

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A TEEN: REPRESENTATIONS OF TEENAGERS IN
NETWORK NEWS, ADULT-GENERATED NEWS FOR TEENS, AND TEEN-PRODUCED
INTERNET WEBZINES

by

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(Under the Direction of Alison Alexander)

ABSTRACT

Communication scholars and media professionals recognize that young people are not paying attention to the news. There is little doubt that the often negative stories about young people shown on television news and in mainstream newspapers can lead young people to think negatively of their selves, possibly causing them to tune out these news sources. Is news coverage of adolescents really overwhelmingly negative, as the literature suggests? Much of the research into teen news representations has focused on mainstream media, including broadcast news programs and newspapers. This study utilized a textual analytic approach and Foucault's theory of representation to examine teen representations in three media sources: network news, adult-generated media sources geared toward teenagers, and teen-produced webzines. The study found that teenagers are represented as having problems, and as having limited ability to solve

their problems. While teen representations found in this study do offer some support for the dominant discourses about teen media representations, they challenge some of the assumptions inherent in this dominant discourse. The most prominent challenges come from those media sources that are produced by teenagers for a teen audience.

INDEX WORDS: Teenagers, Representation, Textual analysis, News, Webzines, Discourse, Broadcast News,

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this to my wonderful husband Bill for all your love and encouragement throughout the research and writing of this dissertation. You are my best friend and my biggest supporter in this, and everything that I do. And to my parents Marilyn and Howard Galin, who taught me early on to work hard, and who always believed I could achieve this goal.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Communication scholars and media professionals bemoan adolescents' inattention to news. Is it that young people are not interested in news or is there something about it that turns them away? The literature focuses on two separate areas regarding teenagers and news: the fact that they are watching the news far less than in past generations (Mindich, 2005); and the often negative image of teenagers that is presented in both print and broadcast media (Sternberg, 2005; Males, 1996, 1999; Dorfman & Woodruff, 1998; Gilliam, 2001; Giroux, 1996; Mazzarella & Percora, 2007). These studies do not suggest a relationship between negative images of teenagers in the news and teenagers' inattention to television news. It is however possible that the negative images they saw of themselves in the news motivated teenagers to stop watching.

The negative images of teenagers in mainstream news are just one possible reason why teenagers may not watch the news. In his interviews with young people, Mindich (2005) found that young people see the news as "not being as much fun as entertainment" (p. 48), as "stressful" and as not doing enough to engage them. (p. 47). He (2005) also suggests that young people may not want to watch the news because there are so many other choices of things to watch on television in a media landscape that includes hundreds of channels as well as the Internet. According to The Pew Research Center (2004) young people report using search engines to look for news and rely on email to receive news stories.

Teens may be not like the format of the news or may not be available during the times when traditional news programming is on television. Van den Bulck (2006) suggests that teenagers are often unintentional avoiders of news, meaning that they want to watch, but that they are not available at the times when these programs are on. Network news runs during the 6 o'clock hour during which teenagers may be involved with sports, or other after-school activities, and therefore not at home to watch news programming. Teenagers may also not be interested in the stories that run on national news programs, and therefore they utilize their time with media by engaging with different media sources.

Teenagers' inattention to news programming suggests the importance of examining news content, particularly that which is related to teenagers. A look at coverage on network news turns up stories about the struggles of teen parents, teenagers using the Internet to plan a school shooting, and distracted teen drivers. But there are also stories about what makes teenagers happy, about two boys already working toward a career dream, and about a young girl fighting to keep drunk drivers off the streets. Is news coverage of adolescents really overwhelmingly negative as the literature suggests? What kinds of stories are told about young people, what issues are addressed, and how do teenagers come to be represented in news stories about them?

Understanding news content means looking below the surface, to how journalists do their jobs and to the manner in which society views adolescents. Choices journalists make about the types of teenager-related stories they write, and the ways in which they write them, impact how teenagers come to be represented in the news. These representations can, over time, construct a discourse about youth that comes to define who young people are, and what they are all about. It is only through recognizing these discourses and the organizational, cultural, and social factors

that contribute to them, that we can understand how these different media representations affect our knowledge of teenagers in our society.

