are the participants' uses of media and media-related products.

#### Rationale for Using the Case Study Approach

When I was teaching a summer course in media writing for the Summer Enrichment Education for Kids (SEEK) program at the University of Arizona in 1993 to middle school children, I realized I knew nothing about my students' real media preferences. Their assertions in class discussions that Sesame Street, Disney films and R.L. Stine's books were their primary entertainments seemed somehow suspect for reasons I could not ascertain directly. Then, just before the end of the first week of class, I noticed several students sharing a paper secretly, making sure I was not watching. Under questioning, they reluctantly admitted it was a paper detailing the characteristics (moves) of various Mortal Kombat characters. When I asked how many of them played this video game, I got no response.

Then I tried asking individuals, one at a time, what the game was like and whether it was fun to play. Once one student began answering, several students also began answering those questions simultaneously, as though starved for an opportunity to express themselves frankly on this subject. During this spirited conversation on the Mortal Kombat video game, one student said no teacher had ever shown an interest in the game before. Why, he continued, was I willing to discuss it? Because, I replied, "You obviously enjoy it. And I am interested in what you really enjoy and do not enjoy and why." This answer is still true. Because of my genuine, nonjudgmental interest, I got to know the students

as they are, not as how I want, or assume, them to be or how their parents want, or assume, them to be. From my observations, I concluded that this video game had made them careful consumers of the media, keen critics of video games, and especially able to communicate with one another about this form of media despite geographical, socioeconomic, gender, age and other differences. They were, in short, affected by the media in ways I had not expected. The individual approach was the one that had gained me access to these observations. Had I treated them as a group, I would have gotten standard or no answers. Marsha Kinder, a film theorist who writes frequently on children and videogames, also got surprising results from the case study approach (Kinder, 1991). During a case study of her son, Victor, then eight years old, Kinder realized that he had gone from books to television to videogames in his media preferences without ever wanting to watch films. The reason why, Kinder (1991) finally decided, had to do with Victor's lifelong association of media and interactivity. "To kids like Victor, who are raised on television, moviegoing frequently translates into a frightening loss of power" (p. 30).

I began to think that a study of everyday use of media would yield information about the kinds of people students have, perhaps unbeknownst to families and teachers, actually become. The aforementioned observations of the reading laboratory student in his use of the Disney and Broderbund CD ROM animated storybooks further solidified my belief that qualitative case studies would be most effective at revealing students' actual media use.

### Rationale for Studying Six Students

Six appeared to be a number large enough to yield patterns in data, but small enough to allow thick, rich detail in a qualitative study (Seidman, 1991). Ethnicity and gender were not variables, nor were parents' educational levels, academic standing, number of siblings or structure of family. Family income was the only criterion necessary for inclusion in the study. However, the study included seven primary participants by the time the research was finished. At least five secondary participants, as well as family and friends who were an inseparable part of the primary participants' lives during the period of observation, were included in the study. In the Southern California research, the secondary participants were both under five years of age and, so, became a micro-research study in themselves that suggested the need for further study of that age group.

### Research Categories

In the preface to his anthology, Natural Audiences: Qualitative Research of Media Uses and Effects, Thomas Lindlof (1987) says that qualitative study of media involves investigation of natural use of media in many areas. "There is an interest in accounting for everyday interactions with media" (p. x). Jennifer Bryce (1987) suggests researchers organize this everyday use into categories for data management purposes.

This study drew data from the following categories: films, television, clothes, personal books, record and compact disks, collection, bedroom decor, video and computer games, hairstyle, and computers. Other categories (such as production equipment)

were added when they appeared. For every category, I provided data on mainstream media, if any, involved. In the "hairstyles" category, for instance, I found no evidence of media influence, but in "room decor," I found several.

Other categories were considered in the course of this research, such as "food" and "sports." These and other areas of the child's life appeared to be influenced by mainstream media. But in the data analysis, I found the aforementioned categories were most comprehensive. All yielded information about the amount of time the student's daily existence was affected by mainstream media.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter will deal with two kinds of studies in the use of media. The first set of studies includes observations that have been made on the audiences who watch media. The other set includes studies that investigate the effects that can be caused by media. For purposes of contextualization, however, the different approaches of media audience studies done by media and education scholars needs to be addressed.

#### Media Theorists' Audience Research

Media scholars' research on audiences tends to feature the researcher him or herself in a prominent role. It also is often grouped under the term "reception theory" or, as Horace Newcomb (1994) calls it in the introduction to the audience-study section in his anthology Television: The Critical View, "The reception contexts of television" (p. 363). Essays included in this section of Newcomb's anthology are representative of the broad range, lack of structure, and lack of consistent methodology used to analyze audiences in media studies. Topics include an "ethnographic interview" in which the author visits the participants' house, conducts an unstructured interview about television (Seiter, pp. 387-410), and makes such pronouncements about the participants as "I had already placed (the interview participants) in class terms by their home furnishings...of which they were proud" (Seiter, p. 392). John Fiske's (1994) essay, Ethnosemiotics: Some Personal and Theoretical Reflections, reports ethnographic data taken from the author's life on an ad

hoc basis without use of organizational framework. Fiske's (1994) romantic life, for instance, is interjected into his data with arbitrary selectivity. When he describes himself as being in an "important, heterosexual, non-marital, mixed-age relationship" (p. 412) he chooses not to give precise ages or say whether his partner is the younger or older in this mixed-age pairing.

#### Educators' Audience Research

Educators' media research tends to obey principles of qualitative research by downplaying the role of the observer and avoiding judgment of the participants being observed. Among the most carefully conducted qualitative studies of media use are those found in Lindlof's Natural Audiences (1987). Those most relevant to this study are Viewing in Diapers: The Early Development of Television Viewing (Lemish, 1987), How Children Negotiate Television (Wolf, 1987), Mothers' Comments to their Children about the Relationship between Television and Reality (Messaris, 1987), Family Time and Television Use (Bryce, 1987), and Media-Logic-in-Use: The Family as Locus of Study. All use categorical frameworks including such topics as family member numbers, ages, hobbies, occupations, incomes, schedules and daily logs of media use. In one study, the family schedule was so chaotic that quantitative method of measuring average number of eye blinks per minute had to be used in order to determine actual vs. background viewing of television (Traudt and Lont, 1987). In Lemishes' (1987) study of ways in which children use television, the number of knob turnings per child per hour was counted. Findings included what Ellen Wartella (1987) in her commentary

called the "astonishing" discovery that babies learn from, and interact with, television at much younger ages than previously suspected. Another finding of interest to this study was that the higher the income of the family, the less rigid the father's insistence that viewing habits be under his strictly-enforced control (Bryce, 1987). All these studies involved extensive fieldwork, all in the participants' homes except for Wolf's study of children's negotiation of television, which took place among 107 children in a day care/summer camp facility in Texas (Wolf, 1987). All studies in Lofland indicate that television has become one of, if not the most important, central focus of all participants' home lives with the possible exception of the family in Bryce's (1987) study with the most income and in which the mother had the highest education level (master's degree) among the three families studied. Unlike the other families, the latter family members were what Bryce (1987) calls "polychronic" as opposed to monochronic. In other words, viewers can do several things at once while watching television. However, these classic qualitative studies of participants using media were the only ones of their completeness I could find.

But media effects studies have many other types of research methods that can contribute to the kind of research proposed here.

#### Media Effects Studies Examined

Media effects is the type of research most relevant to the study of the use of media by children. It began as a separate course of study in conjunction with mass communications studies in the 1950's with the publication of The Process and Effects of

Mass Communication by Wilbur Schramm (1954) and has been largely funded by governmental agencies such as the military and school districts. This kind of research has tended to extend along a continuum that has commercial purposes at one end, such as the effects of subliminal sexual signifiers in advertisements and scholarly purposes at the other (Key, 1972; Packard, 1968). Between those extremes are studies that look at viewing habits, educational and cognitive effects of viewing habits, behavioral effects of viewing habits, family relations effects of viewing habits and consumer spending effects of viewing habits, among other effects. Bryant and Zillman's (1986) compendium provides an example of areas examined in media effects studies: news shows, shows laden with aggression and "pornographic sexual communications," educational shows, children's shows, political programs, and shows dealing with minorities and the mass media. The 1994 volume contains much the same topics but adds a chapter on the effects of advertisements on viewers. Media effects studies also use different approaches to media studies, such as the uses and gratifications theory (Gans, 1975), which categorizes media into the various gratifications provided by it and uses made of it.

Perhaps the most important, broad-ranged media effects study of children was conducted Canadian psychologist Tannis MacBeth Williams in the 1970's. Findings were published in The Impact of Television: A Natural Experiment in Three Communities in 1986. Under Williams' guidance, researchers conducted a quasi-experimental study of a town, "Notel," in Canada before and after it received television reception. Two other towns, "Unitel" and

"Multitel," were used as control towns. In Phase #1, "Notel," the experimental town, had no television reception. Of the control towns, Unitel had one channel, the Canadian Broadcasting Company (CBC, the Canadian Government owned channel), and Multitel had four channels: CBC, ABC, CBS, and NBC. In Phase 2, which took place two years later, Notel had CBC, Unitel had two CBC channels, and Multitel had four channels. Areas tested by quantitative means included television's effects on children's reading skills, cognitive development, leisure activities, sex roles, and aggressive behavior.

While still an effects study, this study was different in that it observed behavior rather than simply effects. As Williams (1986) said, when prominent researchers in the field "ask about effects, they more often obtained self-report, parent or teacher ratings than measures of actual behavior....thus, although these (researchers) contributed immeasurably to our knowledge of children and television, they also left many questions unanswered" (p. 2).

One question left unanswered was how much effect television had on children's reading ability, particularly in grades 2 and 3. Thus, Williams (1986) decided to test these grades. Of the 217 students in the original cohort, 153 were tested again two years later. Tests were controlled for IQ. Initial findings showed that television might have had a deleterious effect on reading fluency, especially for boys. Notel boys who had gone through grade 1 and the first part of grade 2 with no television had relatively higher fluent reading skills scores than the other children. Two years later, after watching television for about a

year, the Notel scores were much closer to those of children in the other towns. While there was some catch-up of fluency skills in grade 3 for all groups, Williams said the evidence is significant, "The pattern of results from our fluent reading test was far from perfect, but the weight of the evidence indicates that reading development may proceed more slowly in the presence than in the absence of TV..." (p. 61).

While space here precludes reporting of all findings from the Williams studies, those relevant to this study can be summarized as follows:

1. Television may slow and help prevent acquisition of fluent reading skills and creative thinking by children.
2. Television content increased children's aggressive behavior and stereotyping of sex roles.
3. Television displaces community activities for both children and adults, especially older adults.

Perhaps the most important finding in this study is that television shapes schemata in children.

The hypothesis that people's beliefs or concepts are initially established in part through television viewing and then used to process new information from all sources, including television, is consistent with a number of findings, some of which are difficult to explain otherwise. This influence would help ground Smythe's (1977) theory that television works to educate consumers to behave as commodities that can be bought and sold.

Many media effects studies are contradictory. It is

important at this point to give an illustration of these differences in findings. The issue of harmful effects of television on children is one of the most useful examples because it is one of the most strongly debated.

Reed Hundt, the chairperson of the Federal Communications Commission, said on the McNeil-Leher News Hour on August 29, 1995, that there are "at least" twenty studies showing that television violence changes children's behavior on playgrounds, in schools, at home, and in other settings. But Hundt conceded that because it is a business, American television cannot be expected to change any type of show that is profitable, even when not in the public interest. He added that thanks to the Reagan era deregulation of the 1980's, broadcasters are no longer held to the public interest requirements of the Communications Act of 1934. Yet Jib Fowles (1992), Professor of Media Studies at the University of Houston-Clear Lake, has included a chapter entitled "Why television is good for children" in his book, Why Viewers Watch: A Reappraisal of Television's Effects. This chapter cites many studies, such as those conducted by Schramm, Lyle, and Parker (Schramm et al., 1962) and studies commissioned by Sesame Street showing children watch television because they like it and that they are not only not harmed by it but given emotional catharsis and intellectual stimulation by it (Fowles, 1992). In his chapter on television and violence, "Television is good for spleens," Fowles argues that Japanese television is more violent than America's because it acts as a safety valve for Japan's rigid, structured but also nonviolent society. Fowles (1992) also describes findings of the Feshbach study of teenaged boys

and television violence as showing that boys (especially those of lower socioeconomic levels) who come to the television feeling aggressive, will be calmed by violent shows that depict the working through of violence in the plot. Fowles (1992) later reports in another context that Feshbach found that boys who were calm when they began watching the violent shows were likely to become more aggressive as a result of watching. But Fowles (1992) does not allow that particular finding to negate his thesis that violence on television is actually good for our society, as the two concluding sentences of his chapter demonstrate:

With the resolution of the program, as the criminals are caught, the viewer can feel untroubled about the aggression he has released along the way (while watching the violence-containing program) without moving a muscle. There is little sensation in the aftermath except relief.

However, a prominent mass media studies scholar, Everett M. Rogers, of the Annenberg School of Communications, has declared that the catharsis effect is not supported by research. "The television effects research shows little support for a catharsis effect, that TV violence purges the viewer of aggressive tendencies" (Rogers, p. xiv).

As the work of Fowles and others demonstrates, effects studies can be debated ad infinitum. For this reason alone, I feel there is a need for a media study that treats media as a culture and not as an effect. Though they are quantitative, experimental, and qualitative in design, effects studies all have had a direct effect to be looked at. None that I know has used

the methodology of an ethnographic study of the culture, and none has seen media as a culture instead of as an effect within the culture. Everett M. Rogers (1988) suggests in his "Foreword" to Milestones in Mass Communications Research, by Shearon A. Lowery and Melvin L. DeFleur, that "methodologically sophisticated research of the 1970's and 1980's" has failed to show "strong media effects of a direct nature." For this reason, Rogers believes another kind of media research is needed. "Perhaps mass communication researchers should investigate additional types of indirect media effects in the future" (p. xiv). I see a need for research of indirect effects that is anthropological in nature, conducted with no a priori notion of what is to be looked at or found.

I argue that this research should show ways in which the media create as well as affect audiences. As stated, I believe an open-ended, qualitative or ethnographic study of children in their natural habitats living their daily lives that can get at answers to both research questions.

A survey of the history of mass media effects studies will be useful at this point in showing the kinds of work and methodologies undertaken by researchers of media effects. I will follow this survey with a review of the literature on research of educational uses of mainstream media. (Note: The terms "mass" and "mainstream" are synonymous in this paper).

#### History of Media Effects Research

The following outline of the history of media effects studies is taken from an annotated list of influential media research projects compiled by Everett Rogers (Lowery and DeFleur,

1988).

### Early Studies

In the 1930's, the Payne Fund studied the effects of films on children. Its findings indirectly inspired the institution of the Production Code, a Government-inspired set of rules overseen by former postmaster Will Hays, that determined moral content of movies until the mid-1950's. Hadley Cantril investigated the effects of Orson Welles' "Invasion from Mars" broadcast on the Mercury Theater of the Air in 1938, under the auspices of Princeton's Office of Radio Research, the first communication research facility based at a university. The Erie County study conducted by Paul F. Lazarsfeld (1948) in the Columbia University Bureau of Applied Social Research found little direct effect of media on voting behavior. A Yale University psychologist, Carl Hovland, studied the effects of military training films on soldiers' morale. The diffusion approach was initiated in the Air Force Funded Project Revere to test mathematical formulae predicting the diffusion of leaflets dropped from an airplane. The Decatur Study conducted by Paul Lazarsfeld tested the two-step flow of communication model, and the role of interpersonal networks in the communication process.

1940's. Frederick Wertham's studies of the effects of crime comic books in the 1940's and early 1950's, Seduction of the Innocent, involved content analyses, surveys and longitudinal studies. This report was influential in achieving governmental repression of comic books containing sex, violence, horror and how-to-instructions for aspiring criminals.

1950's. The first important studies of the effects of

television, published in Television in the Lives of Our Children (1961) and conducted by Stanford University researchers Wilbur Schramm, Jack Lyle and Edwin Parker, showed the results of 11 effects studies. Interviews with 5991 students in grades one through ten and 1958 parents were conducted in western cities and Canada to find out how their lives interacted with, and were influenced by, television. Findings included the following:

1. Children use television for entertainment, information and as a focus for socializing.
2. Information absorbed from television told children what clothes and grooming habits were in fashion, and how sports should be performed.
3. Viewing began at age two.
4. High IQ children watched less after sixth grade than lower and middle IQ children.
5. Adult shows were watched by three quarters of the children by the time they were in sixth grade.
6. Also discovered were that in 100 hours of television, children saw 16 different types of violence were seen involving 115 people who were injured, hurt, trampled, murdered and otherwise harmed people (Schramm et al., 1988).

1960's-1980's. After publication of this book in 1962, 2,800 more studies on the effects of television had been published by mass media scholars by 1980.

Then came the Report to the U.S. Surgeon General on Television and Social Behavior (1971), a study costing \$1 million, showed findings of research on the effects of TV

violence. Rogers believes that an important topic for future media effects studies would be the agenda setting function of the media (Lowery and DeFleur, 1988).

The foregoing studies tended to use content analyses, quantitative measurements, experimental, and quasi-experimental methods, but not ethnographic or all-qualitative methods. The Schramm (1954 & 1962) studies came closest to being qualitative in their intention of learning about family life and social habits of students, but used interviews and surveys instead of qualitative researcher observation.

#### Research on the Effects of Mass Media on Education

Studies of mainstream media's effect on education have not been qualitative or ethnographic but quantitative and experimental. In order to understand the raisons d'être for this research, one needs a historical perspective on the teaching of mainstream media in public schools.

One of the first media scholars to address educators on the subject of media and learning was Marshall McLuhan. Prominent in the 1960's, McLuhan (1966) believed that the teaching of reading was no longer important because, by the 1980's, the print literate environment would be obsolete. I share here James Morrow's recollections of a conference based on McLuhan's teachings:

The Sixth Annual Fordham University Film Conference was for two kinds of people: teachers and trainers of teachers. The teachers came to be trained. The teacher-trainers came to put on a show. There were lots of flashy films, lots of flashy names (Judith Crist, John Schlesinger, Frank and

Eleanor Perry, Marshall McLuhan), and lots of flashy lecturers congratulating each other on being 'practicing fanatics'...Film study, that nice, respectable low-key movement in education, had gotten completely out of hand. One by one, the hard-core McLuhanistes at the conference rose to present renditions of an argument that goes something like this (after you finish saying, 'as McLuhan has observed'): Today's kids are growing up, with extraordinary depth and involvement, in a unique, non-linear environment defined by the 'new electronic media' (meaning television). This environment has endowed them with a set of perceptual predispositions which are quite different from and, truth to tell, better than, those of their local teachers, parents, and McLuhan experts. These are the children of a 'post-literate' society. The teacher who ignores this fact is riding for a fall. There is even a word...(these teachers) are called 'pobs' ('print-oriented bastards')...Communicating with kids, especially urban Black kids, 'where they're at' (television ads, movies, rock music) quickly became an end in itself. Nobody seemed to know where to go from there or if, indeed, it was even advisable to go anywhere from there...injecting a non-linear child with reading, writing, and other middle class conventions might warp him for life. (Morrow and Suid, 1977, p.3)

Perhaps because his rumors of the death of print were, to paraphrase Mark Twain, greatly exaggerated, Marshall McLuhan's influence on educators had almost disappeared by the 1980's. By

that time, new theoretical frameworks had come to dominate media studies in higher education. I will deal here with seven: those of the Marxists, structuralists, semeioticians, psychoanalytics, formalists and sociologists.

The Marxists felt that art and mass media are class based and intended to reproduce the classes creating or financially supporting it (Hall, 1982; Williams, 1977). Semeiotic thought held that the class, gender and other aspects of a culture could be understood in a film by analysis of that film's visual codes. Semeioticians believed that all objects in the mise-en-scene (meaning everything put in the scene in front of the camera) expressed (either consciously or unconsciously) cultural codes of various sorts (Barthes, 1967; Eco, 1989). The structuralist movement, begun in Britain by Bennett, Woolacott and others, also used semeiotics, but embedded them within a bottom-up approach to analysis of media that allowed the various structural elements of film, such as narrative, casting and mise-en-scene, to shape analysis of the film (Bennett & Woolacott, 1989). The psychoanalytic approach, based mainly on writings of Freud and Lacan, assumed that films are created primarily as means of working out of oedipal and preoedipal conflicts and fantasies buried in the subconscious (Barthes, 1972). The formalists, exemplified by David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, believe that it is the form of a film--the ways in which it is shot, lit, blocked, cast, acted and otherwise shown in the mise-en-scene; plus the ways it is edited (such as the shortening of scenes to create the effect of suspense and the use of shot-reverse shots in romantic and confrontational scenes to create tensions) that

determines the film's meaning. The content of theme of the script is considered to be only one more form among many available to the film makers (Bordwell & Thompson, 1993).

