

Literature Review

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Literature Review for Arts Based Inquiry Project

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Arts Based Inquiry Project Literature Review

Following my recent encounter with art and media production as a means to discover culture and identity, I decided to explore how advertising shapes identity through an arts based, inquiry project. The project is threefold; it first involves the process of creating and documenting this project, which will allow me time to reflect on the relationship between media, cultural expectations, and the shaping of social identity. Secondly, presenting the work will likely act as a catalyst, instigating viewers to reflect on the visible and tangible aspects of how advertising influences the human perception of the self. And most importantly, it is my hope that this project will awaken peer interest and fuel meaningful exchanges on this issue.

Relevance of This Topic

I intend to record the creative and reflective process of this project through visual representation. As such, the creating, producing and editing of the video will become an integral part of my learning experience. This form of autoethnography filming can be a valuable form of teaching and learning, as the learning process can be studied and transposed to other projects in varying contexts.

Using a combination of art and filming will likely help me discover new epistemologies and experience new sensitivities, and at the same time allow me to evaluate responsibilities as an artist, an educator, and as an individual. Beyond deepening my understanding of arts-based ways of knowing through first-hand experience, I hope the exploration of allegorical and metaphoric concepts can better serve my own teaching practice, and also serve as an example to other educators.

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Research Method and Methodology

Literature sources are essentially taken from peer-reviewed papers and articles found on Scholar portals. This literature review is based on scaffolding for the project; firstly, I have researched sources pertaining to autoethnography, a/r/tography, and arts based projects; secondly, I perused literature that explored the effects of media and advertising on image and self-identity. As my research progressed, I found I needed to narrow down my topic and concentrate on a specific type of advertising and identity making; namely advertising that focused on lifestyle, social status and gender role stereotyping. The articles are first summarized and analyzed, then a synthesis on how the literature applies to context and issue is provided. This literature review also looks at research beyond the literary sources, and demonstrates how this ongoing research pertains to my project.

Summary, Critique and Synthesis of Articles

Arts Based Project Literary Sources

The authors Sinner, Irwin, Gouzouasis & Grauer (2006) provide and explore a series of arts based, educational research dissertations from UBC students. Their exploration focuses on the practice of a/r/tography and what it means to inquire about the world as an artist/researcher/teacher. Sinner et al. (2006) explore the process of art making, living inquiry, and writing and how these are intricately linked to embody and represent understanding. This literary source provided valuable information, presenting numerous, rich examples that visually and textually represent and explore understanding. Since this is my first experience with arts and education, practice-based methodology, it proved an excellent guide to the practice of a/r/tography.

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Having a better idea of the types of projects that involve art and education, I now looked for various ways others had used narrative inquiry. Through arts based research, the authors Estrella & Forinash, (2007) search to validate theories, and explore core beliefs about transformational learning. Reviewing the personal inquiry narratives provided by the authors allowed me to reflect on how I would express my voice through art to demonstrate my lived experience. As I reflected on the narratives as a viewer, I realized that individuals viewing my own arts project would likely interpret my work according to their worldview.

Since my arts based inquiry project is autoethnographic in nature, I researched sources that defined ethnography through arts based, educational research. My idea of using an original way of viewing the world, constructing knowledge and exposing viewers to societal issues, is very much corroborated in Fierros' (2009) article. The author also explores the idea that this form of communication can expose and awaken human experience, thus reinforcing my idea of sharing my project with my peers through VoiceThread, where they will be able to react and respond. This article also helped me recognize and understand the importance of categorizing and documenting my project as ethnography, educational research. I now understand that I have embarked on a unique knowledge quest, where I am fully engaged in the subject matter to make meaning of my learning.

Literary Sources on the Relationship between Media and Self-Identity

In order to help me reflect on the advertising and social identity, I researched various literary sources. Bartholomew, (2010) explores the idea that advertisers promote

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'lifestyle' as a crucial element of identity construction, leading consumers to self-identify within specific roles. According to the author, products are advertised as if they were an essential part of our inherent, collective values and beliefs. The article helped guide my reflection on how advertising influences our life narratives through the shaping of our social identity and self-esteem.

Advertising is a large subject, incorporating many ways products are sold to wide audiences. Thus, in order to focus on a specific area for my project, I began researching how advertising is used to portray social status. Grier & Deshpandé, (2001) explore how ethnic advertising shapes the consumer's perception of the self in relation to social status. Findings from Grier & Deshpandé's (2001) study determined that media try to appeal to consumers by defining status as a desired position within a social system. My exposure to ethnic advertising guided my image selection for my collage. I decided to use images that represent products modeled by white, middle-class men and women, so as to demonstrate how advertisers use specific characteristics that try to portray the link between a product and a desired position within a social system.

Having now focused my on the idea advertisers target lifestyle and social status to shape the consumer's perception of the self, I now needed to further delve into how advertisers define lifestyle and social status. Ventakataramani & Schwarz's (2003) article examines gender role and stereotyping in advertising. This literary source allowed me to reflect on how advertisers activate stereotypic constructs that lead to specific judgments and behaviors; another good reason to research and study the impact of advertising in shaping our collective identities. This article also led me to question my own perception of gender role stereotyping in advertising, and reflect on how to represent

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this within my arts based project. Because the article discusses how advertising depicts women in sex-typed roles, as well as how this can influence men's perception of women, I have decided to integrate this in my project.

So far, my research has determined that advertising often shapes the consumer's idea of lifestyle, social status, and gender role through stereotyping. Considering the serious effects advertising can have on social identity construction, it was important for me to research and confirm the idea that my project could awaken the public to the forces of commercialization. Stack & Kelly, (2006) explain how media conglomerates advertise the idea of 'belonging' to a group to sell products. The authors believe it is important to use education to analyze and discuss media, and also feel viewers have the power to change media by improvising new images. Bartholomew (2010) and Stack & Kelly (2006) demonstrated urgency in awakening public opinion to this issue, as their research uncovered that the population at large seems unaware of the impact advertising has on self-definition.

Use of Research Material Beyond Literary Sources

Beyond the reviewed literature, I will be researching video making sites, as well as consulting magazines for images that represent the shaping of identity. Because of the ethnographic nature of this arts based inquiry project, I will undoubtedly embody my own understanding of how advertising influences social and personal identity making. The documenting of the creation process through video making will in itself be an ongoing ethnographic project. By documenting the actualization of the project, I hope to demonstrate how the actual process has guided my learning and understanding. I hope this documented, learning experience can in turn become research material.

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Conclusion

Findings from this literary review form the foundation of my arts based inquiry project. My exploration of the literature has permitted me to investigate the process of art making, explore the concept of living inquiry, and guide my learning process so far. My ongoing research on video making and advertising images, combined with my own embodied experience of advertising in relation to self-identity, are continually shaping and transforming my ethnographic research. The continuing ethnographic account of my research and learning process is proving to be an enriching embodied, learning experience. I continue on my quest to visually and textually inquire into the world of advertising and self-identity as an artist/researcher/teacher.

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