For many people, however, television news is not the only source of news. Since 2000, the Internet has increasingly become a news staple for millions of people, particularly those under age 18. The Internet offers youth an alternative to seek out information and many traditional news sources have online content geared toward youth. In addition, the Internet gives youth an opportunity to create news, through numerous websites that position them as journalists and writers. Do the issues covered concerning youth and the ways in which young people are represented in news change when the medium does, or when the “journalists” are in their teens?

This study seeks to explore the ways in which teenagers are represented across three media: network news broadcasts, adult-generated news sources geared toward teenagers, and teen-produced Internet webzines geared toward a teen audience. It also explores the ways in which these representations differ from one another. A textual analysis was conducted on the following youth-related news stories to analyze differences in teen representation: teenager-related stories on ABC, NBC, and CBS network news; news stories produced by adults for teenagers on CNN Student News and Channel One and their Internet components; and four Internet news webzines produced by teenagers for a teenage audience: LA Youth, New Youth Connections (NYC), BUZZ, and Listen Up!

This chapter outlines the ways in which news is constructed, the ways in which teenagers are viewed in society, and how these two factors influence the news coverage of teenagers in the news. It then outlines the ways in which theories of representation, specifically Foucault’s discursive approach, can prove useful for understanding the ways in which teenagers are covered in both television and Internet-based news.

Review of the Literature

This study is informed by prior research in several areas: the construction of news by journalists, societal constructions of adolescence, news coverage of teenagers in mainstream media, and the use of different news sources by young people and adults. Theories of representation provide the theoretical framework for this study.

News as a Social Construction

It is the job of journalists to present to us the news of the day in a manner that is both informative and objective. And this job is two-fold. Journalists not only determine how to cover particular stories, but decide which stories—out of the vast number of events that are going on each day—are worthy of coverage and presentation to the news-watching audience. The decisions are made under the auspices of news judgment, but to assume that it is this news judgment that is solely responsible for journalists' choices is to overlook the organizational, cultural, and social factors that affect news construction. Journalists give meaning to events that happen by producing them into stories within the context of “professional ideologies, institutional knowledge....assumptions about the audience” (Hall, 1992, p. 129). The decisions that journalists make therefore affect our sense of what is “real” when it comes to the events and issues that we see in the news and to those groups given media attention. It is therefore necessary to pay attention to these organizational, cultural, and social factors in the construction of news.

Organizational factors: Like all organizations, newsrooms try to work as efficiently as possible using the resources available to them. Bantz (1985) suggests news operations act as factories. People are given very specific jobs at different stages in the production of a story from the gathering of the raw information to the broadcasting of the story over the airwaves. The organization is driven by the routines involved in doing news work (Ettema, Whitney &

Wackman, 1987). Shoemaker and Reese (1996) say newsroom routines develop in answer to questions about: what the audience will like; what the news organization can handle; and what stories are available for coverage on a specific day.

To answer the first question—what stories the audience will like--scholars have developed a list of news values. These include prominence, human interest, controversy, unusualness, timeliness, and proximity (Stephens, 1980, Baskett, Sissors & Brooks, 1982, as cited in Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Journalists have also developed what Shoemaker and Reese (1996) call “defensive routines” (p. 112) to keep from offending readers and listeners. Objectivity serves this function. By keeping one’s personal feelings out of news stories reporters and managers keep from being attacked or criticized by those who do not agree with them, and therefore can avoid bringing embarrassment to the news organization (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Gans (1979), as cited in Shoemaker and Reese (1996) says that by keeping their personal values out of news stories, reporters achieve more autonomy over their stories. If they were not objective, journalists would be subject to attack with every story they write. Journalists create a “full-blown version of the web of facticity” by focusing on the methods that they used to establish facts, such as the use of supplemental information, use of quotes, and reliance on legal procedures (Tuchman, 1978, p. 160).

The stories that are produced are just a fraction of the stories that are “out there” for journalists to consider. Because journalists are constrained by time in gathering stories and by space in producing them for a newspaper or television newscast, they must make choices about what to cover and what to ignore. (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). White (1950) first suggested the metaphor of a news gatekeeper, letting some stories in and keeping others out and choosing from among the thousands of available stories the select few that will be covered. Journalists operate

within the confines of a “news net”, in which they are more likely to cover stories that happen during normal business hours, as well as stories that can be planned for (Tuchman, 1978).

And they use a number of routines to determine what stories are out there.