One of the more recent theoretical approaches to media, that of feminists, shows most media products to be justifications of the white male patriarchy. A feminist method of demonstrating this position is illustrated in Haralovich's essay, Sitcoms and Suburbs: Positioning the 1950's Homemaker. In this essay, Haralovich examines ways in which the 1950's era television shows Leave it to Beaver and Father knows best reveal ideal images of women that women were supposed to adopt in their post World War II incarnations as non-working wives and mothers (Haralovich, 1989; Spigel, 1988). Laura Mulvey (1975) became the legitimizer of feminist film theory with her groundbreaking essay, "Visual pleasure and narrative cinema." In this essay, Mulvey (1975) makes often-quoted statements, such as every woman "raises her child into the symbolic" and then ceases to have a function in the world. Mulvey also shows that films undermine the notion of woman as a whole person by showing women in shots containing bodily fragments that contain more desirable body parts.

A sociological approach to media analysis categorized media into products and audiences of various socioeconomic classes and educational levels, called "taste cultures" by Herbert Gans (1974).

The visual literacy strand of media education concentrates on similarities of visual and verbal processing. One well-known representative of this movement, Rudolph Arnheim, showed that writing and drawing intersect as cognitive skills (Arnheim,

1957). The media literacy strand of film studies was perhaps the first (and is probably still the only) strand of media studies to be used in public schools starting in the 1970's with the inclusion of media literacy units in language arts textbooks. It sets an agenda for students; it teaches children to recognize what is harmful, unjust, politically incorrect and otherwise negative about film and television. An organization called Action for Children's Television helped implement the Children's Television Act, which presumably limits the number of commercials and acts of violence on cartoons and other children's programming. Sesame Street and similar approved programs emerged from this strand of media studies (Dimmett, 1992). The Center for Media and Values, a conservative organization listing 15 religious groups on its publication masthead, supplies kits to schools that help teachers utilize critical analysis of media in language arts classes.

#### Conclusions

As can be seen, none of the media studies mentioned in this chapter, except for studies included in Lindlof (1987) utilized a much more open-ended, non-agendaed qualitative or ethnographic observation of children. The time has come to conduct such a study with no notion of the effects, viewing or use habits, or any other specific finding, to be gleaned.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research design and procedures that were used in this qualitative study of media use by upper middle class children of middle school age. Qualitative methods such as observation, interviews, and document analyses helped further the investigation on how media were consumed by these children during their leisure time. The main purposes of this chapter is to:

1. Describe the participants and their families.
2. Explain the qualitative measures used.
3. Discuss how the measurement tools were developed.
4. Explain the methods used for the analysis of data.

This study incorporated methods found in the qualitative research paradigm. As the review of literature has shown, studies about students' natural, spare-time preferences about media use were not a topic of concern among the researchers. Thus, this study provides an authentic account of media use by students.

#### Procedure

The research for this dissertation was conducted in the field between the months of January and December, 1996. Research methods were drawn from qualitative studies of family and children's use of media reported in Lindlof's (1987) anthology, Natural Audiences: Qualitative Research of Media Uses and Effects. Seven primary participants were chosen on the basis of their family's income level, which had to be at or above the median for their geographical area, and their age, which had to be at or between the middle school ranges of 10 and 14. These

participants were divided into four groups. In Group II, friends the same ages as the primary participants were present so often that they were observed also on a limited basis. They were never observed using media in their home. Group III included two children, one four and one who was under two years old. Both interacted with the primary participants in this group so often they, too, were observed in their use of media. But they were not observed using media in their homes. Others observed on a far more limited basis included friends of the primary participants who used media with the primary participants.

The research was guided and organized by the following categories: Films, Television, Clothes, Hairstyles, Books, Record and Compact Disks, Bedroom decor, Video and Computer games, Computers, and other media categories as they appeared (such as the Production Equipment, which included the Numark Mixer). All these categories act as spheres of interaction with the participants' relationship to the culture in which they live (Olson and Bruner, 1974).

#### Advantages of Using Case Study Approach

Merriam (1988) believes case study is a form of inductive and descriptive research that "concentrates on many, if not all, the variables present in a single unit" (p. 7). The case study seems best for the investigation of ways in which mainstream media shapes American children and the culture because the process of "shaping" can only be ascertained by observation of interaction with the hypothetical cause (mainstream media) of the shaping process. That interaction constitutes what Merriam calls a bounded system (Merriam, 1988). In explaining this concept,

Merriam defines it as "The focus of the examination" (p. 9). It could thus be "an instance of some concern, issue, or hypothesis" (p. 10). In this study, the bounded system consists of a myriad of small relationships with media in all facets of the subject's life, not only watching and listening and playing of computer games. These relationships constitute what Merriam calls "events or phenomena" (p. 7) that must be observed and identified as they occur in order to be understood.

In this chapter, I am using the structure suggested by Hammersley and Atkinson (1987) in Ethnography: Principles in Practice. This book discusses problems inherent in the following categories of ethnographic study: access, field relations, documents, recording and organizing data, analysis and writing. While I have not organized this chapter into these specific categories, I have written this chapter with these categories in mind.

#### Recruitment of Participants

My study consisted of observations of seven middle-school age (sixth through ninth grade) students living in families with incomes above the median or more in the Tucson, Arizona area (about \$29,000), the southern California area (about \$56,000), and the New York City area (about \$36,000).

It was difficult finding participants who agreed to let me observe them. Many agreed but then changed their minds about allowing me to observe them. I found these students through references from teachers, colleagues, family, and informants living in this same upper-middle income bracket. Out of a total of 26 rejections by either parents and/or students, these

students and their families agreed to allow me to come into their homes at various hours and observe their use of media, whether or not the parents were present. Sometimes I was allowed to follow the participants into others' homes for observation.

Participants were asked to keep journals about media habits, respond to interest surveys, explain the fine points of video games, and to participate in taped interviews, as well as be observed in their daily lives. Initial willingness of participants to fulfil these requirements proved false. Only two participants kept any kind of a media log. None wanted to respond to surveys and the game players soon tired of explaining the fine points (or anything else) of the games. All did submit to questioning and observations in daily lives, but with reluctance and impatience.

#### Details of Method

On observation days, I arrived at the participants' houses or, in the case of the southern California-based participants, at the home of their grandmother where they visited frequently and, in three instances, were cared for on a regular basis. If the participants used any media at all, I noted the form and content. If they ate food or used products licensed from a media company, such as Toy Story character toys from Burger King, I noted the ownership of the products and usage. If they dressed in media-related clothing (such as Mickey Mouse shirts) or slept in media-related bedding (such as Mickey Mouse sheets) I noted these usages of media products. If participants went to the movies or video arcade or to another student's house to watch a video or television, I went along. In three cases, I initiated trips to

the video arcade, but found such excursions unproductive. If students used compact disks or played computer games at home, I tried to record all titles. I noted all television watched.

I initially thought I would be conducting many subject interviews for reasons expressed by Seidman (1991). He said "At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (p. 3). However, I found participants not only unwilling to respond to such interviews, but untruthful in answering interview questions. The only time the interview method was utilized extensively was when an assistant researcher was used in the New York City observation.

#### Expected Constraints

I expected to have difficulty finding what Hammersley and Atkinson call the ethnographer's place in the setting of the study (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1987). In her study of television use by three families, Bryce (1987) found the unexpectedly different lifestyles of the families required major adjustment of her presence in the participants' homes and of her proposed categorical structure. I knew I could not assume what Junker refers to as the two extreme fieldwork positions, that of complete observer (silent presence) or complete participant (one of the student's peers), because I would not be comfortable in, or achieve useful data from, either position (Junker, 1960).

However, Junker's other positions on the continuum of possible fieldwork social roles were assumable. Those positions included participant as observer, comparative involvement, comparative detachment and observer as participant, all of which

I assumed on ad hoc bases, shifting from one to another as the situation demanded. In a participant as observer role, I played video games, watched films or television, and shared other media activities with the individual students. In the comparative involvement role, I was reactive in that I sympathized when a student was disappointed in a media product or forbidden it by a parent. My note taking and recording were seldom visible to the student. In the comparative detachment mode, I took notes obtrusively and voiced reflective opinions only when asked for opinions. In my observer as participant role, I made notetaking my priority activity, while showing a sincere interest in the student's media du jour (Junker, 1960). I allowed these positions to shift continually, depending on the ease of data collection. I found interaction with family members and friends necessary if I were to remain welcome in the home. But in many cases, these people proved to be secondary participants who did not fit the criteria for primary participants in some way, such as age, but provided valuable data that, especially in the case of the younger participants, implied a need for further research. I was always wary of fitting in too well. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1987) point out, too comfortable a role renders data collection impossible. As I discovered when I gained access to my students' usage of Mortal Combat games, too friendly or peer-like an attitude makes the students suspicious of sharing real feelings about the media they use as does a too-uninterested and judgmental attitude. The best position in that case seemed to be that of observer participant, or, in other words, that of an authority figure who regarded students' media choices as

legitimate, valid, and interesting but not shared by the researcher. My interest was that of a teacher, not a peer--an observer first, before being a participant. It seemed to be an appropriate position that allowed maximum comfort in communication without suspicion or distrust.

I expected to avoid a too comfortable position by using the time constraint--I would not stay long enough to engender overfamiliarity. However, I soon found out that, unlike the classroom environment, the home environment was much more difficult to predict, penetrate, and remain a part of. Once they found out I was actually a part of their private lives, the participants wanted me extruded, and tried to extrude me with various methods. I also encountered participants' attempts to create what Goffman calls a "personal front" (Goffman, 1955). In this case, their personal front behavior included insisting that they like only wholesome, non-violent media. By spending enough non-judgmental time with them to allow them to let their guard down, and by showing a sincere interest in every opinion they had, I encouraged them to relax and reveal genuine preferences.

I told participants' parents my intent was to gather information about children's use of mainstream media, not to gather information supporting a negative viewpoint about children's use of mainstream media. I also told parents that if their children asked me to keep something in confidence, I would do so unless, as Seidman urges, the information involved danger to them or other children (Seidman, 1991). I also assured parents I would always defer to the parents' authority, respect the family schedule, and pay my own expenses. Also, I said I

would be willing to terminate the study at any time.

My study was non-directive. I did not suggest that any one media type or product be used or not used more than another. If a subject eschewed all broadcast and electronic and filmic media in favor of books, I was prepared to observe the aforementioned categories (hair, clothes, bedroom decor, school work and activities, friends, and others) as well as the books read, the time spent reading, and the reactions to the books. However, this finding did not occur.

#### Analyses of Data

As Hammersley and Atkinson (1987) suggest, "Data in themselves cannot be valid or invalid; what is at issue are the inferences drawn from them" (p. 191). I decided how the "small pieces...fit together within the context of the overall structure, as well as what overall structure best fits the small pieces" (Lofland and Lofland, 1984, p. 138).

I observed the kinds of homework participants were expected to do, and their school performance (as much as I was able to ascertain that performance without intruding on privacy or report it without breaking confidentiality). But I avoided making judgments on the effects media had on schoolwork, social life, and other areas. Such judgments were not the purpose of this study.

In writing, I used a chronological narrative followed by a categorical analysis. Hammersley and Atkinson (1987) advise, "(T)he text hangs together in...the same way as do the various cultural components" (p. 225) of the particular case history being written about. Thus, the structure of every case history

was dictated by emergent themes as well as by the aforementioned categories. I attempted to follow Hammersley and Atkinson's (1987) suggestion that the writing start with a description of generalities, then use the "zoom lens" technique to focus in on specific details illustrated by the case history. These included the media used (when, where, what, and how) or the schedule of social activities or any other rubric overarching and organizing the subject's life. Data were limited as much as possible, however, to kinds of media use.

#### Handling of Narration and Analysis

Hammersley and Atkinson (1987) go into detail on the problems inherent in separating narration or description from the analysis of the description in the final writing. They suggest that the tendency to go on and on with theory without having any illustrations to ground it should be resisted. In order to avoid the separation of theory and description, I avoided theorizing until the conclusions, and then included only the particular details being described in the categories.

#### Conclusion

As Hammersley and Atkinson (1987) conclude their book, I conclude this chapter by saying that the overarching notion in my methodology was the use of reflexivity, a process requiring "Explicit recognition of the fact that the social researcher, and the research act itself are part and parcel of the social world under investigation" (p. 234). Despite the use of categories, I hoped to avoid what Hammersley and Atkinson (1987) call "the paradigmatic mentality" (p. 237). By that mentality I mean the tendency to separate the media into separate modes of

entertainment, with separate effects such as frightening, angering, arousing, enriching, and educating. Most media combine modes and produce many if not all the foregoing effects simultaneously. A home video game, for instance, combines video, computer, education (in mastery of the game, if not subject matter) and, depending on the genre of game, arousal along with enrichment. The Quick-time movies of Dinosaur fights in the multimedia program Dinosaurs certainly arouse viewers' aggression as they enrich understanding with information about dinosaur battles. Because of this overlapping in media, I was particularly eager to use narrative "naturalist" accounts of the people who use the media (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1987). These accounts "must be accepted at face value or at least treated as embodiments of a rationality that may be described but not endorsed or used" (p. 234). That line could be rephrased as the overarching purpose of this dissertation: To describe types of media use by participants but not to endorse these uses, or use them for support of any agenda, in any way.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS AND REPORT OF DATA

This chapter consists of observations of media use by seven students in grades six through nine. Purpose of this chapter is to:

1. Provide detailed case studies of the participants to demonstrate their interaction with media.
2. Present data gathered using the case study approach.

The study revealed information concerning students' behavior with, use of, interaction with, and thoughts about mainstream media. This report of findings will provide a description of what was actually discovered by the researcher using the methods described in the previous chapter. An understanding of the participants' behaviors with and attitudes toward mass media is important when drawing conclusions. Therefore, this chapter summarizes the data regarding behaviors and attitudes that were collected over the 12-month period during which the study was conducted.

#### Data Collection During Observation

My role in this research can best be described as that of observer participant (Junker, 1960). While I remained primarily an observer, I occasionally participated in the participants' media activities as game player or television show watcher. I provided transportation to arcades and to one movie theater so that I could observe participants' consumption of media in these settings.

The primary method used to document the participants' use of

media is the case study approach. The following case studies are an account of what occurred during the period of observation. Case studies performed have been divided into four separate groups. These groups are:

1. Group I that includes Cher and Brad from Tucson, AZ.
2. Group II that consists of Josh and Noah from Tucson, AZ.
3. Group III in which Juli and Matt from California are the participants.
4. Group IV that includes only Tommy from New York City.

These students were often with friends or relatives during the time of the observation. Thus, these friends and relatives were also observed. The main difference between the seven primary participants and these associates is that the primary participants were observed in their own homes and in the homes of others. The friends and relatives were not observed in their own homes by themselves. Second tier participants include Pete and Perry in Group II, and Lynn and Ezra in Group III.

Overall, the participants can be broken into three tiers. The first tier consists of seven primary participants (Brad, Cher, Noah, Josh, Juli, Matt, and Tommy). The second tier consists of four frequently seen friends and relatives. These included Pete and Perry who were friends of Josh and Noah, and Ezra and Lynn who were relatives of Juli and Matt. Because of their frequent presence and cooperation during the observation, this second tier group functioned as subgroups and, in the case of Lynn and Ezra, posed possibilities for further research. The third tier consists of briefly seen friends of the primary

participants who played very minor roles in the observations. This tier includes Dion and Tyler in Group I, Joe in Group II, and Nicky in Group IV.

All of the groups, except for Tommy in Group IV, were observed by me. Tommy in New York City had to be observed by a research assistant who lives in New York. She is acquainted with Tommy's family.

#### GROUP I

Group I consists of a brother, aged 10, and sister, aged 13, whom I will call "Cher" and "Brad." Two members of their peer group, a girl aged 12 and a boy aged 10 (Tyler), were present during one day of observation. All are African-Americans except the male friend, Tyler, who is Caucasian.

#### Demographic Information for Group I

Cher and Brad's home is in the Tucson foothills, on a cul de sac with similar homes. The house has four bedrooms, a backyard patio with a pool, and would sell for about \$400,000 today. Their mother passed away when they were very young, and their father is a paraplegic who uses a wheelchair. He has an income of over \$30,000. The family is originally from the Philadelphia area and, before that, lived in the Dominican Republic.

Both Cher and Brad attend private schools. Cher is now a ninth grader at a Catholic School, and is a graduate of the Episcopalian elementary school where Brad is now in the sixth grade. All family members of Group I are African-Americans. One friend, Tyler, is Caucasian.

Codes had to be developed to differentiate among the participants. Reasons for doing so were to avoid confusion

between the actual participants and their friends, and to remind the reader of the participants' ages. The following codes are used for making identification simpler.

1. Cher = Cher(13,AA)
2. Brad = Brad(10,AA)
3. Tyler = Tyler(10,C)
4. Dion = Dion(12,AA)

The codes are organized by the name of the participants, their age, and their ethnicity or race. For Group I, the code "AA" signifies African-American and "C" stands for Caucasian. The table below offers a list of participants involved with the study that includes outside family members and friends, and others who had contact with Group I during the study (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1. Participant List to Group I

Demographic Information - Group I (Tucson, AZ)			
Roles	Name	Coded Name	Bibliography
Primary	Cher	Cher(13,AA)	African-American thirteen-year-old female. Brad's sister.
	Brad	Brad(10,AA)	African-American ten-year-old male. Cher's brother.
Friends	Dion	Friend Dion(12,AA)	African-American thirteen-year-old female friend to Cher.
	Tyler	Friend Tyler(10,C)	Caucasian ten-year-old male friend to Brad.
Adults	Babysitter	Babysitter	Twenty-year-old Caucasian female who goes to college.
	Father	Father	African-American male in his early thirties. Physically disabled.

Media Log

Day 1. Friday evening.

5:20 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at a local upscale fast-food type restaurant.

Cher(13,AA) brought two compact discs with her titled Bones, Thugs 'n' Harmony and Dangerous Minds. On this evening, Cher(13,AA) listened to them through earphones until she was reminded by her father not to do so. Brad(10,AA) played video games most of the time, stopping only long enough to eat his food. Favorite films discussed were Clueless and Lion King. They have not seen Babe and do not want to. Cher(13,AA) wants to see the film Dangerous Minds because she likes the soundtrack so

much. Favorite television shows discussed were Fresh Prince of Bel Air and Martin. The father said his favorite show is In Living Color. Brad(10,AA) and Cher(13,AA) told him playfully that the show had gone off the air years ago. "Really?" the father said, feigning surprise "I didn't know that!" The father's favorite music is anything by Nat King Cole. Brad(10,AA) did not enter the discussion. He stayed in the arcade section most of the time playing videogames, mostly with Mortal Kombat III.

The father said he would be gone for the next five weeks on an extended stay at an out-of-town hospital. A babysitter had been hired to care for Brad(10,AA) and Cher(13,AA) while he was gone.

Day 2. Sunday.

*10:30 a.m., at Church nursery.*

I was supposed to meet Brad(10,AA) and Cher(13,AA) at their church nursery. Cher(13,AA) does volunteer child care in the nursery during the church service. While I was waiting, I decided to speak to some of the children milling about and playing in the nursery. Two Caucasian girls, aged 8 and 9, said their favorite singer is rapper T.L.C. Their favorite radio station is KRQ AM 92.9 and KRQ FM 93.7. They say their parents monitor everything they watch and listen to. At that point, Cher(13,AA) entered the nursery and asked if I would give her, Brad(10,AA), and their friends a ride to their home. I said I would.

*In my car after Church.*

On the way home to Cher(13,AA)'s and Brad(10,AA)'s house,

Cher(13,AA)'s clothes smelled of smoke. I asked her if she smoked cigarettes. She said she smoked about one or two Marlboro cigarettes per day.

Cher(13,AA) played KRQ FM and AM on the car's radio, switching between the stations to search for songs she liked. She finally hit a song by a rap singer named Coolio and shut out the rest of us as she listened and sang along, moving her upper body and hands to the rhythm. The girls told me the film they had seen most recently was Now and Then. The boys state that they have not been to the movies recently, and that there is no movie currently playing they really want to see.

*Noon to 3:30 p.m. at Participants' House.*

Upon arriving home, Brad(10,AA) changed into shorts and a shirt advertising McDonald's. Cher(13,AA) changed into slacks and a shirt that says National Latin Club convention on the back.

Brad(10,AA) went immediately into his room and did Social Studies homework. As he worked, his friend Tyler(10,C) went through his toy chest. He pulled out several Transformers' character toys that star in their own Saturday morning children's show. On the walls are X-men posters along with posters representing the musical groups En Vogue and World War I. Friend Tyler(10,C) said his favorite toy is his family's computer. He thought it was an IBM clone. He said they get free access to the Internet. Brad(10,AA) and Cher(13,AA) do not have a computer.

The living room of Brad(10,AA) and Cher(13,AA)'s house is dominated by a huge compact disk player. Performers played by Cher(13,AA) during this time period included Coolio, Dr. Dre, Ice Cube, Hootie and the Blowfish, and TLC. She said she owns a CD

made by the basketball player Shaquille O'Neal who sings rap songs. However, Cher(13,AA) does not think the CD is that "great."

The television set, a 21 inch color console, is placed against a sidewall that does not face the chairs and sofa. Those pieces of furniture all face the CD player. Cher(13,AA) and her Friend Dion(12,AA) read Sassy and Seventeen magazines while the compact disks played. The babysitter reads a John Grisham novel.

The boys played Mortal Kombat II on Brad(10,AA)'s Nintendo. To improve their performances, they read strategies from the Mortal Kombat Magazine. Sometimes they switched to the National Basketball Association videogame, but never for long. About every twenty minutes, they took a break and ate or played basketball on the patio, then returned to the videogame. At one point they examined Brad(10,AA)'s extensive basketball card collection, bound in vinyl-encased sheets in a three-ring binder.

Brad(10,AA) and Friend Tyler(10,C) watched the Hula Bowl football game for about twenty minutes. It was the only time the television set was on all day.

While listening to music, Cher(13,AA) and her Friend Dion(13) made telephone calls to friends during most of this time period.

*5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Participants' House*

I returned from a trip to the mall by myself to do some errands. The boys played Mortal Kombat II. Cher(13,AA) and the babysitter were not present, having gone to eat dinner with the babysitter's parents.

Day 3. 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. Monday at Participants' House.

I went to Brad(10,AA) and Cher(13,AA)'s house to pick up Brad(10,AA) for school and see what media they use in the morning. Rap music was playing in the living room when I got there.

*In my car on the way to School.*

As I took Brad(10,AA) to school that morning, he told me he had watched Married with Children the previous night after I left. He said that it is his favorite television show. Al, the father, is his favorite character.

*In the Headmaster's Office.*

Because I was already at the school, I asked for, and was granted, an interview with the Headmaster of Brad(10,AA)'s school. He told me he knew that the school was behind on computer technology. He wanted to get more computers as soon as possible but was comforted by the realization that most students had computers at home. He felt the academic (non-computer) aspect of the curriculum was important to the parents.

*3:30 to 4:30 p.m., in the Mall Arcade.*

I had told Brad(10,AA) I planned to take him to a video arcade of his choice. He chose the one nearest his school, located in a shopping mall. In forty-five minutes, Brad(10,AA) spent \$7.50 worth of quarters on Mortal Kombat III and NBA videogames. There were only two other people in the arcade while we were there. They were a teenaged couple in identical black trenchcoats, gold hoop earrings, bright red hair, and white face makeup. The look was almost the same as that of the Winona Ryder

character in the film Beetlegeuse.

Day 4. 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Thursday at Participants' House.

I took Brad(10,AA) and Cher(13,AA) home after a basketball game at Brad(10,AA)'s school, having agreed to watch them until the babysitter returned from her community college courses. During the forty-five minute car ride, Cher(13,AA) played KRQ FM. Upon arriving at their house, Cher(13,AA) immediately played gangsta rap CD's and made telephone calls. Brad(10,AA) went straight to Mortal Kombat II and NBA. He tried out using codes for MKII given to him by a friend of Cher(13,AA)'s.

Dinner was frozen chicken nuggets heated in the microwave with tortillas covered with processed, grated cheese. Brad(10,AA) and Cher(13,AA) said the nuggets were the supermarket's brand of chicken nuggets, sold by the pound. They did not know which supermarket had sold this product. While eating, Brad(10,AA) watched a professional basketball game on the kitchen's television set that had Suns vs. the Wolverines. He then watched Best of 90210, and knew all the characters' storylines.

Day 5. 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Tuesday at Participants' House.

Cher(13,AA) worked on her Religion class homework for about 20 minutes. The class is now studying The Book of Exodus and the sacking of Rome by the barbarians. She swayed to the beat of the rap music as she answered the questions in her Religion class textbook.

Cher(13,AA) and I watched Party of Five (her favorite show),

Country Music Awards, and Fresh Prince of Bel Air. All three of us watched Melrose Place.

Brad(10,AA) played Mortal Kombat in his usual twenty-minute long spans, watching Best of 90210 between playing periods. Both Brad(10,AA) and Cher(13,AA) exhibited knowledge of all the characters and storylines of Melrose place and Beverly Hills 90210, and had a heated discussion about the identity of a murder victim on Melrose Place.

Day 6. 5:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Thursday out and about.

While driving in my car, Cher(13,AA) listened to KRQ FM and discussed music she likes other than rap. "R and B" is the name of this type of music, which stands for rhythm and blues. She says some rap musicians, such as TLC, also "Do rhythm and blues."

After dinner at a Mexican restaurant, I took Brad(10,AA) and Cher(13,AA) to a nearby arcade that offers a roomful of videogames plus pinball and outdoor amusements such as racecar driving and miniature golf. Brad(10,AA) played a game called Tekken that is much like Mortal Kombat. He lost quickly. Cher(13,AA) played pinball. I played a simulation game entitled Cops that is based on a television show of the same name on the Fox Network. The arcade cost us all \$13.00 for half an hour.

After the arcade, we went to see Goldeneye at the \$2.00 movie theater. Brad(10,AA) played Mortal Kombat III at a novice level and lost. He spent \$3.00 in about fifteen minutes. We all had popcorn and drinks. Cost for food and the movie tickets was about \$22. Cher(13,AA) wanted to leave half an hour before the movie was finished for reasons she did not reveal. Brad(10,AA) and I insisted on staying until it was over.

Day 7. 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. Friday at Participants' House.

I picked up Brad(10,AA) and Cher(13,AA) from their schools and took them home because the babysitter had to go out of town. Cher(13,AA) brought two friends with her, Friend Dion(12,AA) and another girl aged thirteen. In the car, they seemed excited and turned from one station to another on the radio. After arriving home, I found out that the babysitter was there sleeping, since she had left for her trip before dawn. Cher(13,AA) inserted the soundtrack of the film Now and Then in the CD player. The songs "Sugar" and "Knock Three Times on the Window" were heard before the girls left the house to go for a walk outside.

Brad(10,AA) tuned into the new Goosebumps show on the Fox channel. He said he would rather watch the television show series than read the books. Yet, he had told me that The Goosebumps books are the only printed matter he reads for pleasure. I watched the episode with him.

Brad(10,AA) told me his school is having a magazine drive. I subscribed to Arts and Entertainment Monthly because I watch that cable channel a great deal. Brad(10,AA) said he never watched it. Brad(10,AA) did not play videogames while I was there on this particular day.

When they returned, the girls smelled of smoke.

I decided to terminate my research with this family at this point because I believed I had uncovered the patterns of their mainstream media use and that further research would be repetitive.

#### Categorical Analysis of Group I

Findings from the case studies have been divided into

categories for easier analysis. These categories include the types of media that are used by the participants and descriptions of their living arrangements. The categories provide summaries of the actual time spent on the media, the printed materials that were read, types of music that were listened to, the layout of the participants' rooms, and how the participants' appeared using popular items.

### Television

In the approximately 19 and 1/2 hours I spent with these students, the television was watched for a total of about 5 hours. The following shows that were watched by the participants includes Country Music Awards, Beverly Hills 90210, Goosebumps, Melrose Place, Fresh Prince of Bel Air, Martin, Party of Five, the Hula Bowl, and a Suns vs. Wolverines professional basketball game.

### Radio

During my time with this family, we spent about 5 hours and 15 minutes in my car, during which they always had the radio turned to KRQ FM, and very occasionally, KRQ AM, MIX FM. All are rock music stations.

### Music and Compact Disks

The compact disk player was playing rap music a total of 10 and a half hours while I was with these participants. Artists such as Coolio and TLC were the most popular with Cher(13,AA). Her brother did not play rap music on his own. Cher(13,AA) owned disks by Dr. Dre, Hootie and the Blowfish, recycled 1960's songs on the Now and Then soundtrack, the Dangerous Minds soundtrack, and Shaquille O'Neal. However, she plays these artists less

often.

### Videogames

Brad(10,AA) played videogames for a period of about 4 hours and 15 minutes during the time I spent with him. Mortal Kombat II and III and the National Basketball Association videogame were played at home and at the arcade by the subject. Tekken was played at the arcade. I never saw Brad(10,AA) win a videogame he played.

### Films

Two hours were actually spent watching film during my stay with this family. There was no talk of films, either in theaters or on video, that I did not initiate. Goldeneye was the film seen during my research; Clueless, Now and Then and Lion King (which the participants have seen "over 20 times" and all the James Bond films (Cher[13,AA]) knew all the characters, having seen these films "several times" with her father, whom she claimed was an ardent fan of the Double 007 films) were the only films mentioned. They own Lion King and the James Bond films in video versions. All are mainstream, major studio films.

### Books and Other Printed Matter

About a total of an hour was spent on homework by Brad(10,AA) and Cher(13,AA) when being observed. No time was spent on reading books for pleasure. About an hour was spent on reading magazines such as Sassy, Seventeen, and Mortal Kombat. The books they owned that were reportedly read for pleasure included the Babysitters' Club and the Goosebumps series, as well as the novel Caddie Woodlawn. Owned by Cher(13,AA), but not read by her, was the book, Ten Things Women Do to Mess Up Their Lives

by Dr. Laura Schlesinger.

#### Room Decor

Cher(13,AA)'s room had no media related items. Brad(10,AA)'s room had music group posters (En Vogue and World War I) and two posters showing X-Men characters, taken from the comic books and on Saturday morning cartoons. Transformer toys were in the toybox. Brad(10,AA) said he no longer plays with them.

#### Clothes and Hairstyles

These categories did not reflect mainstream media. Brad(10,AA)'s Nike basketball sneakers were the only media related items that were worn while I was with them.

A more condensed version of these categories can be seen in the table below (Table 4.2). The table includes the number of times that Cher(13,AA) and Brad(10,AA) used the media. Media use is defined by actual touch, wear, turning on and off the technology, walking into a theater, holding a book, etc.

Table 4.2. Distribution of Media Use by Group I

Frequency of Media Use - Group I (primary)		
Forms Used	Cher(13,AA)	Brad(10,AA)
Television	4	7
Radio	3	0
Music	6	0
Videogames	0	5
Films	1	1
Books	1	1
Magazines	1	1
Room Decor	0	3
Clothes/Hair	0	1

A total of 27 hours was spent on mainstream media--radio, television, videogames and compact disks--by Brad(10,AA) and Cher(13,AA) during the 19 and a half hours I spent observing these participants. The extra eight hours can be accounted for by the fact that the videogame and compact disk use overlapped. These figures suggest that nearly 100 per cent of the participants' spare time was occupied in some manner by these media forms.

Pleasure reading of popular magazines occupied an hour of this time, and this overlapped with the uses of other media. While Brad(10,AA)'s use of the Mortal Kombat magazine augmented his playing of the game, it is difficult to categorize it as pleasure reading because his use of videogames appeared to be more hard work than play.

Actual amount of time dedicated to these media forms could be different if the father was present during the study. Because the father was away, he was not present to supervise the activities more closely. Thus, these percentages may not accurately reflect the participants' spare-time use of the media, but do reflect preferences.

#### GROUP II-A and II-B

Group II consists of two primary participants in one family. However, two other students were present so often during the observation, I had to observe them in order to observe the primary participants. Thus, I decided to give them their own group identification, Group II-B. I will call the primary participants Group II-A and the secondary, second-tier participants II-B. The two groups will be looked at together because they were intermingled most of the time. Being next door neighbors, Group II-B students were mostly in the home of Group II-A students while I was conducting the research. I spent a total of three hours in the role of visitor-observer in the Group II-B home, but most of my time was spent as participant-observer or observer-participant in the home of Group II-A.

#### Demographic Information for Group II-A

Josh is 14 and attends a public high school as a freshman. Noah is 11 and attends a sixth grade, public middle school. They are brothers whose father, Sigmund, is a mental health counselor at a local university. Their mother, Karen, is in charge of publications for a department of the city government. Both are in their late thirties. They are Caucasian Anglo-Saxon Protestants who grew up on the southeast

coast.

Noah is involved in soccer and Boy Scouts. Josh is a former competitive player of Mortal Kombat at all levels and versions. He has been in local and regional tournaments for that videogame.

He learned about computers at a summer computer enrichment course at the local university. He claimed he used to try to be a "hacker," attempting to access forbidden files, but tired of that activity. He has not taken any computer or technology courses in his school district. His parents said they want him to concentrate more on academic activities, and at the time of the investigation, they were arranging interviews for him with the admissions officer of a local private school known for its high academic standards.

This family lives in a planned neighborhood of detached family homes in Northeast Tucson. While not a gated community, it is walled and was constructed from bare earth by the developers. The homes would sell for about \$90 to \$120,000 today. Josh and Noah have their own bedrooms on the second floor. On the first floor is a parlor (for company), a computer room, a large open family room that includes a large kitchen and dining area separated from the family room area by a low formica-topped counter.

#### Demographic Information for Group II-B

Pete is 14 and attends the same school as Josh. Perry is 11 and attends the same school and grade as Noah. They live in a house similar to Group A family's house on an adjacent street. The main difference is that the dining room is separated from the rest of the house. Their mother, Sue, has three jobs as

administrative worker for three doctors. The father, Keith, is the boys' stepfather. He drives a delivery truck. Both Sue and Keith are approximately the same ages as Karen and Sigmund. Sue has two grown sons and one grandchild from previous marriages. Pete and Perry have little contact with their real father, who is remarried with new children and is in the military. Both boys have their own rooms. Perry's room is on the first floor and Pete's is on the second.

As with the first group of participants, codes also had to be developed to differentiate the participants in Group II. Reasons for doing so were to avoid confusion between the four participants and their friends, and to remind the reader of the participants' ages. The following codes are used for making identification simpler.

1. Josh = JoshA(14,C)
2. Noah = NoahA(11,C)
3. Pete = PeteB(14,C)
4. Perry = PerryB(11,C)
5. Joe = Joe(14,CA) [Half Caucasian, half Asian, Friend of JoshA(14C) and PeteB(14C)]

Again, the codes were organized by the name of the participants, their age, and their ethnicity or race. For Group II-A and II-B, the code "AA" signifies African-American, "C" stands for Caucasian, and "CA" refers to being half Caucasian and half Asian. The "A" next to Josh and Noah means that they are in the primary group. The "B" signifies participants in the secondary group (Pete and Perry).

The table below offers a list of participants involved with

the case study that includes outside family members and friends, and others who had contact with Group II during the study (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3. Participant List to Group II-A and II-B

Demographic Information - Group IIA & IIB (Tucson, AZ)			
Roles	Name	Coded Name	Bibliography
Primary (IIA)	Josh	JoshA(14,C)	Caucasian fourteen-year-old boy. Brother to Noah.
	Noah	NoahA(11,C)	Caucasian ten-year-old boy. Brother to Josh.
Secondary (IIB)	Pete	PeteB(14,C)	Caucasian fourteen-year-old boy. Neighbor and friend to the primary group, especially to Josh.
	Perry	PerryB(11,C)	Caucasian ten-year-old boy. Neighbor and friend to the primary group, especially to Noah.
Friends	Joe	Friend Joe(14,CA)	Half South Pacific thirteen-year-old male friend and neighbor to the primary group.
Adults	Karen	Karen(Mother IIA)	Female in early thirties. Mother to Josh and Noah.
	Sigmund	Sigmund(Father IIA)	Male in early thirties. Father to Josh and Noah.
	Sue	Sue(Mother IIB)	Female in late thirties. Mother to Pete and Perry.

#### Media Log

Day 1. 3:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., Thursday in Group II-A's family room.

Upon arriving home from school, JoshA(14,C) and his Friend Joe(14,CA), who came home from school with him, went into the computer room and shut the door. JoshA(14,C) was wearing a shirt promoting the popular music group, Smashing Pumpkins. He said it was his favorite group. I was not invited into the computer room. By that time, JoshA(14,C) was already indicating through body language and lack of rapport that he resented my continued presence. PeteB(14,C) was not here today because he was grounded and had to go straight home. Friend Joe(14,CA) is 14, and is half Asian.

PerryB(11,C) and NoahA(11,C) were already home from school, eating ice cream and Oreo cookies. I asked whether NoahA(11,C) or JoshA(14,C) played videogames at home. NoahA(11,C) showed me JoshA(14,C)'s Super Nintendo and his Gameboy gameplayers. PerryB(11,C) and NoahA(11,C) played Mario and Tetris on the Gameboy for about ten minutes, then said they were bored with those games and put the platforms back in the bedrooms. I asked about records and compact disks. NoahA(11,C) showed me his parents' extensive collection of Long Playing Records ("LP's") that included folk music, protest songs, early rock and roll, and other types of music from the 1960's and 70's, along with some classical and semi-classical music. He said that they had a compact disk player but that he did not know where it was.

PerryB(11,C), NoahA(11,C), and I watched about ten minutes of the Fox Channel's X-men cartoon on the family's old, 13-inch-screen pre-solid state Zenith television. PerryB(11,C) wore a "No Fears" group t-shirt. NoahA(11,C) told me he and JoshA(14,C) own the following videos: Secret Garden and New Adventures of

Heidi. Favorite films they have seen lately include Mortal Kombat and Species.

NoahA(11,C) and PerryB(11,C) soon got restless and went into the computer room. After a few more minutes of watching X-men alone, I knocked at the computer room door. When JoshA(14,C) opened the door, I told him I wanted to see how he was using the computer.

*In Group II-A's computer room.*

Friend Joe(14,CA) and JoshA(14,C) told me they were on the Internet looking for information on roller blading. All the homepages they browsed through turned out to be commercial messages from roller blade shops and manufacturers. Friend Joe(14,CA) left the room.

Some school friends of JoshA(14,C) then visited and asked JoshA(14,C) to go with them to a wrestling match at school. JoshA(14,C) declined the invitation, explaining that he thought wrestling was "boring."

After about 10 minutes, JoshA(14,C) said he was tired of searching for roller blade information and would show me how he used the computer for talking with friends. He E-mailed his friend Carlos, who is his age and attends another school. JoshA(14,C) explained to me that Carlos uses his computer 24 hours a day and "has no life outside his computer." I could read their e-mail conversation, which consisted mostly of non-stop "flames" or friendly insults surrounded by several punctuation marks, and questions from Carlos about my gender, age, and appearance. After about ten minutes of this kind of communication with Carlos, JoshA(14,C) bid his friend goodbye. He

then tried accessing computer games via an internet browser so that he could show me how he downloads those games he wants to sample. There was an annotated bibliography that describes the available videogames. The games are supplied by game producers who want users to sample portions of their games so that users can decide whether or not to purchase an entire game. The downloading is supposed to take about six minutes, JoshA(14,C) informed me. He sat back, arms crossed, and waited.

However, the downloading task proved too much for the Macintosh memory. It crashed. Nothing JoshA(14,C) did, including banging on the side of the hardware, got it back up and working on the Internet. Suggestions from Carlos via E-mail, which included using a new browser, did not work. Suggestions from Friend Joe(14,CA) who entered the computer room in response to JoshA(14,C)'s cries of anguish, included turning off the computer completely and rebooting it. These strategies also failed to work. I left this scene and joined PerryB(11,C) and NoahA(11,C) in the family room.

*In Group II-A's family room.*

PerryB(11,C), NoahA(11,C) and I watched the end of Family Matters and part of The Simpsons. The boys got restless before the latter show ended and went outside to ride bicycles. I went back into the computer room.

*In Group II-A's computer room.*

JoshA(14,C) was sitting in front of the computer, frantically begging it ("Come on! Please work! Don't do this to me!") to work, while Friend Joe(14,CA) watched. I left the scene without interfering.

*In Group II-A's family room.*

Asked if he watched the cable channel MTV (Music Television Channel), JoshA(14,C) said he thought MTV was "for kids" and did not care for it.

NoahA(11,C) and PerryB(11,C) came in from bicycling. NoahA(11,C) said he likes shows on the Nickelodeon channel, especially Salute Your Shorts, Who's Afraid of the Dark, and The Tomorrow People. NoahA(11,C) and PerryB(11,C) told me they did not like or watch Beavis and Butthead or Renn and Stimpy. However, PerryB(11,C) later told me in a private conversation that his favorite show was Beavis and Butthead. I realized then that the participants' comments in front of their parents may not be accurate because of parental pressure.

JoshA(14,C) then came out of the computer room complaining about the computer. Karen(Mother IIA) interrupted him by telling him she needed files on a floppy disk transferred from one format to another for her boss. Karen(Mother IIA) then explained to me that no one at her work is capable of this task. JoshA(14,C) was the only person she knows who can do it. He said he will look at the disk when he has time. He complained again about the computer. Karen(Mother IIA), seemingly preoccupied with other matters, reminded him the computer had recently been upgraded. JoshA(14,C) replied that the upgrade had not helped and went back into the computer room.

PerryB(11,C) came into the family room then. PerryB(11,C) said he had to go to his house and invited me along to meet his mother and see his computer. I said I would be happy to do so if it were all right with his mother. He called her and got

permission. Karen(Mother IIA) told me she would have dinner ready when I returned.

*At Group II-B's House.*

The computer belonging to Group II-B is an IBM clone that is less than a year old. It is kept on a computer desk in the dining room. Sue(Mother IIB) told me it was loaded with 25 computer games but was not hooked up to the Internet. She said she did not feel comfortable allowing her children to use the Internet without being supervised because she had read that they could find "bad things" on the Internet. She said her favorite game was Tetris and that PerryB(11,C) was very good at it. She added that people told her that she let PerryB(11,C) spend too much time on the computer, but she thought it was good for him.

All the furniture in this room was new, matched, and had a unified color scheme of pink, rose, gray and black. A silk floral centerpiece on the glass-topped dining room table pulled all the colors and design motifs together.