Signal (as cited in Shoemaker & Reese, 1996) distinguished between routine channels, informal channels, and enterprise channels used by reporters to find out information. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) say that reporters often rely on official sources, such as those in governmental offices, as well as experts who “put events into context and explain the meaning of news” (p. 130). Officials and experts are typically reached through traditional channels, but reporters may also use the other channels to get information from them. Fishman (1982) says that reporters rely on “phase structures” within the organizations that they cover in order to distinguish between events worthy of coverage and non-events, which are typically ignored. Phase structures enable journalists to determine whether something new--and therefore newsworthy--is occurring, and whether what is happening is in fact important enough to be covered (Fishman, 1982).

Journalists also typify stories based upon whether they are pre-scheduled, unscheduled, or non-scheduled (Tuchman, 1997). Hard news stories include those that are unscheduled events—such as crimes or fires—or prescheduled events, including press conferences.

Information is unavailable until the event happens, and the story must turn quickly. Soft news stories, on the other hand, are primarily non-scheduled events, such as investigations and consumer pieces. They can run at any time allowing for additional interviews to be obtained or other angles to be explored. Stories typified as soft news can contain more analysis and more context because of their nature as not needing to be on the air that same day. (Tuchman, 1997)

Tuchman (1978) says that journalists even have plans in place for hard news stories that take a different turn from what is expected—a type of story called “what-a-story”. When a

“what-a-story” happens, Tuchman says journalists look back to past “what-a-stories” that were similar to the present one, and use those past stories as a map for covering the current story. Therefore a “what-a-story” would be constructed by journalists not just based upon the events and happenings of today, but upon the events and happenings of a similar story that happened in the past. The angles that would be taken and the interviews that would be conducted would be based not just on news judgment involving this present story, but on factors surrounding a similar past story. They develop a “mental catalogue of news story themes” that helps to determine who might be involved in such a story and how the story will unfold (Berkowitz, 1997, p. 363).

In addition to story typification as impacting the construction of television news, norms within the newsroom also influence how news is constructed. Bantz (1985) talks about three types of norms operating in newsrooms: professional norms, business norms, and entertainment norms. Professional norms are usually held by journalists and news managers. They involve story thoroughness, story quality over story quantity, and the implementation of beat systems for reporters. The use of beats is more likely to be found when professional norms are dominant as opposed to business norms. Business norms, which favor the interchangeability of reporters as well as a focus on story quantity over story quality, are usually held by station managers. Entertainment norms put decision making in the hands of the audience. What the audience likes or is believed to like is what is covered by the news organization (Bantz, 1985).

Organizational factors operating among different news organizations also influence story construction. Bantz (1985) says journalists in the field display controlled competition with reporters from other stations. They may pool their video or share interviews, which could result in “sameness” in the coverage of particular stories within a given television market. This

controlled competition works in another way to create sameness. Reporters feel pressure to not “miss a story” that the competition has. The effect is that journalists jump on the band-wagon with a story because the competition has it. The result is that stories are covered not because of their importance but because stations do not want to overlook something that the competition has. (Bantz, 1985).

These organizational factors may be partially economically motivated. The goal of pleasing the audience, of having stories that will be well received by the audience, is important for financial reasons as well. Stations need viewers—and oftentimes viewers of a specific demographic—in order to bring in the advertising they want. Without advertising dollars, the station can not survive. The effect of this is that certain stories may be covered, not because they are necessarily important, but because they are important to a certain group of people whom the station wants to attract. For example, stations often want to attract women in their 30’s and 40’s, and may do so with the use of certain “mom-oriented” stories. It is for this same reason that it would be unlikely that there would be a negative story about a car dealership, given their role as advertisers for local news stations. These economic factors, folded into the organization of a newsroom, have the dual effect of promoting the reporting of certain stories while almost silencing the reporting of other types of stories.

Social factors: There are also social factors that influence news construction. One such factor is access to journalists. Moloch and Lester (1974) say that those who are wealthy or powerful have habitual access to journalists. That means that these people’s activities are considered to be of such importance that journalists cover them on a regular basis. People with habitual access to journalists are able to call press conferences that make it easy for journalists to obtain information and put their story out there. That means that this group’s stories become

newsworthy not simply because of the importance of the information, but because of the ease with which journalists can gather that information. Gans (1979) as cited in Gamson (1992) says that the power of official sources combined with the need for journalistic efficiency ultimately structures how news organizations decide what can be considered to be news. People who are considered to be important have their stories covered because journalists are already covering their activities, and so stories about them are just easier to accomplish and take less time.