Beyond the dining room I could see another room in which a man (the stepfather, PerryB(11,C) told me later) was watching a theater-screen sized television with some other people. I was not able to see this room or meet these people. All I could see was that they were wearing shorts, smoking cigarettes, and watching a wrestling match.

PerryB(11,C) wanted me to see the computer games installed on his computer. After an hour of sampling such games as Tetris and Doom, I realized it was time to return to NoahA(11,C) and JoshA(14,C)'s house. PerryB(11,C) told me that Doom is actually his favorite game, although he also likes the Mario Brothers. He

is not allowed to play Mortal Kombat, but prefers Doom anyway.

*At Group II-A's house.*

While waiting for dinner, JoshA(14,C) went skateboarding with his friends and PerryB(11,C) used the Adobe Paint Box program on the computer. He created a multi-colored abstract design. Dinner included Rice-a-Roni and green salad. This fact is media related because we all sang the Rice-a-Roni commercial at dinner as we tried to remember the words.

After dinner, JoshA(14,C) went into the computer room and NoahA(11,C) laid down on the family room couch because he was feeling ill. Karen(Mother IIA), NoahA(11,C) and I watched the nightly rerun of the Seinfeld television show. Then Karen(Mother IIA) had to do an errand at the drugstore, and I went into the computer room.

*In Group II-A's computer room.*

JoshA(14,C) tried to make the computer work again. He succeeded at getting back onto the Internet. He exchanged a few more "flames" with Carlos. I asked JoshA(14,C) if he often uses the Internet for information. He said he did, especially for school assignments. I asked him to tell me how he usually integrates the information from the Internet into his school reports. He said, "I just turn it in the way I get it off the 'net." This family has free access to the Internet through Karen(Mother IIA) and Sigmund(Father IIA)'s jobs.

JoshA(14,C) then offered to show me a "chat room" but got sidetracked into a new roller-blading information search. New roller-blade homepages appeared, mostly of a commercial nature. I tried to read them aloud but was always interrupted by

JoshA(14,C)'s restless search to find a new homepage. Only 20 seconds was allowed for JoshA(14,C) to read new information offered on a screen. Nothing he clicked on seemed to occupy his full attention.

Karen(Mother IIA) then returned home. She and I watched the 8 p.m. NBC Seinfeld show, which was the regular weekly show. She also taped this show on the VCR in their bedroom for Sigmund(Father IIA) to see when he returned home. I made arrangements with her to come back that following Sunday, which was the date of the Superbowl. She said that event was not that important in their home.

Day 2. 2 p.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday in Group II-A's family room.

I arrived at JoshA(14,C) and NoahA(11,C)'s house at 2 p.m. on Superbowl Sunday. JoshA(14,C) was out skateboarding and NoahA(11,C) was lying on the sofa ill. Sigmund(Father IIA) was there with Karen(Mother IIA). We talked for about an hour, mostly about computers, before he and Karen(Mother IIA) had to leave for meetings. Sigmund(Father IIA) told me that the Macintosh Company had been doing programs such as Windows for over 10 years. Neither Microsoft nor IBM, however, had ever admitted to this co-optation of the windows function, but acted as if each had invented it.

Sigmund(Father IIA) and Karen(Mother IIA) told me of the family's history of computer use. The latest acquisition had been a new hard drive for the Mac 2ST. They had bought this Mac 2ST nine months before with a laser printer for a very good price. Before this computer, they had owned a Mac SE. In 1982,

they had gotten their first computer, a VIC 20, by Commodore that was a more primitive computer than the "famous" Commodore 64, Sigmund(Father IIA) added. The family had recently installed a separate telephone line for the modem.

JoshA(14,C) and PeteB(14,C) came into the house at that point. JoshA(14,C) went right into the computer room. PeteB(14,C) said his father was watching the Superbowl and his mother and PerryB(11,C) were off visiting a friend. He sat down and joined our conversation.

Karen(Mother IIA) told me that PeteB(14,C) comes over early every morning and Sigmund(Father IIA) always greets him with an imitation of Jerry Seinfeld greeting Newman on the Seinfeld show. He says "Hellloo, PeteB(14,C)" in the same tone that Seinfeld says "'Hellloo, Newman!'" on the program.

Karen(Mother IIA) and Sigmund(Father IIA) then told me they were introduced by a computer--not a computer programmed with a dating service, but a computer that was unfamiliar to Karen(Mother IIA). They were working in the same company and she did not know how to use the company computer. It was a Macintosh, so Sigmund(Father IIA) was able to teach her how to use it. They bonded over the computer and have been using Mac's ever since, Sigmund(Father IIA) added. He then told me that Mac's have so many more technical subtleties and artistic capabilities than the IBM. IBM has stolen many Mac features, he adds, even the icons and screen formats. Finally, Sigmund(Father IIA) had to leave. I went into the computer room.

*In Group II-A's computer room.*

JoshA(14,C) told me the computer has been rewired to make it

work again. To demonstrate, he tried to download a game program. After a few minutes, it became obvious the computer had crashed again. Once again, JoshA(14,C) did everything he knew how to do to get the computer working again. His mother came into the computer room then, in response to JoshA(14,C)'s loud cries. JoshA(14,C) told her that with all the money spent on computer upgrades, the family could have bought a new computer by that time. Karen(Mother IIA) said new computers cost more than the upgrade. JoshA(14,C) said that an IBM clone probably would have cost less and would be more reliable. Karen(Mother IIA) replied again that they could not afford a new computer at that time and he would have to make do with the one they had.

Karen(Mother IIA) then asked JoshA(14,C) if he had time to work on the disk she had brought home from work. He said he had not. She said in a conciliatory tone that there was plenty of time, and that he should not worry about it. She then left the computer room.

JoshA(14,C) calmed down and began e-mailing Carlos. They decided to show me a chat room. They entered a discussion room with a roller blading title and were rudely spoken to by the people already there. JoshA(14,C) said that most computer chat room participants are more friendly. He left the chat room after about two minutes and said he would try "Surfing the net" for awhile. For this task he chose Netscape from a long list of browsers he said were available to him. He immediately began trying to download the HTML World Games again. We waited the necessary six minutes, but nothing happened. The computer was still malfunctioning. After about five more minutes, he said he

would give up and watch the Superbowl.

*3:30 p.m., in Group II-A's family room.*

PeteB(14,C) turned on the television to the Fox Network Loony Tunes show. JoshA(14,C) and PeteB(14,C) then watched the cartoon, Garfield and Friends. When the Superbowl game came on, Karen(Mother IIA), JoshA(14,C), NoahA(11,C), PeteB(14,C) and I watched Vanessa Williams sing the National Anthem. Karen(Mother IIA) remarked that Vanessa Williams (former Playboy Magazine model) was not a good role model for young boys, then left the room. PeteB(14,C), JoshA(14,C), and NoahA(11,C) watched the game for a few minutes, while eating large soup bowls full of ice cream, Oreos and store brand cookies, and tortilla chips with cheese sauce and large glasses of Diet Coke. After about ten minutes of watching and eating, they lost interest in the game. PeteB(14,C) and JoshA(14,C) left the family room one at a time without saying where they were going. NoahA(11,C) remained on the couch, sleeping.

*In Group II-A's computer room.*

PeteB(14,C) was in the computer room by himself, using the Mavis Beacon keyboarding software program. I watched him concentrate on the first exercise. When he saw me watching, he stopped using the program. I asked him if he liked it. He replied that he was just "fooling around."

Day 3. *3:30 p.m. to 9 p.m., Thursday at Group II-B's House in PerryB(11,C)'s room.*

PerryB(11,C)'s bedroom is a self-contained media headquarters. He has a Sony boom box, a portable CD player, a VCR, and a new solid state 19-inch television. There is a new

waste basket decorated with the logo of the 49ers Football Team. There is a practice basketball hoop also with the 49ers logo. All furniture and equipment were new. All were also matched.

PerryB(11,C) had no videos or compact disks in his room. He told me again his favorite television show was Beavis and Butthead. I told him that he said he did not like that show before. He said it was his favorite show to watch when he was by himself at his house.

*At the supermarket.*

Karen(Mother IIA) decided to take the boys with her to the supermarket, then they would get pizza at a business that is both a pizza parlor and video arcade. She told me JoshA(14,C) and NoahA(11,C) like to eat at this place because they can play in the arcade while waiting for their pizza to be prepared.

Once in the supermarket, NoahA(11,C) and JoshA(14,C) headed immediately for the magazine rack. JoshA(14,C) began perusing a magazine entitled Internet Underground. Karen(Mother IIA) said he could buy one Internet magazine and one videogame magazine. She forbade him to buy the videogame magazine he chose because of a violent scene on the cover. JoshA(14,C) replied that the magazine was not really about violence and that the scene was not violent, but just "looked that way."

*In the restaurant's arcade.*

There were nine, big screen videogames and three live action games that had bowling, pinball and baseball-throwing. NoahA(11,C) went immediately to the bowling game. JoshA(14,C) went to the Mortal Kombat III game. While playing, he told me about the regional MK tournament he had played in and almost won.

He said he "guessed" Kitana was still his favorite Mortal Kombat character. He also said he was bored with the MK game even at the Third Master Level.

*In Group II-A's family room.*

JoshA(14,C) sat on the couch and read his new Internet magazine. Suddenly he announced loudly that he found the magazine "awesome." I asked permission to look at media items in JoshA(14,C) and NoahA(11,C)'s bedrooms.

*In JoshA(14,C)'s bedroom.*

There is a non-solid state television set that he used for his Super Nintendo videogames. On the wall are posters advertising videogames and on the book shelf are several books which JoshA(14,C) said he has read. He said he is currently reading Silicon Snake Oil by Clifford Stoll and the Mortal Kombat novel that the film was based upon. There is a set of children's encyclopedia on one bookshelf.

*In NoahA(11,C)'s bedroom.*

There are posters on the wall depicting a scene from NASA and one showing the actor Jim Carrey in his film The Mask. Another poster features an advertisement for Pro Action Surf Brand showing a porpoise with sunglasses. On a nightstand is a Bugs Bunny clock and a Loony Tunes calendar. There were two Goosebumps books on another table.

Day 4. 3:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. At the arcade in a restaurant.

After school, JoshA(14,C) had an interview at the private school he hoped to attend. I took PerryB(11,C) and NoahA(11,C) to the same arcade where I had gone with Brad(10,AA) and Cher(13,AA). In one and a half hour, they went through \$12 in

quarters playing bowling and pinball (NoahA(11,C)), the Cops game, and an airplane pilot simulation experience (PerryB(11,C).)

*In the dining area of the home.*

Before dinner, Karen(Mother IIA) told me another one of her favorite television program besides Seinfeld was The Today Show. She especially likes Katie Couric. The whole family watches that show every weekday morning while getting ready to go to school or work. NoahA(11,C) came into the room carrying a magazine I had not seen in his room called Totally Kids published by the Fox Network. He said he had been reading it in his room.

*In Group II-A's family room.*

NoahA(11,C) watched most of a Nickelodeon show entitled Rugrats featuring babies as main characters. He then watched part of Clarissa Explains It All on the same channel.

*In Group II-A's computer room.*

JoshA(14,C) was alone, using the computer. He said he was "Surfing the 'net" and "seeing what was happening" with Carlos and chat room friends. The computer is still not downloading VRML videogames.

Day 5. 4 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. in JoshA(14,C)'s bedroom.

JoshA(14,C) and PeteB(14,C) had arranged to go to the arcade with me today but told me when they got home after school they had decided to go skateboarding instead. NoahA(11,C) was at a meeting. JoshA(14,C) gave me permission to look in his room again.

I saw another book I had not seen before called Walker of Time a winner of the Best Young Adult Award of 1994.

JoshA(14,C) told me later he had enjoyed reading it. It had been

given to him as a gift. I also saw other books that he said he had read: Z is for Zachary, Black Pearl, Tropic Kingdom, Cuckoo's Egg, and a Garfield book.

*In Group II-A's family room.*

NoahA(11,C) arrived home from a Boy Scout meeting wearing a Tasmanian Devil t-shirt from Loony Tunes cartoons. We discussed educational games. He said he likes Carmen SanDiego, but that his family does not own it. He plays it sometime in school. He said he listens to music at other friends' houses, but only if it is being played. There is no music he cares to hear on his own. He also said his teachers show films, television shows and allow playing of interactive software only as a reward for finishing regular school work.

*In Group II-A's computer room.*

NoahA(11,C) used the Adobe Paintbox program for about 15 minutes in creating another colorful abstract drawing. PeteB(14,C) used the Mavis Beacon keyboard program for about ten minutes until JoshA(14,C) took over the computer to "Surf the 'Net" and search chat rooms. On this day, the computer remained in use by the boys for about 20 minutes at a time. Then they ate ice cream and cookies (Oreos and store-brand) and drank Diet Coke. They then went out skateboarding and later returned to the computer. This complete cycle was carried out at least twice on this day.

#### Categorical Analysis of Group II

Findings from these two case studies have also been divided into categories for easier analysis. These categories include the types of media that are used by the participants and

descriptions of their living arrangements. Again, the categories provide summaries of the actual time spent on the media, the printed materials that were read, types of music that were listened to, the layout of the participants' rooms, and how the participants' appeared using popular items.

### Television

The television was watched a total of 11 hours during the twenty hours I spent with Group II. Shows actually watched included CBS and NBC network shows of Seinfeld (NBC new and CBS reruns), Fox's channel Family Matters, X-Men, and The Simpsons, Nickelodeon Channel shows Clarissa Explains it All (once), and Rugrats (once), and The Superbowl on NBC (once for ten minutes). The one show watched regularly when I was not there was The Today Show on NBC.

I never saw JoshA(14,C), NoahA(11,C), PeteB(14,C) nor PerryB(11,C) watch television with concentrated attention more than ten minutes at a time before attending to another activity. NoahA(11,C) came close when watching Clarissa Explains it All and Rugrats, but that may have been due to his illness. There was no passion exhibited for any television show except Seinfeld, but that was on the parents' part and not the boys'.

### Radio

The boys listened to the radio about a total of an hour, but always in the car. The station preferred was KRQ FM. However, none demanded the radio be on, and none changed the dial once it was set.

### Music and Compact Disks

I saw none used during this study of Group II.

### Videogames

Videogames were played about a total of two hours during this study. I saw none played by any of the participants during their spare time by choice. Only when at the arcade did any of the boys play videogames. JoshA(14,C) played Mortal Kombat. PerryB(11,C) demonstrated Doom and Tetris.

### Films

No films were shown or seen during this part of the study. No films were discussed spontaneously unless I initiated the topic.

### Computers

The computer was actually used for about 11 hours of the time I spent with these participants. Computer activities I saw included Adobe Paint Shop, Mavis Beacon's Keyboard Program, Chat rooms, E-mail, browsing with Netscape, and HTML World that never worked, but was pursued a total of nine times while I watched. Computer purchases included a memory upgrade, which costs about \$2,000.

### Books and Other Printed Matter

Reading occupied about an hour of the participants' time. Active reading was done by choice such as NoahA(11,C) reading the Fox Channel magazine Totally Kids and JoshA(14,C) reading the magazine Internet Underground. Though many other print literacy books were available, none was actually read during my time with these students.

### Room Decor

Wall posters, clocks, calendars, and trashcans have mainstream media logos on them. They included the 49ers Football

Team, Loony Tunes characters, X-Men, and Jim Carrey starring in the film, The Mask.

#### Clothes and Hairstyles

Two shirts promoted the music groups Smashing Pumpkins and No Fears. One shirt promoted the Warner Brothers' Loony Tunes character Tasmanian Devil. Pants, hairstyles, and shoes were non-media related.

A more condensed version of these categories can be seen in the table below (Table 4.4). The table includes the number of times that JoshA(13,C) and NoahA(11,AA) used the media. Media use is defined by actual touch, wear, turning on and off the technology, walking into a theater, holding a book, etc.

Table 4.4. Distribution of Media Use by Group II-A

Frequency of Media Use - Group II (primary)		
Forms Used	JoshA(14,C)	NoahA(11,C)
Television	4	4
Radio	0	0
Videogames	2	1
Computers	14	3
Magazines	3	1
Room Decor	0	3
Clothes/Hair	1	1

A table has also been developed to show media uses by the secondary group (Table 4.5). Because Pete(14,C) and Perry(11,C) were periodically around the primary group of observation, their uses of media have also been recorded. Again, media use is defined by actual touch, wear, turning on and off the technology,

walking into a theater, or holding a book.

Table 4.5. Distribution of Media Use by Group II-B

Frequency of Media Use - Group II (secondary)		
Forms Used	PeteB(14,C)	PerryB(11,C)
Television	3	3
Radio	0	0
Videogames	0	11
Computers	1	2
Magazines	0	0
Room Decor	0	0
Clothes/Hair	0	0

A total of 26 hours was spent on mainstream media--radio, television, videogames, magazines, and computer activities--by JoshA(14,C), NoahA(11,C), PeteB(14,C) and PerryB(11,C) during the total of 20 hours I spent with these students. The extra six hours can be accounted for by the fact that the computer was often turned on while the television was playing, and someone was playing videogames while reading was taking place in another room. On one occasion, three media would be layered simultaneously such as computing (JoshA[14,C]), watching the television (NoahA[11,C]), and reading (NoahA[11,C]). Both episodes of reading observed augmented electronic media in some way. The approximate amount of money spent on mainstream media by the Group II-A family while I was present included the \$1,900.00 computer upgrade and \$5.00 worth of Internet magazines.

### Group III

Group III consists of two participants. These two participants were Juli, a 14-year-old high school student, and her cousin Matt who is thirteen. Both live about twenty minutes away from each other in a Southern California residence. Because these primary participants spent so much time during the observation with their cousins Lynn, who is four- and-a-half years old and Ezra, who is one and a half years old, Lynn and Ezra were also included in the observation as a subgroup or second tier capacity. However, because Lynn and Ezra did not meet the age group criteria of this study, they were not included as a "Group B." Yet, Lynn and Ezra are included in the categorical analysis of this group.

#### Demographic Information for Group III

Juli is a 14-year-old high school Freshman honors student in a Southern California public high school. Matt is her cousin, a 13-year-old sixth grader in a school for children with learning problems.

Juli lives with her parents in a four-bedroom home on the northern end of a Southern California beach town about 20 miles south of Los Angeles. Her father is a printer who works with computerized presses, and her mother has an administrative job with the city. She is completing her Bachelor's degree in an interdisciplinary area emphasizing business and all aspects of computers. Juli has a seventeen-year-old brother in the twelfth grade who is also an honors student, and a younger brother, Joe, aged eight. Her extracurricular interests are soccer and jewelry making.

Matt lives in a household that includes his mother, his mother's roommate, the roommate's adult son, and Matt's 18-year-old sister, who is a Freshman and honor student in a Southern California four-year college. Their home is located on the southern end of the same town, about 20 minutes away from Juli's house. The mother and roommate work in executive capacities at a large company involved in government contracts.

Ezra is the great grandson of Charisma's ex-husband, with whom she maintains close ties. Lynn is the great granddaughter of Charisma, daughter of Juli's older sister, Mary, and thus, niece of Juli and Matt.

Codes also had to be developed to differentiate the participants for this group. Reasons for doing so were to avoid confusion between the actual participants and their family members, and to remind the reader of the participants' ages and ethnicities. The following codes are used for identifying the participants in Group III.

1. Juli = Juli(14,C)
2. Matt = Matt(13,C)
3. Lynn = Lynn(4.5,C)
4. Ezra = Ezra(1.5,C)

The codes were organized by the name of the participants, their age, and their ethnicity or race. For Group III, the code "C" signifies Caucasian. The numbers 4.5 and 1.5 indicate the years of Lynn(4.5,C) and Ezra by showing their half years.

The table below offers a list of participants involved with the case study that includes outside family members and friends, and others who had contact with Group II during the study (Table

4.6).

Table 4.6. Participant List to Group III

Demographic Information - Group III (Southern California)			
Roles	Name	Coded Name	Bibliography
Primary	Juli	Juli(14,C)	Caucasian fourteen-year-old female. First cousin to Matt.
	Matt	Matt(13,C)	Caucasian thirteen-year-old boy. First cousin to Juli.
Secondary	Lynn	Lynn(4.5,C)	Female cousin by marriage. Daughter of Juli's sister, Mary.
	Ezra	Ezra(1.5,C)	Son of Charisma's ex-husband's daughter.
Adults	Charisma	Charisma	Grandma to Matt and Juli. Greatgrandma to Lynn, and by marriage, to Ezra.
	Mary	Mary(Lynn's Mom)	Caucasian twenty-one-year-old mother to Lynn, and granddaughter to Charisma.
	Tory	Tory(Ezra's Mom)	Caucasian twenty-three-year-old mother to Ezra.

During my period of study with Juli and Matt, I stayed with their grandmother, Charisma, who functioned as my research assistant. Charisma arranged meetings, interceded in negotiations, and in many other ways acted as intermediary. Her most important task was the maintenance of a positive mood among the participants and me, especially at times when the participants were bored with the study and reluctant to cooperate. Charisma had a special interest in the children aside

from being their grandmother. She had recently retired from an unexpectedly long career in the public school system. Upon being hired over 20 years ago as a playground assistant (the only position her lack of a degree qualified her for), she was immediately promoted to librarian assistant. She was then promoted to head librarian because there was no librarian at her school. An award she was given upon her retirement praises her ability to work with children and help teachers teach the love of books.

Charisma's condominium is located almost exactly half way between Matt and Juli's houses. She sees Matt every weekday because he comes to her house to wait for the school bus and spends about two hours at her house after school.

#### Media Log

Day 1. 12:30 p.m. to 4 p.m., Friday in Charisma's (grandmother) living room.

I arrived at Charisma's home a few minutes after noon. She was working on her E-mail while her ex-husband held his grandson, Ezra(1.5,C), aged one and a half years old. Ezra(1.5,C) wore a Lion King t-shirt. Ezra(1.5,C)'s mother, Tory(Ezra's Mom), who was nine-months pregnant, arrived soon afterward with lunch for her and Ezra(1.5,C). The lunch was Kids Meals from Burger King. She said one reason she likes Burger King is because it is giving away Toy Story dolls. She gave Ezra(1.5,C) a Buzz Lightfoot doll from the lunch package. Buzz Lightfoot was a co-hero in Toy Story. Tory (Ezra's Mom) said Ezra(1.5,C) loves this movie and will sit through the entire video version of it without moving. He also likes the animated storybook version of the film that is

played for him on his parents' computer. "He likes having the story read to him and waves at the characters in the pictures. He tries to turn on the computer on his own to play it," Tory(Ezra's Mom) added.

Charisma's media equipment included two VCR's which are at least two years old, an old, non-solid state 17-inch television with a defective picture, and a new computer. The computer is a Vector brand with one and a half gigabytes of memory and pentium chip. It cost \$2,375 including the monitor and keyboard. Charisma uses CompuServe for E-mail and Internet access.

Matt(13,C) arrived back from school at about 2 p.m. Today, he played with Ezra(1.5,C), drank orange soda (he is not allowed to have Coke), and told me that in his class, there are about 13 students. There are two "old" computers used by the entire school, but none of these are in his classroom. At home, Matt(13,C) has a new Sega 64 game player. It is the latest model he said. His friends own only the Super Nintendo and regular Sega game players. Matt(13,C) wants a Nintendo 64, because it has better graphics. He owns many videogames but is allowed to rent any game he wants at Blockbuster if he does well in school during the week. He often rents Mortal Kombat III that he enjoys playing. Matt(13,C) is not able to purchase this game because it is considered too violent by his mother.

Matt(13,C) told me his family has two computers. One is in his sister's room and the other is in the living room being used for various purposes by the whole family. Matt(13,C) does not get onto the Internet. He uses his game platforms for CD games at home and uses his grandmother's computer for computer games at

her house.

Asked what he read for pleasure, he replied that he liked comic books. Spiderman is his favorite. He said he recently went to a movie at a theater by himself and saw The Stupids. He said he enjoyed that film.

*2:30 p.m., Charisma's (grandmother) living room.*

After socializing with the family members for about half an hour, Matt(13,C) went over to the computer and began playing Mech Warrior II for a few minutes, then Load Runner, then went back to Mech Warrior. This game involves the take-over of a planet called "Terra" in the year 3100. Two tribes must battle for supremacy and the victors get to fight for Terra. The player gets to be in either tribe he chooses, then is allowed to choose and/or design his mechanized combat uniform. All the mechanized battle uniforms have legs, arms, and heads and come equipped with many kinds of weapons. The player plays as though he is actually inside the uniform, lumbering across the planet fending off mechanized enemies from the other tribe. This process is accompanied by heavy, dirgelike background music that keeps time to the walking steps. An electronic female voice announces the arrival of enemies, telling whether or not a strike was made, and gives such reports as "External camera engaged" (which means the player gets to see himself in his warrior uniform, as though watching a film). If the player is hit, the screen goes dark.

Today, Matt(13,C) chose to wear the War Hog uniform. Every so often he fired one of his many guns. "Enemy Mech destroyed," the computer voice said in a pleasant, neutral tone again and again. Matt(13,C) swayed his body in time to the music and his

attempts to avoid and fire at the enemies. He often sucked air through his teeth to express tension. "Oh, no!" he said frequently. "Shoot! Six bad guys! Where did they come from?" he said, just before he was hit. He ejected from his uniform just before being wiped out. The screen went blank. He went on to play again and this time chose the Marauder uniform. He spoke to himself constantly, saying such phrases as "Let's do this," and "It never gets easier," as he negotiated the stark, mountainous terrain of the planet. He ended up ejecting again before being wiped out. Undaunted, he went on to play again, this time in the Direwolf uniform. He won this round and then played as War Hog again. He was killed in that game. "I died," he said, genuinely upset.

At this point, he decided to play Lode Runner. This game is much less realistic. It involves going into a gold mine and getting as much gold as possible from the Mad Monks who hoard it there. Weapons include bombs and guns. Charisma gave Matt(13,C) both games as gifts on special occasions. His mother picked him up at about 5 p.m.

Day 2. 8:00 a.m. to 7 p.m., Saturday in Matt(13,C)'s room from 8:00 to 9:00 a.m.

Matt(13,C)'s room contains a television that serves as a monitor for his game platforms, a bed, and shelves full of videos, videogames, and a few books. He was unwilling to show me his belongings. He did tell me his favorite television shows were Home Improvement, Family Matters, Martin, and Spiderman. He said he never watches MTV. He has no favorite music group. We left with Matt(13,C) to pick up Juli(14,C), who was playing

soccer nearby. Matt(13,C) brought with him his Sega 64, plus programs he plays on it such as Jurassic Park, and Streets of Rage.

*9:10 a.m., Soccer Field*

When we arrived, Charisma introduced me to Juli(14,C)'s mother and father and eight-year-old brother. The father and brother had just come from the brother's own soccer game, in which he made the three winning goals. We sat down to watch Juli(14,C)'s team play. The first thing I saw Juli(14,C) do out on the field was let a ball get past her for a goal. Then she let another get past her for another goal. Her mother said Juli(14,C) would not be upset by these failures to block the goals because she didn't let such things bother her. Her team won anyway, 4 to 2.

Juli(14,C) was introduced to me after her game. She is slender and dainty looking. She has been playing soccer for six years. Indeed, just as her mother predicted, she seemed completely composed and happy. She told me she plays soccer for fun, not for exercise nor to win. Her team will now go into the playoffs which were to be held the next weekend.

While I watched the soccer match, Charisma left to rehearse for a choral concert. Juli(14,C)'s other brother, who is 17, was on an environmental field trip with his school class. He is on his school's Academic Decathlon team, which was holding a meet the next weekend, also.

The mother also told me about her family's media possessions. There are four televisions, one in each bedroom and in the living room, and two VCR's, one in the boys' bedroom and

one in the living room.

The family has no gear for playing violent videogames. The mother said they had a problem with videogames. "The kids had borrowed a Nintendo. It was a real problem. They all played fighting games instead of doing homework. Grades actually went down." The older brother was especially affected because "He played Mortal Kombat all the time." The Nintendo was banished from the house and computer games were strictly limited to weekends. Grades had actually improved because of this response. The children are now doing well in school, especially in math.

Juli(14,C) told me her school has two computer labs--but she has never used either one. She has six classes: Spanish 2, English Honors, Beginning Dance, Anatomy, Algebra and Health.

*Noon to 1 p.m., at Juli(14,C)'s House*

Charisma returned from chorus rehearsal just as the game was ending and took Juli(14,C), Matt(13,C), and me to Juli(14,C)'s house. The other family members met us there, having arrived just before we did.

Despite the mother's words, Juli(14,C)'s eight-year-old brother began playing The Addams Family on a Game Gear. I wondered who owned the Game Gear but did not get a chance to ask. Under Matt(13,C)'s guidance, the boy was completely absorbed in the game with obvious delight. The mother showed me some drawings that the eight-year-old had drawn--a picture of a tornado from the film Twister and a game board like the one in the movie Jumanji. "He'll draw in his room for hours," the mother said. The family rents movies but does not attend theaters because of the expense. "There are no theaters here

under \$7.50--at least not when we can go." The mother said she likes her computer classes at college. "They provide a foundation that will lead to more learning." But, she adds, her non-computer business classes "tend to drag."

*2 p.m. to 2:20 p.m., in the car.*

We drove back to Charisma's house with Juli(14,C) and Matt(13,C). Juli(14,C) said she plays quite a few videogames: Space Quest Five, Lode Runner, and The Seventh Guest. The latter is particularly appealing to her. It involves looking for the missing guest. "Every time you solve the puzzle, you get one more piece of information about the missing guest." I asked Juli(14,C) what her favorite movie was. She replied Down Periscope. This film stars Kelsey Grammer who is the star of the popular television show Frazier. She communicated the entire plot of the film in detail (I later saw it myself and found out she had described the plot accurately).

*2:30 p.m. to 3 p.m., At Charisma's house.*

Juli(14,C) and Matt(13,C) played Streets of Rage on the Sega CD. In response to my question, Matt(13,C) said impatiently that he did not know the story of this game, that it was just "Fun. You just try to kill the criminals." It consists of heroes controlled by the players walking down a shabby street (which looks like it might be in Hong Kong or another city in the Orient) and being attacked from left and right by enemies. Two players can play against each other or together against the bad people. Matt(13,C) and Juli(14,C) alternated playing hero and villain, and hero partners. Juli(14,C) told me she did not care for this game very much, "I like to know why I'm killing people

and in this game, you never find out why."

Charisma's granddaughter Mary(Lynn's Mom) and her great granddaughter Lynn(4.5,C), arrived at about 2:45 p.m. Lynn(4.5,C) is four and a half years old. Charisma often cares for her while Mary(Lynn's Mom) works. Mary(Lynn's Mom) has brought McDonald's Happy Meals for her and Lynn(4.5,C).

While we talked, Matt(13,C) continued playing Streets of Rage. Juli(14,C) played with Lynn(4.5,C). For awhile, they went outside and practiced with hula hoops, at which Juli(14,C) appeared to be very proficient. Matt(13,C)'s sounds of effort and anguish increased in frequency and volume. "That's why I like this game," he suddenly cried, shooting an enemy skeleton with his laser. "I hate that skeleton!" The game ended and the score was 193. I asked Matt(13,C) if that was a high score. Matt(13,C) told me the score means nothing and does not matter.

*3:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., in Charisma's living room.*

Lynn(4.5,C) watched raptly for over half an hour as Matt(13,C) and Juli(14,C) played Streets of Rage. Mary(Lynn's Mom) told me Lynn(4.5,C) plays the CD ROM animated storybook versions of Pocahontas, Aladdin, Winnie the Pooh, and Toy Story, all of which are products of the Walt Disney Company.

At about 5:15 p.m., Matt(13,C) and Juli(14,C) began playing Jurassic Park, the videogame version of the film. The idea of the game is that Jurassic Park has been invaded by enemies and the dinosaur eggs must be saved. Before embarking on this quest, the player is provided with printed text about the particular dinosaur whose eggs are being sought. Both Matt(13,C) and Juli(14,C) said they dislike this feature. "Too much information

makes a game boring," Juli(14,C) explained. Then she added, "Unless the information is necessary for figuring out something you need to know to win." Matt(13,C) resorted to reading the printed directions that came with the game to find out what to do with the eggs he retrieved. I looked at this text--it was about high school level, I judged from the sentence length and number of multisyllabic words. He seemed to have no trouble at all reading it quickly. He told me he understood it.

Matt(13,C) told me he bought Jurassic Park himself. He saved up his allowance, which is \$5 a week. Lynn(4.5,C) asked Charisma to read the book, Garfield's Vacation, to her. We then went swimming as Mary(Lynn's Mom) left for work.

*4:45 p.m., after swimming in the park.*

As we walked back to the house, I asked Juli(14,C) what she would do that night. She said she would watch Walker, Texas Ranger and listen to the radio, mainly an "oldies" station because she likes 1960's music. She said she watches MTV with friends, but that everybody she knows is mad at MTV because it shows so few music videos anymore. She and her friends prefer the VH music channels which offer nothing but music videos.

*5 p.m., in Charisma's living room.*

Lynn(4.5,C) wanted to play Barbie Dolls with someone. Matt(13,C) went into the bedroom, which is stocked with children's toys, and got the Barbie Bag and Barbie Doll House, a three-story pink and white plastic Victorian style house that is fully furnished in what looks like 1960's style furniture.

*5:10 p.m., in Charisma's living room.*

Matt(13,C) and Juli(14,C) begin playing Lode Runner.

Lynn(4.5,C) got so interested in the Lode Runner game she forgot about the Barbie paraphernalia. The three of them played Lode Runner for about 20 minutes. Matt(13,C) and Juli(14,C) were extraordinarily patient with Lynn(4.5,C), teaching her how to play and allowing her to believe she was actually competing. The three finally stopped playing Lode Runner and began playing Streets of Rage.

*5:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., in Charisma's living room.*

Finally, Lynn(4.5,C) went over to Charisma, who was sitting patiently beside the Barbie Dolls and Doll House waiting to play Barbies. Matt(13,C) and Juli(14,C) seemed relieved and now played Lode Runner again by themselves. But, in about ten minutes, Lynn(4.5,C) came back to the videogame players and demanded to be able to join them. "I want to be the Blue guy," she insisted. Ever patient with their younger cousin, they told her she could be the Blue guy. "Good," she cried eagerly, face shining.

That game ended--apparently Lynn(4.5,C) won--and Matt(13,C) and Juli(14,C) decided to play Streets of Rage. Lynn(4.5,C) insisted on joining them. She was given a set of controls and shown how to work the joystick. Then Matt(13,C) and Juli(14,C) left her to play by herself and went back to Lode Runner.

"Now I can kill everyone," Lynn(4.5,C) cried happily, maneuvering her character down the dirty, burned-out streets, shooting and hitting all attackers. Her game ended--Lynn(4.5,C) won--and she got to choose a new character. This time she decided to be "The karate guy," a character who kicked as well as shot his enemies into submission. She won again by beating up

all attackers before they could beat her. Matt(13,C) and Juli(14,C) applauded her victory, and seemed genuinely surprised at her skill. They went back to Lode Runner leaving Lynn(4.5,C) to play Streets of Rage by herself. She was thoroughly absorbed by that time, and did not miss their participation.

While Matt(13,C) and Juli(14,C) took a break to get something to eat, I asked Matt(13,C) if he went to video arcades. He did occasionally visit an arcade in a nearby mall with his friend Cory using his own money. They usually stayed there about three hours. Juli(14,C) said she would go to arcades, but that there were none within walking distance of her house.

Now, Juli(14,C) and Lynn(4.5,C) went back to Lode Runner. Then Matt(13,C) joined them and Lynn(4.5,C) went to play Jurassic Park by herself. Soon Lynn(4.5,C) became frustrated with the game. "I can't figure out how to shoot guys and go in the tunnel!" she cried out loudly.

"Just keep touching the buttons and see what happens," Juli(14,C) urged her gently. Lynn(4.5,C) did so. Soon, she was no longer frustrated. She began making sounds of delight. "Auntie (Lynn(4.5,C) calls Juli[14,C] 'Auntie'), come see how I killed that guy," she called happily. Juli(14,C) dutifully came over and watched, adding (for reasons I was not sure of), "But we don't want to kill babies." "No," Lynn(4.5,C) repeated in a solemn tone, "We don't want to kill babies."

Then Charisma urged Lynn(4.5,C) to come play Barbie Dolls, and Lynn(4.5,C) complied. The Barbie game Lynn(4.5,C) made up on the spot consisted of role playing the parts of various dolls such as Daddy, Mother, and the baby Barbies. Lynn(4.5,C)'s

narrative for the game involved Daddy wanting to sell a basket full of puppies, while Mother took a nap. Charisma had to play the part of the neighbor Barbie wanting to buy the puppies.

7:30 p.m., at Charisma's House.

At that point, Mary(Lynn's Mom) came to pick up Lynn(4.5,C) and it was time for Charisma to drive Juli(14,C) and Matt(13,C) home.

From Juli(14,C)'s Log: "I arrived home and made myself some dinner (and) listened to my (older) brother tell me about his new computer game (Doom 2)."  
Other media activities included listening to the radio and watching Mad TV.

Day 3. 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., Sunday in Matt(13,C)'s room around 2:00 p.m.

Matt(13,C) greeted me dressed in a Wolverine shirt. Wolverine is a character from the X-Man comics. That night before, he said he watched a little HBO but cannot remember what it was. He mostly played video games, but cannot remember which ones. He asked me if I wanted to go with him to see the new Nintendo 64 at Blockbuster. I reminded him I had not driven the family's car, so I could not drive him to Blockbuster's. Instead, he decided to play Mario. The television got fuzzy, and he kicked it and the picture cleared up. He explained the mission of the game--to become Mario and rescue Mario's friends from the villain's castle. He also showed me all of the aids that were provided to Mario such as Yoshi the dinosaur and the keyholes enabling shortcuts to the castle. He played for about an hour, never tiring of trying various ways of accomplishing the mission and never quite succeeding. I asked him why he kept

trying. He did not answer. His expression indicated that he found that question very annoying for reasons he refused to articulate.

Finally, he put on another videogame, Star Fox. This game appears to be a spoof of videogames because all the heroes are barnyard animals wearing very serious expressions. Their mission is to fend off enemies in space. As he played, Matt(13,C) swayed from side to side, making noises, just as he did when playing Mech Warrior. At one point, he could not figure out how to slow down his spacecraft and found out how by reading the directions.

I asked Matt(13,C) what game he wanted to buy next. He said he wanted Earthseige 2. It costs \$54.95. At about 3:20 p.m., he called Charisma and demanded she come get us, "Now!" She said she would. I asked him why he was in such a hurry to get to her house. He said because he wanted to play Mech Warrior on her computer. He does not own the game platform version of that program.

*3:30 p.m., in Matt(13,C)'s living room.*

In the living room, the mother's roommate was playing Solitaire on the computer. The mother and the roommate's son were watching the film Switching Channels on the USA television channel. Charisma arrived, and we drove to pick up Juli(14,C).

*4 p.m., in the car.*

I asked Juli(14,C) what kind of videogames she liked. Her choices, based on word of mouth among friends and her brother, include Phantasmagoria, Police Quest, Kings Quest, and anything with puzzles. She cannot "get into" simulation games such as Mech Warrior.

5:00 p.m., at Charisma's house.

After picking up Juli(14,C) from her house, Charisma drove us back to her house where Matt(13,C) and Juli(14,C) immediately began playing Jurassic Park. They played until 6:15, when Matt(13,C) was picked up by his mother.

Juli(14,C)'s Media Log: The ownership of the Game Gear is cleared up by this entry in Juli(14,C)'s log: "2:30 p.m. Played Sega Game Gear." She later said she played Sonic the Hedgehog, The Addams Family, and The Lion King video games. At 3 p.m., she watched Ghostbusters on television. That night, she watched Roseanne, Lois & Clark, The X Files, and listened to the radio. From Matt(13,C)'s Media Log: After going home, he watched Star Trek, Brotherly Love, The Simpsons, and Unhappily Ever After before going to bed.

Day 4. 2 p.m. to 7 p.m., Monday (School holiday) in Juli(14,C)'s living room, 2 p.m to 3 p.m.

I arrived at Juli(14,C)'s house at about 2 p.m. to find her organizing, and making tiny labels for the family CD ROM collection. Beside her was a giant basket of clean laundry waiting to be folded (her chore). She watched the film Forrest Gump. Juli(14,C) says she loved this film and had seen it many times. The CD collection I saw includes the following titles: PGA Golf, Indianapolis 500, Dr. T.'s Singalong, Spacequest, Monopoly, Bridge, The Ultimate Seven: Seven Different Games on CD, Rasparon's Gambit (chess), Sports Illustrated, and Michael Jordan in Flight.

3 p.m., in Juli(14,C)'s bedroom.

There are many signs of achievement in this room. A medal

that was one of six top prizes out of 580 entries for an essay contest on integrity sponsored by Allied Signal, as part of that company's Integrity Awareness Week was there. (Besides the medal, Juli(14,C) also received a t-shirt, lunch, and a \$50 savings bond in this contest.) There were also eight framed soccer medals. Her media equipment includes a portable CD player, a Magnavox Boombox, with tape player, CD, and clock radio. She still has the first tape player/radio she ever owned. She has a stereo with a radio, 2 tape players and CD player, and a walkman with radio and tape player. There are some books on the shelf--The French Lieutenant's Woman which she is now reading for English class, some Babysitters' Club selections, and manuals for Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego, Doom, and Space Quest. There are generic-looking spelling, typing and encyclopedia programs. Also, on her shelf are Stories from the Bible, Seventeen magazines, Science and Nature books by Time Life, and videos (The Coneheads, Silence of the Lambs, Addams Family Values, and one of her favorites, Defending Your Life, the philosophical meaning-of-life film starring, and produced by, James Brooks). There are also 29 different bottles of nail polish, which she has bought at various sales with her \$2-a-week allowance.

*3:40 p.m., in Juli(14,C)'s living room.*

We continued watching Forrest Gump while Juli(14,C) folded clothes and took a telephone call from a friend that lasted about 15 minutes. She told me later she has about 15 close friends, many of whom are Asian or Indian ("not Native American, but from India,") and finds school boring except for dance class. "I like

dance because you get to move and talk while you're learning." She likes math because the teacher lets the class talk while figuring out problems. Her science teacher uses the laserdisc player a lot. At about 3:45, Charisma came to pick us up.

*4:00 p.m., in Charisma's living room.*

Matt(13,C), who arrived shortly after we did, went right to the Sega CD. He and Juli(14,C) played Jurassic Park until they went swimming at about 4:30. Charisma accompanied them during their hour-long swim and reported that Matt(13,C) had improved his swimming in two days.

*5:00 p.m. to 7 p.m., in Charisma's living room.*

Matt(13,C) and Juli(14,C) played Streets of Rage and Charisma played Solitaire on the computer. She got into a program on the computer she couldn't get out of and asked for Matt(13,C)'s help. He advised her to "Push Windows." She tried that solution and found it did not work. Soon, she got out of the program on her own. Matt(13,C) then got frustrated with his game because his character was getting beaten up by a gang of girls. "I hate it when girls get on their knees because then you can't hit them." His mother called Charisma to say she was coming over to pick up Matt(13,C). "No!" he cried. "Tell her I'm not going home--ever, I'm staying here!" By the time Matt(13,C) was picked up and Juli(14,C) driven home, it was about 7 p.m.

From Juli(14,C)'s Media Log: Her media activities included listening to the radio while reading a book (she does not say which book), (8 a.m. to 10:15 a.m.), watching I Love Lucy, listening to the radio, watching Mr. Rhodes, and listening to the

radio before going off to sleep.

From Matt(13,C)'s Media Log: He watched Beast Wars upon waking up. He played video games with a friend for an hour. Later, he watched MTV for an hour. The family watched I.Q. that evening before he went to bed.

Day 5. 6:30 a.m. to 7:00 a.m. and 1:30 to 4:00 p.m.,  
Tuesday. In Charisma's living room 6:30 a.m.

Matt(13,C) was dropped off by his mother on her way to work. He immediately began playing Mech Warrior and had to be dragged away when it was time to wait for the school bus at 7 a.m.

2:00 p.m., in Charisma's living room.

Matt(13,C) came in from school and went immediately (not even getting anything to eat) to Mech Warrior, which he played enthusiastically and noisily until he was picked up by his mother at 4 p.m.

From Juli(14,C)'s Media Log: She listened to the radio an hour while getting ready for school, read The French Lieutenant's Woman while in English class, watched Rosie O'Donell, listened to the radio while doing homework (an hour), and again after dinner (15 minutes), and before going to sleep (about 10 minutes).

From Matt(13,C)'s Media Log: He described school as "I was board (sic) for 6 hours." That night, he watched Home Improvement and Simpsons.

Day 6. 6:30 a.m. to 7:00 a.m., 1:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.,  
Wednesday. In Charisma's living room, 6:30 a.m.

Matt(13,C) played Mech Warrior until he was dragged away to wait for the school bus.

1:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., in Charisma's living room.

At about 1:30, Mary(Lynn's Mom) brought Lynn(4.5,C) to be cared for by Charisma. Mary(Lynn's Mom) was upset because Lynn(4.5,C)'s teacher wanted to advance Lynn(4.5,C) to the Kindergarten class from the pre-school class she is currently in. "She's just like you were," Charisma said to Mary(Lynn's Mom), "very smart in school." Mary(Lynn's Mom) replied that she had been put ahead a school year and hated it. Mary(Lynn's Mom) said she wants Lynn(4.5,C) to be with classmates her age but does not want her to be bored in school.

Matt(13,C) came home at 2 p.m. and spent a half hour or so in cordial interaction with Mary(Lynn's Mom), Lynn(4.5,C), and Charisma.

*2:30 p.m., in Charisma's living room.*

Matt(13,C) then played Mech Warrior. Lynn(4.5,C) (four and half year old) wanted to play with him. Matt(13,C) did not want her to play Mech Warrior (neither did Mary(Lynn's Mom) nor Charisma). Matt(13,C) did let her use the computer while he conversed with Charisma and Mary(Lynn's Mom). Lynn(4.5,C) played the animated storybook version of Pocahontas by herself. At 4 p.m., Matt(13,C) was picked up by his mother's roommate. I went through the CD pile Charisma keeps for the use of the children. It included the CD ROM animated story book versions of Pocahontas, Aladdin, and Toy Story. Matt(13,C)'s games and Math Rabbit were also there. I asked if Lynn(4.5,C) wanted to play Math Rabbit. She did not. She agreed to play Pocahontas. I asked Mary(Lynn's Mom), who happened to be talking to Charisma, what television programs Lynn(4.5,C) enjoyed. Mary(Lynn's Mom) said that Lynn(4.5,C) watched the new Cartoon channel that showed

Scooby Do, Speedracer, and other old cartoons. Mary(Lynn's Mom) said other programs include Barney, Lamb Chop, and sometimes, Sesame Street. Another favorite video was a Disney Sing Along tape. Lynn(4.5,C) liked this video probably because it had the Disney characters and that the songs were already familiar to her.

At 6 p.m., Lynn(4.5,C) changed to the CD ROM animated story book version of Toy Story. After half an hour, she switched back to Pocahontas, playing that animated story book until she decided she wanted to watch the video version of Cinderella. Then she began playing the card game Go Fish with her grandmother while the Cinderella video was on. She never did concentrate on the Cinderella video. It was still running, unwatched, when her mother Mary (Lynn's Mom) came to pick her up at 7 p.m. Before Mary(Lynn's Mom) left with Lynn(4.5,C), she talked with Charisma and me about ER and Days of Our Lives, the two television shows that Charisma time-shifts (records to watch later) on a regular basis. Though now familiar with the characters and some of the plot on Days of Our Lives, I had lots of questions about those shows that Charisma and Mary(Lynn's Mom) were glad to answer. Charisma has been watching that particular soap opera for years. She was the one who got Mary(Lynn's Mom) "started on it."

From Juli(14,C)'s Media Log: She listened to the radio in the morning and at evening and during lunch. She watched Rosie O'Donnell and Gargoyles in the afternoon after school.

From Matt(13,C)'s Media Log: He described his school day as "waiting for the bus for 43 minutes and agine (sic) I was board (sic) for six hours." That evening, he watched Spiderman, Mr.

Cooper, Funniest Home Video, Home Improvement, The Simpsons,  
Ellen, Nick Ferno (sic), and Grace.

Day 7. 6:30 to 7:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.,  
Thursday. In Charisma's living room, 6:30 a.m.

Matt(13,C) played Mech Warrior until he left for school--  
unwillingly--at 7 a.m. He said that school is boring. He will  
not say why. He told me he was "...tired of all these  
questions!"

1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., in Charisma's living room.

Ezra(1.5,C)'s mother, Tory(Ezra's Mom), brought one and-a-  
half-year-old Ezra(1.5,C) over a little after 2 p.m., along with  
a Burger King Kids' Club meal and the new toy that came with it,  
a Woody toy. (Woody was the cowboy doll hero of Toy Story). It  
had a detachable, twirlable lasso. Ezra(1.5,C) seemed to like  
it.

Matt(13,C) came home from school around 1:50 p.m. and went  
right for Mech Warrior.

Ezra(1.5,C)'s mother said she was concerned at how addicted  
Ezra(1.5,C) seemed to be to videos. "We have a 35-inch  
television. I prop Ezra(1.5,C) up in front of it, put on the  
video of Toy Story, go off and take a shower, and he'll be right  
there, mesmerized with that video, when I come back an hour  
later. He wants to see it over and over. He points to it on the  
shelf when he wants it. I tell his dad not to let him watch it  
all the time. It does not seem normal for a child that age to  
have that long an attention span." She added that Ezra(1.5,C) is  
now trying to turn the VCR on by himself.

Asked if Ezra(1.5,C) liked to look at books or color in

coloring books, Tory(Ezra's Mom) said, "Not really. The only book he cares about is his Toy Story coloring book."

Ezra(1.5,C) threw his new toy on the floor after about five minutes of twirling the lasso and went over to watch Matt(13,C) at the computer. Ezra(1.5,C) stood beside Matt(13,C), his attention riveted, for about 15 minutes, until his grandfather picked him up bodily. He then played running games with Ezra(1.5,C) and Charisma until his mother left at about 3:30.

From Juli(14,C)'s Media Log: She listened to the radio for an hour in the morning, and again for a half hour during lunch. She also watched Rosie O'Donnell after school, and listened to the radio a half hour after dinner.

From Matt(13,C)'s Media Log: He described school as, "I went to school all day people got into fights." (Since there is no comma, it is impossible to tell if the "all day" relates to being at school or people getting into fights). He watched Home Improvement, The Simpsons, Martin, Living Single, and Seinfeld.

Day 8. 6:30 a.m. to 7:00 a.m. and 11:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Friday. In Charisma's living room, 6:30 a.m.-7 a.m.

Matt(13,C) went, as usual, right for Mech Warrior and played it until he was told to wait outside for the school bus.

11:30 p.m. to 4. p.m., in Charisma's living room.

I tried playing Mech Warrior on my own, without reading any directions. It was difficult to negotiate. When I finally realized that choosing a tribe meant typing my name on a list of warriors under Matt(13,C)'s name, I was rewarded by superimposed text inviting me to "Revel in the purifying fire of war and elevate our Clan to supreme reign over all. Then we will be able

to turn our focus back to regaining Terra and fulfilling the prophecies of our ancestors."

*2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., in Charisma's living room.*

Matt(13,C) came home at 2 and played Mech Warrior again, yelling in surprise when he saw that my name had been added to the roster of warriors.

*5 p.m. to 7 p.m., at a restaurant.*

At 4:00 p.m., Charisma took us all over to pick up Juli(14,C) and then out to eat at a buffet, where Matt(13,C) had two servings of mashed potatoes with gravy and a side dish of red jello, followed by a hot fudge sundae. Juli(14,C) had a salad and mashed potatoes, and a chocolate sundae.

I asked Juli(14,C) how she felt about keeping her media log. She said it had been tedious but that it had been interesting to find out how much media she actually used in her life on a continual basis. Matt(13,C) kept his log for Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Charisma said, "That's marvelous! I did not think he'd do that much." She wanted to use an educational game to see if it will help Matt(13,C) with a content area he needs to work on. I said I would be glad to have the results of this work--if she could get Matt(13,C) to work on any other program but Mech Warrior in his spare time!

Juli said that Mary (Lynn's Mom) had decided not to sell her game platform when she grew up, but to hand it down to Lynn.

I thanked them all for their cooperation.

From Juli(14,C)'s Media Log: Listened to the radio an hour before school, watched Rosie O'Donnell while playing the Sega Game Gear (she does not say which program).

### Categorical Analysis of Group III

Findings from this case study have also been divided into categories for easier analysis. These categories include the types of media that are used by the participants and descriptions of their living arrangements. Again, the categories provide summaries of the actual time spent on the media, the printed materials that were read, types of music that were listened to, the layout of the participants' rooms, and how the participants' appeared using popular items.

#### Television

During the 40 and 1/2 hours I spent observing these students, I never saw them watch television. However, the participants did record that they watched shows in their media logs. Programs such as Home Improvement, Family Cousin Matters, Spiderman, The Nickelodeon Channel, MTV, Seinfeld, and Martin are apparently watched by Matt(13,C). Walker, Texas Ranger, the Music Television Channel, and the VH channels are, according to her verbal report, watched by Juli(14,C). She recorded watching Mr. Rhodes, Rosie O'Donell, Mad TV, I Love Lucy, X Files, Lois and Clark, and Roseanne in her media log. The Cartoon Channel, Barney, Lamb Chop and Sesame Street are watched by the younger children, Lynn(4.5,C) and Ezra(1.5,C). All families have cable except for Charisma.

#### Radio

According to her media log, Juli(14,C) listens to a "golden oldies" station at least two hours a day, in the early morning while dressing and at night before going to sleep. Matt(13,C) does not, apparently, listen to the radio. Juli(14,C) owns four

radios.

### Videogames

Matt(13,C) owns two game platforms, a Nintendo, and his latest, the Sega 64. At least five hours of the time I spent observing him had him playing videogames on the two game platforms. Game platform games owned by Matt(13,C) include Jurassic Park, Streets of Rage, Mario, and Star Fox. He gets to rent Mortal Kombat or whatever other game he wants on the weekend if his weekly school report is favorable. He had not been able to rent any videogame the weekend I observed him.

### Films

I never saw either of my participants watch a film in a theater or express any unsolicited desire to do so while I observed them. The only discussions of film we had took place at my initiative. I did see examples of films' influence in the drawings of a Twister scene and of a Jumanji board by Juli(14,C)'s eight-year-old brother.

### Films on Video

Two videos I saw actually being played--but not really watched--during my period of observation were Forrest Gump at Juli(14,C)'s house and Cinderella at Charisma's house. Both were played for the benefit of someone else. In the former case, I was the beneficiary. In the latter, Lynn(4.5,C) requested Cinderella. Juli(14,C) owns Coneheads, Addams Family Values (the family also owns the CD program based on this film), and Defending Your Life.

### Computers

There are two computers at Matt(13,C)'s house, one at

Juli(14,C)'s, and two at Charisma's. The second computer is not IBM compatible and is no longer used. At least 15 hours of the 32 hours I spent observing Juli(14,C) and Matt(13,C) were spent playing computer games by Matt(13,C). I never saw Juli(14,C) play any computer games, except when she played with Matt(13,C) at Charisma's house. She did record about an hour of play on her own in her media log. Computer games owned by Matt(13,C) and Charisma include Mech Warrior II and Lode Runner. Animated story books owned by Charisma include Toy Story, Pocahontas, The Aladdin Activity Center, and Winnie the Pooh. Children's computer software includes Dr. Seuss' ABC's and Math Rabbit. Computer programs owned by Juli(14,C)'s family include PGA Golf, and at least 12 other software programs, mostly instructional programs and non-violent games. According to her log, Juli(14,C)'s brother just got Doom II, which he described to her on Day 1 of the study after she went home. Juli(14,C) wants Phantasmagoria, Police Quest, Kings Quest, and Doom. Edutainment programs include Where in the World is Carmen SanDiego? and Albeglaster, and a purely educational program on spelling and typing. Computer card game programs are used regularly by Matt(13,C)'s mother's roommate and by Charisma.

#### Books and Other Printed Matter

I never saw either of my participants read any printed matter on his or her own except for videogame and computer game directions read by Matt(13,C). Matt(13,C) has some well-thumbed through game magazines in his room. A book currently being read by Juli(14,C) for school is the French Lieutenant's Woman.

### Room Decor

Juli(14,C)'s room had no media-related decor. Matt(13,C) had a poster of the Spiderman on the wall, but nothing else.

### Clothes and Hairstyles

None bore any relation to media except for Matt(13,C)'s Wolverine shirt. Both students dressed conservatively and neatly at all times.

Matt(13,C)'s hair was straight, blond, and necklength, but not in any particular style. Juli(14,C)'s shoulder length black hair could possibly be said to be a scaled down version of popular singer Michael Jackson's hairstyle with its slicked back style decorated with curly tendrils in front. She said it was "just the style" among her friends.

A more condensed version of these categories can be seen in the table below (Table 4.7). The table includes the number of times that Juli(14,C) and Matt(13,C) used the media. Media use is defined by actual touch, wear, turning on and off the technology, walking into a theater, holding a book, etc.

Table 4.7. Distribution of Media Use by Group III-Primary

Frequency of Media Use - Group III (primary)		
Forms Used	Juli(14,C)	Matt(13,C)
Television	10	9
Radio	9	0
Videogames	9	10
Videos	2	0
Computers	6	12
Room Decor	0	1
Clothes/Toys	0	1

A table has also been developed to show media uses by the secondary group (Table 4.8). Because Lynn(4.5,C) and Ezra(1.5,C) were periodically around the primary group of observation, their uses of media have also been recorded. Again, media use is defined by actual touch, wear, turning on and off the technology, walking into a theater, or holding a book.

Table 4.8. Distribution of Media Use by Group III-Secondary

Frequency of Media Use - Group III (secondary)		
Forms Used	Lynn(4.5,C)	Ezra(1.5,C)
Television	0	0
Radio	0	0
Videogames	3	0
Videos	1	0
Computers	4	0
Room Decor	0	0
Clothes/Toys	0	3

Of the 32 hours I spent actually observing Juli(14,C) and Matt(13,C), at least 20 of these hours were spent playing video and computer games by them on their own without adult supervision of any kind. It can thus be concluded that these software programs are the participants' first choice of entertainment, with all other forms lagging far behind.

The other twelve hours of my observation were spent by the participants riding in the car, swimming, doing chores, talking on the telephone, playing soccer, eating, playing with relatives, and waiting for the school bus. None of the latter involved true free choice except talking on the telephone.

#### Group IV

Group IV consists of only one participant. His name is Tommy and he lives in New York. Tommy is fourteen and is attending a school for teenagers with learning or other difficulties. Because of distance, I was not able to observe this

student. However, a colleague of mine who lives in New York, Constance, was able to perform the case study. Therefore, the case study for Tommy is different in format compared with the first three groups. Constance, the data collector in New York, took notes, interviewed Tommy, and transcribed the following information. The format for Tommy's case study is an account of what Constance has observed, heard, and asked from Tommy.

#### Demographic Information for Group IV

Tommy is an only child, aged 14. His family is white, middle-class to upper-middle class, depending upon the combined income from both parents, which varies from year to year. Both parents are free-lance writers. Tommy's mother, Sharon, also writes for a magazine. Tommy's father is involved in advertising working as an account executive.

Tommy lives with his parents in a six-room cooperative apartment on the upper east side of Manhattan, on the fringe of the "silk stocking district"--one of the richest neighborhoods. Their 14th floor apartment was originally a two-bedroom flat with a terrace that spanned from one wall of the living room to the window wall of Tommy's bedroom. When the studio/with kitchen apartment next door went on the market, Tommy's parents bought it and added it to their apartment.

During some very successful years their combined income has been about \$300,000. Sharon is from an upper-middle class family from Long Island, New York (her father was a lawyer and her mother a homemaker), and Donald is from a middle class family from Brooklyn (his father was a commercial artist and his mother a secretary).

Tommy was raised in a non-sectarian home, encouraged to think for himself, have ethics and empathy. The family celebrates both Jewish and Christian holidays. When he was 11 years old, Tommy decided he wanted to be Bar Mitzvahed and took the necessary lessons and successfully performed the ceremony.

From kindergarten to eighth grade, Tommy attended a private school on the upper east side of Manhattan near his home. It was during the eighth grade that Tommy began having learning problems at school. He had been an average or above average student, then suddenly, he was unable to focus on or retain certain information. The school said he could not return for his freshman year of high school, which severely upset Tommy. The school said they did not have the time, teaching staff or facilities to give Tommy the attention he needed. This meant a separation from all his friends and the end of a certain way of life that went with going to this school.

Sharon took Tommy to a number of psychologists. Tommy was finally diagnosed with ADD or "Attention Deficit Disorder." Sharon then found another private school to accommodate Tommy's problem. Tommy takes "Ritalin," a drug which is supposed to help ADD sufferers focus better. Tommy thinks it helps a little.

The new school costs about \$17,000 a year in tuition. The dean recently told Sharon that she must buy for Tommy a Toshiba lap-top "notebook," which all the students will need for their work at school and to help them with their homework. Sharon was angry that the school would oblige her to spend \$2,000 on the laptop, which she was told she had to buy from them, with no insurance for loss or repair.

Tommy's bedroom is about 10 x 14, with bunk beds, a desk set up along the window wall, a bookcase opposite the bunk bed wall and a table. In his room are his own MAC personal computer and a "boom box" CD player and cassette deck with speakers. The brand is Sony. It is kept on the table near the bookcase. There are also here (usually) two turntables (one is a Technics, another is a Gemini, used and donated to Tommy by a friend of Donald's) which are kept on the table, but are now with the Numark mixer and "sampler mixer" (a Lexicon "Jam Man,") back in the studio apartment which Sharon is letting Tommy use for the weekend, but no television. Tommy also has a Sony battery-operated cassette player/recorder with headphones.

Although Tommy has a few video games on his computer system, he lost interest in them years ago. He rarely goes to video arcades or spends money in movie theaters playing these games, even when his friends coax him to join in. He and four or five friends (four or five) from his former school have a standing date for the movies nearly every Saturday night.

If Tommy wants to watch television or rental movies, he has to go to his parents' room (where there is a 21" Sony television, and a Panasonic VCR). When he has access to the studio apartment, he can watch a newer model 21" Sony television and Panasonic VCR. His parents have a sound system, including a turntable that is set up in the living room which Tommy never uses.

Tommy is about 5-feet-6-inches tall, broad shouldered but with an otherwise medium build. He has blond hair and blue eyes and is still wearing braces to straighten his teeth. He is very

weight conscious and will go on a diet of his own making and stick to it until he loses the extra five or ten pounds he has gained.

Until he changed schools, Tommy's appearance was like that of Prince William--he had a wholesome, preppy look with longish, but neatly groomed hair. Most of his clothes were dark green, beige or plaid. In his new school, he has taken on the look of urban inner city teen-age boys. He has had his hair sheared off to about 1/8 inch long. He wears baggy sweatshirts or t-shirts and jeans that are two sizes too large and trail around his partially open high-top sneakers. This style could be called the "skinhead" look. Tommy says he prefers the "skinhead" style to his preppy look.

Codes also had to be developed to differentiate the participants for this group. Reasons for doing so were to avoid confusion between the actual participants and their family members, and to remind the reader of the participants' ages and ethnicities. The following codes are used for identifying the participants in Group IV.

1. Tommy = Tommy(14,C)
2. Nicky = Friend Nicky(14,C)

The codes were organized by the name of the participants, their age, and their ethnicity or race. For Group IV, the code "C" signifies Caucasian.

The table below offers a list of participants involved with the case study that includes outside family members and friends, and others who had contact with Group II during the study (Table 4.9).

Table 4.9. Participant List to Group IV

Demographic Information - Group IV (New York)			
Roles	Name	Coded Name	Bibliography
Primary	Tommy	Tommy(14,C)	Caucasian, fourteen-year-old male.
Friend	Nicky	Friend Nicky(14,C)	Caucasian fourteen-year-old male friend to Tommy.
Adults	Sharon	Sharon	Female in mid-forties. Mother to Tommy. Lives in same house.
	Donald	Donald	Male in mid-forties. Father to Tommy. Lives with Tommy part-time; maintains a separate work-related residence.

Media Log

Day 1. 6:00 p.m. to 10:20 p.m., Thursday at Tommy(14,C)'s home.

Tommy(14,C) had been working on his home MAC computer for about 45 minutes, trying to complete a report for his Physics class. Tommy(14,C) thought the project was an interesting, but difficult one. He was asked to apply the first two of Newton's laws to specific data the teacher provided about the angle of entry of the bullets that killed John F. Kennedy and wounded John Connelly--to prove that Oswald couldn't have been responsible for the shootings. Although Tommy(14,C) had his Toshiba laptop, he prefers using his MAC. Tommy(14,C) is not allowed to play music or listen to the television when doing homework.

Sharon called Tommy(14,C) to dinner, but the phone rang as he walked to the dining room alcove. It was Tommy(14,C)'s

friend, who wanted to stay with him for the weekend while his family's apartment was being painted. Sharon approved the visit. Tommy(14,C) returned to his room for the cassette player to listen to a tape with headphones during dinner. Sharon asked him to turn the machine off, which he did with mild annoyance. Tommy(14,C) recounted a few incidents of the day to his mother, including that his friend was mugged, and relieved of \$15, while leaving the subway after school.

Tommy(14,C) said that he watched five minutes of Oprah Winfrey's show that day on which "Fergie," the Duchess of York was the interviewee. He found her story boring and turned to Day and Date, a news magazine show he likes and is on at 4:00 every afternoon, about the time he gets home from school. He mentioned that he combs the television listings nearly every day trying to catch a rerun of a Geraldo Rivera show he missed, the title of which was, "Deformed Neighbors."

Sharon asked Tommy(14,C) about his Physics report, which she thinks is taking him too long to finish. He promised to finish it that night. The phone rang again, and it was for Tommy(14,C). It was his friend Andy who was confirming their Saturday night movie date. They decided to meet at 7:30 in the neighborhood at a corner that was convenient to six movie options in case they couldn't get in to see Space Jam with Michael Jordan. Tommy(14,C) said that last week he'd seen High School High with Jon Lovitz, found it stupid and unfunny, and that he spent half the time talking to his friends while at the movie.

Tommy(14,C) said at the dinner table that he is starving this night, had double portions of salad and the fish dish Sharon

made, but he had just one portion of non-fat frozen yogurt and low-calorie Cool Whip topping. Tommy(14,C) said he is on a diet.

At 6:25, Tommy(14,C) promised to go back to his homework, which he did for about half an hour. The phone rang, and it was the first friend calling back. Tommy(14,C) stayed on the phone with him for almost half an hour, until Sharon reminded him of his schoolwork. At 7:30, Tommy(14,C) left his room and went into the studio apartment and turned on the television to Entertainment Tonight. Sharon entered and wanted to know why he was watching television. He said he was waiting for his father to call him to help him on another school assignment, and he needed to take a break from the Physics problem. She told him to go back to his room and to work on the problem. Tommy(14,C) left the television on and went to his room. Sharon turned the television off.

At 8:00, Tommy(14,C) went to the studio and turned on the television to watch Biography on the A&E channel. Tonight, the subject profiled was Richard Pryor.

At 8:40, Tommy(14,C) lost interest in the show. He put on his headphones and began using the Numark mixer. The television was on behind him, while he operated his three-track mixer and turntables.

Last summer, his mother bought Tommy(14,C) the sampler-- which makes a loop recording of fragments of songs--mixing machinery and required turntable setups--because he was so depressed about the school switch and the fear that he was "stupid." Tommy(14,C) is the only one of his large circle of friends with such "DJ" equipment at home. It has given him a bit more

status among them.

Tommy(14,C) said he reads Vibe magazine, which describes in its articles a bit about the technical side of recordings. He also watched MTV or VH1 on the weekend, wherein he sees technicians using complicated boards of mixing switches and high-power speakers. This skill interests him. The mixers he uses are the amateur versions, bought at a very comprehensive retail music store, Sam Ash, located in midtown Manhattan. This store specializes in everything to do with music and the music business, including selling instruments, sheet music, and simple-to-very-complicated recording and mixing machines. Donald said to Sharon that Tommy(14,C)'s mixing equipment was "the teen-age version of playing in a sand box," and that the equipment and Tommy(14,C)'s use of it is a deluded waste of time. Nevertheless, they bought it for him.

By 9:55, Tommy(14,C) was still at his mixer and had his back to the television, until he saw that it was nearly 10:00 and changed the channel. His father hadn't called in yet, so Tommy(14,C) tuned to another of his favorite news type shows, 48 Hours. Tommy(14,C) turned off the mixing equipment during the first commercial break on 48 Hours, featuring a story about the Columbian drug cartel. He went to bed after the show.

Day 2. 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m., Saturday at Tommy(14,C)'s home.

Tommy(14,C) slept until nearly noon, having been out the night before with five of his friends at their friend Matthew's house. Matthew lives in a high rise doorman-appointed apartment building on 92nd Street off Fifth Avenue. Sharon won't let

Tommy(14,C) walk home the ten blocks south to their house after midnight. Tommy(14,C) took a cab from his host friend's building to his own doorman apartment building at 1:00 in the morning.

By the time I arrived at 12:15, Tommy(14,C) had taken his boom box and CD by the Beastly Boys to the bathroom, to listen to the group while he was showering. His mixer and many of his records and CD's were in the rental apartment, so he grabbed this CD for expediency since he knew his Friend Nicky(14,C) would be arriving. Tommy(14,C) described the Beastly Boys as a group that is "not fully rap, but with a little more funk, punk and rhythm." Most of Tommy(14,C)'s records, cassettes and CD's are rap groups.

His Friend Nicky(14,C) arrived with a small backpack bag and went to Tommy(14,C)'s room at about 12:45. Dressed in a bath-robe, Tommy(14,C) carried his boombox back into the bedroom and greeted Friend Nicky(14,C), who had been going through the CD's and cassettes. Tommy(14,C) closed the door to dress.

The boys emerged 10 minutes later and Tommy(14,C) had breakfast with his family. Friend Nicky(14,C) had juice with them. Tommy(14,C)'s father Donald, in from Long Island for the weekend, joined them at the table. Donald and Sharon were still irritated about the obligatory purchase of the Toshiba laptop. I asked what the rationale was for a school requiring them to buy a laptop. Tommy(14,C) said, "It was a pilot program by Toshiba, but they didn't give us the machines, they made us buy them." Friend Nicky(14,C), who is a friend Tommy(14,C) made at his new school, said, "It's a joke." Donald added, "They're squeezing the parents on bullshit." Sharon said, "It's a big \$2,000 joke, and with no insurance...it's disgusting."

I asked if having the laptop is making a difference to him. Tommy(14,C) says, "I don't think it will change how the Western world thinks about education." I asked how he'd evaluate it so far, compared to, say, a standard bound paper notebook for taking notes at school.

Tommy(14,C) then listed the liabilities of a laptop. He said that "(the laptop) helps, but have you ever had a notebook that won't open because the battery is too low? Then you have to plug it in to recharge it and everyone trips over your cord. That doesn't happen with a notebook made out of paper."

"No notebook weighs ten pounds," he continued, "and no notebook accidentally erases all its memory and all that stuff. And, no paper notebook costs \$2,000 without insurance and if you're robbed, there goes all your work and your stuff. No notebook will shatter if you drop it. So, there are a lot of stupid things about it, you know."

Donald wanted to use Tommy(14,C)'s PC for an hour or so, and wanted to know what the boys will be doing. Tommy(14,C) said they're going to the park (Central Park) to meet some friends and watch a softball game Friend Nicky(14,C)'s friend is playing in. Later that day, they planned to go to a six o'clock show of Space Jam with Michael Jordan, to beat the after-dinner crowd.

I asked Tommy(14,C) how he and his friends decided what movie to see. He said, "Usually we won't go to an 'art film' in the Village, but a movie everyone wants to see. So, it's usually not an all-male pornography movie which only a select few will want to see. But we'll go to a new opening movie everyone would like." I asked if he'd seen any film lately that he liked, and

he said, "I saw a movie with my dad I liked a lot called, The Ghost and the Darkness, with Michael Douglas, and I thought it was good."

Day 3. 1:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., Sunday at Tommy(14,C)'s home.

Tommy(14,C) and Friend Nicky(14,C) were in the studio apartment, and Tommy(14,C) was wearing headphones and sat at a long table that is nearly the length of the studio double-width windows. His mixer and sampler were there, and Tommy(14,C) was showing Friend Nicky(14,C) how to "mix" sound. They were using an LP of what Tommy(14,C) calls a "hard core rock group" called Rage Against the Machine, which he likes because they are "a little bit of funk, a little of rap but with a lot of guitars, not just drums."

When I entered the room, Tommy(14,C) was explaining how to make a "loop" of a sound, using the sampler. This requires buying "singles" of songs by groups that are 33 1/3 LP size, which contain cuts of the song as you would hear it on the radio or in a video version. Another two cuts on the same single are recordings of just the instrumental track (bass and treble), and another, just the voice or a capella, track, and, as Tommy(14,C) noted, "Perhaps a cut of a censored version you would not hear on the radio." These singles, used for mixing, cost about \$6 each.

Tommy(14,C) explained to Friend Nicky(14,C), "You record the flute for two seconds and tap this button on the sampler here, and it plays it back immediately. You don't have to rewind to hear it. If you keep tapping it, it produces a stutter effect. So if you put the beat on, and then put the a capella on, it

generates the flute effect and works it into a beat to make it more complex." Friend Nicky(14,C) grasped the principles and wanted to try.

The sampler can do a loop of sound from two-to-twelve seconds from a single. Friend Nicky(14,C) wants to make a loop using the twelve second sampler. Tommy(14,C) told him that if he "records part of a song and then repeats the beat, it can sound like a new instrumental." Tommy(14,C) tells me that each times he uses the mixer and sampler, it's "an experiment, but each time is different, because each song is different and I know generally what is going to happen."

Friend Nicky(14,C) tried it, and missed his choice of cut the first time. Tommy(14,C) said, "when you hear the part coming up, press this button to stop the record on the turntable and stop it where you want it." What Tommy(14,C) meant was the same as setting a "cue" on a standard 33 1/3 long playing album.

Friend Nicky(14,C) said that video games are easier to play. Tommy(14,C) said he thinks mixing is more creative and that video game systems "go nowhere." Before he got the sampler/mixer/turntable set up, Tommy(14,C) spent less than half an hour a month playing video games, compared with what he said is an hour and a half or more a day at the mixer. "It's like producing your own sound. When it comes out good it's so cool to know you made the song yourself," Tommy(14,C) said. Friend Nicky(14,C) tried a few cuts from Rage Against the Machine, but wants to stop to watch a football game on TV. Tommy(14,C) got them sodas (Tommy(14,C) only drinks club soda, about 2-3 quarts a day, and Friend Nicky(14,C) accepted Classic Coke) and pretzels.

Tommy(14,C) watched the game with Friend Nicky(14,C) for about 15 minutes, then went back to the mixer, half watching the game and talking to Friend Nicky(14,C) at the same time.

At about 5:00, Donald reminded Tommy(14,C) that he had to do his homework. Tommy(14,C) went into his room and spendt about 35 minutes on the MAC. He stopped to have a snack, then he and Friend Nicky(14,C) went to the supermarket for Sharon.

Day 4. 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., Tuesday at Tommy(14,C)'s home.

Tommy(14,C) socialized with a few friends after school and came home too late to see Day and Date or Sally Jessy Raphael, on at the same time. He chooses between the two, depending on the subject.

Tommy(14,C) said, "I've memorized when all the talk shows are on. I'll watch Richard Bey sometimes, but I don't watch him much. I prefer to watch Sally, since she's on at 4:00 and because she usually has troubled teens on." I ask what troubles them. Tommy(14,C) said, "They get into trouble, like driving cars into people's houses or shooting their brothers with BB guns. That amuses me."

"I watch Geraldo a lot because he's on before Sally," he continued, "So, if I get home early, I'll watch him." Tommy(14,C) again mentioned a show that fascinated him, "I once saw in TV Guide that Geraldo was having a show called, 'Deformed Neighbors.' I keep trying to catch a rerun of it, but since I haven't, I always watch hoping to find one that matches up to it. So far, there hasn't been one. I also like watching the 'fat hokies' who complain about everything and everyone they know.

The fat rednecks."

I asked Tommy(14,C) how many hours he watches talk shows per day. He said he watches about two hours of talk shows and two or three hours of other shows that interest him. He said typically he gets home around four after school, he has something to eat and watches a show, if he doesn't work with the mixer.

I asked if his friends watch these talk shows. He said "Yes. But we don't, like, talk about it the next day at school and say, 'did you see Sally Jessy last night?' unless it's something really outrageous, or really funny."

Tommy(14,C) said he doesn't like sitcoms. For example, he does not like Seinfeld, which many of his friends like, because he "Can't stand the sound of his (actor Jerry Seinfeld's) voice. But, he said "The one sitcom I watch and love is The Simpsons."

Sharon said Tommy(14,C) is the only teenager with a sense of humor who doesn't like sitcoms like Friends or Martin.

Tommy(14,C) said, "There was a Simpsons' 'something' number anniversary show" which he watched. The show included clips from early segments when the Simpsons were first on the Tracy Ullman show, before they were a series of their own. Tommy(14,C) thought they weren't as funny then.

Tommy(14,C) said he and his school friends do talk about the Simpsons. He said, "Actually, I know a lot of people who watch them. It's a really funny show." He watches both the reruns of the show, which are on every weeknight at 7:30 p.m. as well as watching the first run episodes on Sunday night.

Tommy(14,C) said he loves news magazine shows, "But none of my friends like them." He said he watches them all, "but I can't

remember all the hosts' names." He told me, "I watch Dateline and 20/20 a lot, also hoping to find one that matches up to the caliber of one I saw on elder abuse. They got that because there were hidden cameras in the homes where it happened. It was a good show. And there was also one I liked on podiatrists who abuse people's feet, slamming people's feet around. That's the truth. They set up cameras in the offices, and it was kind of funny. My dad watched that one with me."

Tommy(14,C) also watches 60 Minutes, 48 Hours and Primetime Live. He said he didn't like the show that was on the previous week on cancer (on Primetime Live) and the people the hosts knew who had the disease. He prefers "The exposes, with hidden cameras."

Dateline was on tonight, featuring an interview with Barbra Streisand, and Tommy(14,C) said he is not sure if he'll watch that portion of the show, not being interested in her.

He told me of one segment of a news magazine show he liked, "[It was] a great story of a guy who survived in the wilderness." He said, "It was good on the one hand, since the guy told how he survived. Then, on the other hand, someone comes on and says he's a fraud. He was at a motel or something, not lost in the wilderness. So it's really funny. Then the hosts ask both sides questions and get the guests' reactions on camera, which I like."

I asked him if he ever watches shows with an occult theme like the X-Files or a science-fiction theme like Star Trek. He says, "I used to watch the X-Files, and I used to watch Star Trek, and then all of a sudden I couldn't stay on the channel for either one of them and started flicking around. I saw the commer-

cial for Millennium, the new show, but now I go out on some Friday nights with my friends and hang out, so it's kind of hard to get to see it."

He added, "I used to watch Mystery Science Theater 3000 a lot, but it's the kind of show where you have to like watching corny old movies and you have to pay attention to the plot. I don't like to follow the plot."

"I don't like mysteries, either," Tommy(14,C) said, "but what interests me is on A&E, like Biography, especially the biographies of the serial killers like Jeffrey Dahmer and Richard Speck. I like them a lot, and I'll watch those shows for the whole time. Or I'll watch outlandish Ancient Mysteries, where, like, guys come on who say the Egyptians were really aliens and give you their evidence. It's kind of cool. A&E also has American Justice, which I like. At 11:00 at night, they do a rerun of Law & Order that I like and sometimes watch. I also like NYPD-Blue, but I don't watch it a lot because Dateline is on at the same time."

I asked about his television viewing habits on the weekend. "I watch during the day on Saturday, but it changes a lot. I get up at maybe 12 o'clock and there's not much to watch. I watch sports once in a while, with my friends, but I'll turn to Scooby-do, the cartoon show, if it's on. There's nothing on Saturday afternoons unless I want to watch Sesame Street or cooking or building your house shows. A lot of the time there's 68 channels on cable and nothing on you want to see."

Tommy(14,C) said that even though he watches about four hours of TV a day, it is when he's using the mixer "that time

flies. I'll start at eight and the next time I look at the clock, it's 10:30. Sometimes I sit in front of the mixer for three hours."

I noticed that this was a discrepancy in what Tommy(14,C) estimated was the time spent on the mixer, that is, he had previously (with Sharon listening) said "an hour and a half." With Sharon out of the room, he reported what is probably closer to the real time spent at it and his sound equipment some days.

#### Categorical Analysis of Group IV

Findings from this case study have also been divided into categories for easier analysis. These categories include the types of media that were used by the participant and descriptions of his living arrangements. Again, the categories provide summaries of the actual time spent on the media, the printed materials that were read, types of music that were listened to, the layout of the participants' rooms, and how the participants used personal items that involved popular media.

#### Television

Tommy(14,C) watched television, parts of a football game and a biography of Richard Pryor for about one hour and 15 minutes during the observation period. He said he watches television about four hours a day. The shows he said he watched are Oprah, Day & Date, Sally Jesse Raphael, Geraldo, Entertainment Tonight, 48 Hours, Primetime Live, Richard Bey, 20/20, and 60 Minutes. His favorite sitcom is The Simpsons. On the Arts & Entertainment Channel, he likes Biography (particularly lives of serial killers), Ancient Mysteries, and sometimes Law & Order. He sometimes watches MTV and the VH1 music channels. He no longer

watches Mystery Science Theater 3000 because he does not like the plots that show old movies. He also does not watch Star Trek or X-Files, possibly because they too involve plots and not factual reality of the sort he said he prefers. Another favorite animated show besides The Simpsons seen on The Cartoon Network is Scooby Do.

#### Music and Compact Disks

His favorite groups include The Beastly Boys and Rage Against the Machine.

#### Videogames

No videogames were mentioned or played. Tommy(14,C) owns a Pac-man type videogame that is almost ten years old.

#### Films and Films on Video

Tommy(14,C) did not watch videos during the time of observation. He did go to see Space Jam and The Ghost and the Darkness. He had also recently seen High School High with his father.

#### Computers

Tommy(14,C) used the family's Macintosh computer for about 35 minutes during the observation period. He used it because of school and not for pleasure.

#### Books and Other Printed Matter

The only printed material mentioned by Tommy(14,C) on his own during the observation was Vibes magazine.

#### Room Decor

There were no posters, prints or other evidences of media in Tommy(14,C)'s room decor.

### Clothes and Hairstyles

None of Tommy(14,C)'s clothes were media related.

Tommy(14,C)'s near-shaved hair was, he said, an emulation of the "Skinhead" style but not anyone in media.

A more condensed version of these categories can be seen in the table below (Table 4.10). The table includes the number of times that Tommy(14,C) used the media. Media use is defined by actual touch, wear, turning on and off the technology, walking into a theater, holding a book, etc.

Table 4.10. Distribution of Media Use by Group IV

Frequency of Media Use - Group IV (primary)	
Forms Used	Tommy(14,C)
Television	4
Music	7
Films	1
Computers	1
Audio Production Equipment	4

During the ten and a half hours Tommy(14,C) was actually observed, he used his Numark Mixer a total of four and a half hours. He is the only one of his friends to use this equipment. He considers it more creative than video games. The mixer is clearly his favorite media device. Although it cannot be considered mainstream, the mixing process uses mainstream media for creating composite products that emulate, or could be said to be in the style of, mainstream media. The rest of his time was

spent talking to the observer, eating, talking on the phone, watching television, listening to music, and working on the computer. None of these activities shared the same importance in his life as the mixer.

#### Overall Distribution Between Groups

The following table illustrates the number of times that the primary participants used mass media or media-related materials (Table 4.11). A total has been given to demonstrate which media products were used the most among all seven participants. The numbers under the participants' names represent each time the participant used the media form such as turning the equipment on or off, wearing media-related clothing, or using media-related products to decorate her/his rooms.

Table 4.11. Overall Frequency Distribution

Frequency of Media Use by Primary Participants								
Forms Used	Cher	Brad	Josh	Noah	Juli	Matt	Tommy	Total
Television	4	7	4	4	10	9	4	42
Radio	3	0	0	0	9	0	0	12
Music/CD's/ Tapes	6	0	0	0	0	0	7	13
Videogames	0	5	2	1	9	10	0	27
Films	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	3
Videos	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Computers	0	0	19	3	6	12	2	42
Printed Matter	2	2	3	1	0	0	0	8
Audio Produc- tion Equipment	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
Room Decor	0	3	0	3	0	1	0	7
Clothes/ Hairstyle	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	4

Types of media that were found common among the participants were television (42) and computers (42). Another popular form was videogames (27). A few other products worth noting were music (13) and radio (12). These six products seemed to dominate the participants' use of free time.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter deals with findings from the research, conclusions based on the findings, and implications for teachers, parents, and future research. This chapter will:

1. Connect the findings to the research questions posed in Chapter One.
2. Pose conclusions to the findings.
3. Discuss the implications of this study for teachers and parents.
4. Suggest implications of the study for future research.
5. Present a brief synopsis of the study.
6. Examine the significance of this study in future research on media effects.

#### Findings, Conclusions, and Implications

The study has suggested that the answers to the research questions are as follows:

#### Are Children Actually Commodified by the Media?

By the word "commodified," I am adapting Meehan's (1993b) definition as the process of making children into salable audience members to advertisers by creating within the children a desire to buy what they see in mainstream media. The findings of this study indicate the answer to this research question is a qualified "Yes." While the participants seemed unwilling to purchase products relating to mainstream media such as clothes, room decor or hairstyling, and did not need to emulate any

mainstream media "look" in their appearance, they had been conditioned to "want" to buy mainstream media. All the children but one, Noah, aged 10, have been turned into desirable audience members for advertisers because they have been made to become dependent upon mainstream media in various forms. I use the word "dependence" here in the same context as it is used in Berman and Siegel's (1992) definition of addiction:

Dependence characterized by chronicity, compulsiveness and uncontrollable urges to use a substance or to perform an activity. The attempt to cut down, control, or stop the activity or use causes severe emotional, mental and/or physiological reactions. Tolerance develops, prolonging or increasing use of the substance or performance of the activity. (p. 9)

As the frequency chart in Chapter Four suggests, Cher may be dependent on rap music, Brad and Matt on videogames, Juli on radio and television, Tommy on television and his sound mixer, and Josh on computers and the Internet. Noah may be developing a dependency on television and computer drawing programs, but so far, he seems to have maintained a balance of media with such non-media activities as Boy Scouts, soccer, and friends. These media dependencies mean that these children can be easily sold to through media--if not at this time, then in the future.

Conclusions of these findings are that, judging from the children in the study, upper-middle class American children are so commodified for advertisers that they cannot imagine the possibility of liking something not on the forced-choice menu of mass media products. If Tommy is creating original music with

his mixer, it is a result of listening to mass media music. If Noah does create original drawings, it is with the help of a computer-assisted drawing program.

Implications of these findings for parents are that their children are part of commodified audiences. That is, their children are developing in ways the parents cannot follow or share. For teachers, the implication is that non-mediated activities, such as going to school, are given almost no attention by the children in comparison with the amount of attention they give to media.

If these Children are Commodified, what Characteristics do Commodified Children Possess?

Findings of this study suggest that the main characteristic of a child commodified for advertisers is the desire to acquire more media. Such a child is always planning his/her next media purchase. The children in this study know what products they want and are thus very salable to advertisers because, having been already conditioned to buy media products, they may be likely to buy products shown on mainstream media. As opposed to children who make things or trade things or in other ways acquire products, the children in this study are ready to pay money for new products.

All the children in the study, with the possible exception of Noah, are ready to buy specific media products. Matt wants a Nintendo 64 and Mech Warrior III. Cher always wants the new rap CD's. Josh wants an IBM Clone. Tommy wants a much more expensive and powerful audio mixer. The youngest second-tier participants, Lynn and Ezra, are so conditioned to Disney animated

images they will always be glad to get the next animated Disney movie on video and in animated storybook form. A second characteristic of commodification demonstrated by the findings of this study is greed (in spite of its pejorative meaning, the word "greed" describes this characteristic most literally). The participants did not just own one product of a particular medium, but multiples. Owning one CD was not enough for Cher, she had to have many. Owning just one videogame would have been unthinkable for Matt. A sign of this greed was the amount of intertextuality displayed in the media products the participants owned. Buying a Disney video was not enough for Lynn and Ezra. They also had to have the Animated Story Book. Matt had not just seen the film Jurassic Park, he had purchased the videogame. Juli's family owned the videogame of the film version of The Addams Family Values. This greed appeared in the way media products were consumed. The products were not used one at a time, but in layerings such as the simultaneous playing of CD music, videogames and television in the home of Brad and Cher; computer and television in the home of Josh and Noah; videogame, computer game, television, and VCR in the home of Charisma while Juli and Matt were visiting; and television and mixer in the home of Tommy.

Also, findings of this study suggest that a third characteristic of commodified audience members is a preference for mainstream media images. None of the participants expressed a desire for original, local regional, or other non-mainstream media products. Attempts to substitute educational media, such as asking Lynn if she wanted to play Math Rabbit instead of

videogames were refused.

Yet, a fourth characteristic of commodified children demonstrated by the participants in this study is a denial of their amount of involvement in mainstream media. For instance, all the participants owned books, said they enjoyed reading and had parents who owned books and read. However, none of the primary participants was observed in the act of reading for pleasure or even reported reading for pleasure during the period of observation. Juli, who first said that she did not use media very much, later reported that she was surprised to find from her media log just how big a part media played in her life. Perhaps another sign of this denial is the participants' refusal to wear clothes associated with media, or in other ways emulate the appearance of media stars. Clothes and hairstyles of these participants were almost all conservative. Whether this conservatism was the result of socioeconomic class or age is not known. The only explanation I was given was Cher's brief statement that it was simply "Not cool" to wear clothes that advertised groups or movies or stars.

Conclusions of these findings are that commodification as audience members has prepared children to want, buy, and consume only mainstream media that entertain, but not educate, in ever increasing quantities. Implications of these findings for parents are that the characteristics of commodified children could undermine parents' instruction of their children. Implications for teachers are that characteristics of commodification may render children unwilling to be educated in traditional ways because they now want to be, and are, entertained by mainstream

media during most of their waking hours. New methods of education must be found that incorporate production, as well as analysis of, video, music, and multimedia (Valmont, 1995).

Are Upper-Middle Class Children Heavy Users of Mainstream Media?

The definition of "heavy user" here is a child who uses media frequently in sustained (for more than a few seconds) use, but often refers to media in conversation. Findings showed the participants used mass media almost every minute during the observation. Media dominated the living rooms of all participants' families. All primary participants went to their preferred media as soon as they entered their homes, regardless of the hour. Morning use was as heavy as evening use. Social discussions with friends and family often centered around media, especially in the homes of Charisma, Matt, and Brad and Cher.

Types of media most heavily used by the most participants in the study were computers and television. Second were videogames. The radio, sound mixer, and compact disks were in the third category of most used. Least used were film in theaters and on video, and then printed matter.

Conclusions to these findings are that the participants' use of mainstream media could be called "heavy." Further, their preferred media tends to be interactive and participatory, as opposed to passive. Unlike books, television, films, and compact disks, the outcome of computers, video and computer games, and the sound mixer can be controlled by the user. Thus, interactivity seems to be the trend mainstream media will take in the future.

An implication for parents to these conclusions is that

media use may affect the cultural, aesthetic, and intellectual development of their children. An implication for teachers is that heavy use of media in their spare time may make children uncomfortable and thus difficult to teach during their school time when they cannot use media.

Do Upper-Middle Class Children Care More About Non-Mediated Activities than they do Mediated?

Findings of the study indicate that mainstream media are the preferred forms of entertainment by these upper-middle class children. First, both girls and boys preferred using media during their leisure time. The only non-mediated, non-supervised activities not involving an adult that were pursued during the observation were skateboarding (Josh), playing with hula hoops (Lynn and Juli), talking on the telephone (Cher, Juli), and playing basketball (Brad and Tyler).

The conclusion is that since none of the participants were observed demonstrating a commitment to sports, crafts (with the exception of Juli's string jewelry-making hobby), reflection, studying, or any other non-media activity, their dedication to mainstream media might have taken precedence over other pastimes.

An implication for parents is that children may not be developing social skills because the majority of their time is spent media by themselves.

An implication for teachers is that their attempts to teach cultural studies other than those dealing with the American mainstream media may fall on uncaring minds. Another implication for teachers is that ways must be found to compete with the media culture for children's interest.

### Implications for Further Research

This study has shown a need for further research in the following areas:

#### Effect of Children's Early Use of Media on Their Attention Spans and Reflexes

If one-and-a-half-year-old Ezra can devote his full attention to the playing of computer games for over 20 minutes, children's attention spans may be getting lengthened or otherwise manipulated by media. If four-year-old Lynn can play computer games by herself for at least 20 minutes, as she was seen doing in this study, a research question could be, "How are pre-school aged children's computer skills and mechanical reflexes being changed by the media?"

#### Domination of the Disney Culture

During one luncheon in the home of Charisma, grandmother of Juli and Matt and great-grandmother of Ezra and Lynn, the food from Burger King included a toy from a Disney movie called Toy Story. Videos that were discussed the most by the adults were Disney films Toy Story, Pocahontas, and Cinderella. These were the same films said to be watched repeatedly by Ezra and Lynn. Later, Lynn played the Pocahontas Animated Story Book. Other available computer programs, such as Math Rabbit and Reader Rabbit held no appeal at all. The mothers of Lynn and Ezra spoke proudly of their children's knowledge of the Disney film plots and characters, and of their ability to recognize the characters in other contexts, such as street signs, magazine illustrations, and on television promotions. Ezra's mother said Ezra was able to find his Disney videos on his own from all the other videos in

the family's extensive collection, remove the videotape, insert it in the VCR, then press the power and play button. Clearly, these children's need for Disney media as opposed to other media is significant (Ricker, 1996). The effects of children's wanting Disney images but not other images is unknown at this time. A research question could be, "Do children feel that visual images other than Disney's are unacceptably unaesthetic?"

#### Need of Some Children to Lie About Media Use

Tommy told his mother and the researcher that he used his mixer for no longer than a certain period at a time. The truth, he later revealed inadvertently, was that he used it for a much longer time. This incident reveals that Tommy's parents do not appear to understand his attachment to his preferred media. A research question could be, "How much do children lie about mainstream media use?"

#### Effect of Media Use on Children's Literacy

Despite being diagnosed with reading difficulties, Matt and Tommy were able to read what they needed to read to operate their chosen media. In keeping with Valmont's (1995) argument that "the reading of video, text and graphics in a non-linear fashion may redefine the entire concept of reading" (p. 17). Matt showed no hesitation at, or difficulty with, reading the considerable amount of text on the computer screen included in the Mech Warrior game. A research question could be, "Are mainstream media rendering reading and writing important to children only in terms of their relation to media?"

#### Effect of Media Use on Children's Literary Interests

None of the children in this study appeared to care much

about literary devices such as narrative, character, or theme. Elements of video and computer games such as fighting strategies, dealing with surprise attack, rescue by characters, and escaping occupied Matt, Brad, Juli and Lynn for extended lengths of time and were sought by Matt and Brad frequently. Tommy was willing to be a passive viewer of television, but only of non-fiction shows, not of fictitious shows with narrative plots. Juli, Brad, and Cher watched narrative series television shows such as Melrose Place during the observation, but they did not read narrative books. The only person observed who was said to show enthusiasm for feature length, narrative shows was Ezra, the one-and-a-half-year-old, but only if the show were a Disney animated film. Lynn preferred interacting with Disney storybooks as opposed to watching Disney narrative films. Listening to music on CD's could be regarded as passive enjoyment of narrative media, but the songs are so brief that the process of choosing several in an hour could be regarded as interacting with the music. By the same token, switching radio channels could be regarded as interacting with that medium although listening to pre-programmed radio stations is a more passive activity than CD planning and playing.

Thus, if arranged on a continuum of interactivity in media, with watching feature-length films in theaters at the left end and creating new media at the far right end, most of the participants' media preferences would lean toward the right end of the continuum. The research question here could be, "Do most children prefer interactivity over passive presentation in media and, if so, how will this preference affect their ability to read

for pleasure?"

#### Lack of Silence in Children's Lives

As busy and carefully scheduled as her life was with soccer, homework, chores, school, and trips to the mall with friends, Juli found enough time to watch television, listen to the radio and play videogames with her cousin Matt for hours at a time during the observations. As busy as Matt was in the mornings with having to get up and prepare for school early enough to be driven to his grandmother's so he could catch the schoolbus in time, Matt always made sure he fit about 20 minutes of the computer game, Mech Warrior into this hectic schedule. Cher said she often fell asleep listening to her CD's or radio, while Brad played videogames and/or watched television right up until bedtime. Moments without media, such as those which occurred when the participants came from the day's activities into an empty house, seemed like dead time that had to be filled immediately with all the preferred forms of mainstream media simultaneously. A research question could be, "Will children think and reflect for themselves if media is always working to think for them?"

#### Effect of Mainstream Media Use on Learning Disabilities

Fowler (1993) describes symptoms of children with Attention Deficit Disorder, a condition with which Tommy and Matt were diagnosed, as being problems with organization, difficulty inhibiting impulses, socializing, poor ability to sustain attention and concentrate, and inappropriate activity unrelated to task, among others. When working with their chosen media (the mixer and videogames), both Tommy and Matt demonstrated the

ability to organize their actions and plans with no difficulties in sustaining attention or showing appropriate activity unrelated to the media's required tasks. Both were able to socialize well with others for long periods of time when using their chosen media. A research question could be, "How many students diagnosed with learning difficulties show few symptoms of their difficulty while using their favorite media?"

#### Effects of Violence in Media on Children

Despite many studies to the contrary, violence in media did not seem to affect the behavior of Matt, Cher or Brad whose media contained violence (Shelton, 1997). The afternoon that Matt played such violent videogames as Streets of Rage and Jurassic Park, his behavior toward everyone present was cordial, caring, and cooperative. Cher was able to laugh and enjoy socializing with friends while listening to explicitly violent, sexual rap lyrics. Brad's behavior seemed unaffected by the violence of Mortal Kombat. Research questions could be, a) "Are violent media harmful for all children?" and b) "Do the violent fighting games bring more pleasure to children of certain ages and genders than role-playing, educational or problem-solving games?"

#### Synopsis

This qualitative study examined seven upper-middle-income middle-school-aged students in three areas of the United States: Tucson, Arizona, Southern California, and New York City. Participants' families earn at or above the median income for their area. The students in the study can be divided into three tiers: Seven primary participants in four main groups (Group I, Brad and Cher; Group II Josh and Noah; Group III Juli and Matt;

and Group IV, Tommy); four often seen secondary participants (Pete and Perry, Group II; Lynn and Ezra, Group III) and three peripheral, less-often-seen friends (Tyler, Group I; Joe, Group III; and Nicky, Group IV). Ages of the primary participants ranged from 10 to 14. The others were included in observations because of their interactions with the primary participants, but were not considered part of the study because of their ages.

The purpose of the study was to determine whether or not American children are now what Smythe (1977) and Meehan (1984, 1986, 1990, 1991, 1993a, & 1993b) call commodified audiences--audiences who have been made salable to owners of media by having been made dependent upon, and thus willing to buy, media products. Primarily observed was participants' spare time use of media in an attempt to determine what media they actually used as opposed to what media they say they preferred. Observations suggested that these seven students, along with their friends and younger family members, have been conditioned to be willing, able and eager consumers of certain mainstream media in ever-increasing quantities with few truly competing non-media interests.

Use of media was calculated on the basis of frequency of use and time spent on use. Major findings were that all students but Noah were dependent on at least one form of mainstream media and none read for pleasure. Major conclusions were that media are not just one expression of the American culture but, in all their various forms, now create the American culture. One overall major implication of this study for teachers is that the intellectual abilities of children in this study are being developed by rap music, videogames, production equipment and

television documentaries in ways that diagnostic techniques may not be acknowledging. Two children in this study with learning disabilities were able to perform complex intellectual media operations though they have been denied mainstream schooling with their peers. One implication for parents is that media use by children is rendering non-media activities, such as family interaction and school attendance, almost irrelevant. Another implication is that internalization of the Disney aesthetic by small children may be creating artistic standards the parents cannot change. Unless rigorously exposed to other kinds of visual and narrative aesthetic experiences, children prefer the Walt Disney Company produced video, animated storybook and game versions of folktales to the near exclusion of all others. One implication for further research is the study of how very young children's use of media overdevelops and underdevelops skills that deal with the usual pedagogical practices in school.

#### Limitations of the Study for the Researcher

Perhaps the most serious limitation was difficulty finding participants. What at first seemed valuable and enjoyable to prospective participants became, upon reconsideration, a potential intrusion upon the participants' spare time and/or an invasion of privacy. In not one case did the parents insist the children cooperate in the study if the children did not want to do so.

This study involved 17 outright rejections by prospective participants and/or their families, 10 rejections after the study had been arranged but not yet initiated, and 6 rejections after the study had been initiated.

All primary participants who did allow the study became resentful of the researcher within a few hours after the study had begun. They had evidently not realized that mainstream media was a private pleasure which they did not want to discuss or share with an adult. Unobtrusive measures were required of the researcher in order for the observation to be continued. These measures included maintaining a physical distance from the subject, chatting with the parent if the parent were inclined to chat, not asking too many questions about the media being used, eating any food offered, and in other ways acting more as participant observer, or someone who was more of a family friend than an outside observer.

Yet, friendliness had to be limited in order to allow the participants to forget the researcher's presence and pursue their real media preferences. One second-tier subject expressed so much friendliness that he begged to be a primary subject, offering any amount of access to his life that could be desired. It was necessary to avoid responding because the primary participants involved became resentful of this person's attempts to divert the researcher. Negative behaviors that had to be ignored included rude speech, outbursts of temper (as in Matt's retort that he didn't want to answer any more questions), attempts to evade the researcher (as when Cher and her friends went for a walk without saying where they were going), and whispering to friends about the researcher from behind raised fingers.

Limiting the study to the primary participants would have been impossible. While media was often used alone, it was often shared with friends and relatives. The latter had to be included

in the observation if the study were going to be complete and accurate.

It was impossible to record exact times of media use. Participants would begin using media, then go off to answer a telephone or make a snack or go skateboarding, sometimes taking media with them (if it were a portable radio or CD player), sometimes coming back to the media, then leaving again shortly after beginning again.

Suggestions for further research by other observers of spare-time media use include the following:

1. Any kind of research conditions allowed by the participants should be tolerated. These conditions should be expected to deteriorate as the novelty of the situation wears off. For this reason, all observation should be done as quickly as possible on consecutive days if the subject will permit it.
2. The researcher must avoid the temptation to leave the site when the participants become difficult. The researcher should remain until participants resign themselves to the researcher's presence and resume their natural behavior.
3. The researcher must try not to let the participants postpone meeting dates that have been agreed upon. If the participants realize they have this power, they will most likely postpone the research indefinitely.
4. Verbal interaction should be kept to a minimum. If a question posed by the researcher is not answered after one repetition, the question should not be repeated.

The participant obviously does not want to answer and, if pressed, will most likely leave the researcher alone and/or make up an answer. A participant who talks to the researcher a great deal, such as the second tier subject who wanted to be a primary subject, often has an agenda that is not compatible with the researcher's. An exception to this last caveat is a participant such as Tommy, who wants to articulate his opinions on mainstream media.

#### Final Comments

This study has shown actual spare-time use of media by seven primary middle-school-aged, upper-middle-income students in their homes. This study has also indicated spare-time use of media by four other middle-school age students and two children aged one and a half years old and four years old. No attempts were made to analyze the content of the media. Observation was the primary research method. Interviews and conversation were allowed to augment, but not substitute for, actual observation of the children's media use. Only the two media logs kept by Juli and Matt during hours when the observer could not be present (such as at lunchtime during school) were allowed to substitute for actual observation.

One overall result of this case-study method was an understanding of the extent, kinds, and specific examples of mainstream media actually used by these upper-middle-income, middle-school-aged children. Another result was the realization that the use of media is perpetuated by a cycle of commodification. Media are made salable to the children by

various means. The children buy them and want to own more of the media. This desire and ability to buy more media makes the children part of an audience that is commodified for the advertiser because its members are willing and able to buy. Among products the children want to buy are more media products which have been commodified for them. Thus, this study has demonstrated the actual existence of this theorized commodity audience, and has suggested that the experience of belonging to this audience occupies far more of children's lives and time than had been suspected.

Younger children observed in this study suggest that membership in the commodified audience begins not with the acquisition of literacy, or of speech, but with the ability to recognize Disney characters on a television screen at home.

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