The “news” in such organized press conferences is usually packaged in a way that suits the source and serves to achieve the source’s objectives (Moloch & Lester, 1974.) The sources may provide people with whom journalists can talk, and since the group has chosen these people, they are likely to support the group’s objectives. In this way, the story is constructed in a manner concurrent with the group or individual’s goals, and is therefore less likely to be objective (McQuail, 2000). Although it is usually the rich and powerful people who have this habitual access to journalists, at certain times other people or groups may have this power—groups such as women’s rights organizations for example (Moloch & Lester, 1974).

Another social factor that contributes to news construction is the conflict journalists face between trying to appear to be objective while trying to construct a story that will be well understood by the audience (Bird & Dardenne, 1988). Journalists consider objectivity to be a focus on the facts, to include the consulting of experts, and to not include human interest elements. The practice of chronicling achieves this best, Bird and Dardenne (1988) say, because chronicling is just a survey of what is going on around us and the factual reporting of what is happening.

But while journalists want to chronicle, they know their audience wants stories, and thus journalists are forced to try to combine these two elements in a manner in which it will satisfy

their goal of objectivity, and produce a story that is understandable to readers. These two antithetical ideas—chronicling and storytelling—often get incorporated into the hard news/soft news dichotomy. (Bird & Dardenne, 1988). Hard news stories include facts from officials in order of importance and soft news involves more storytelling and human interest elements. In other words, the placement of a news story into the hard news or the soft news category influences both its content and its organization.

Cultural factors: Journalists are also influenced by cultural factors in constructing the news. One of those factors is the repertoire of stories within a specific culture. Bird and Dardenne (1988) say that news stories recreate well-known stories in a culture. Journalists fit new stories into old “molds” such as the bereavement story, the hero story, and the Cinderella story. According to Bird and Dardenne (1988) journalists take these stories and make them work for the new “news”. This influences the manner in which the stories can be told. If the story is a hero story, someone must be portrayed as the hero and the person against him or her as a villain. Because journalists have a privileged position in that people believe them to know more than the average person, once a journalist portrays someone as a hero or villain, that person is assumed to be so and is imbued with all that culture considers to be heroic or villainous (Bird & Dardenne, 1988).

Another cultural factor that influences news construction is the decision of whose story gets to be told and whose values are to be imbued in the news story. Bird and Dardenne (1988) say that within a culture there are some people who are believed to be best suited to have their stories told. They say that it is often those who are considered to be authorities or experts who are given agency in news stories. These people are usually the ones who are already in power in society. This can impact news construction by giving powerful people, such as law enforcement

officers or other officials, the voice in telling certain stories. This has particular impact for the construction of news about young people as will be discussed later in this chapter.

Societal Constructions of Adolescence

In addition to being influenced by factors in their newsrooms and out in the field, journalists are also influenced in their work by the ways in which society views the subjects of their reporting, and how they in turn view these subjects. Journalists draw upon “the intellectual tools....of their place and time in the world” (Ettema, Whitney & Wackman, 1987, p. 44) in writing and producing their stories, making it necessary to consider wide-spread societal notions of adolescence. This “encompassing social and cultural context” (Ettema et al, 1987, pg. 44) can influence elements of storytelling such as the types of stories told about youth. Scholars have focused on several topics regarding society’s ideas about adolescence, including the role teenagers play in the larger society around them, and the ways in which teenagers form an identity.

Adolescents in the world around them: The first way in which scholars have conceptualized teenagers is to try to define what a teenager is. This determination was first socio-cultural with the age stages of childhood, youth, and adulthood based upon a person’s separation from the family into which he or she was born. G. Stanley Hall suggested the onset of puberty as a shift away from childhood and toward adulthood (Griffin, 1997), therefore discovering what we have come to know as adolescence.

The combination of biological markers of adolescence along with socio-cultural markers means that adolescents are confusing. Auburn and Grady (2000) suggest that through their appearance and their behaviors, teenagers are viewed as being in-limbo. They are like children in

some ways and they are like adults in other ways. Teenagers therefore share the features of two groups (children and adults) that are normally seen as being distinct groups.

Teenagers also go through more transitions from childhood to adult-like roles now than they did in the past (Cieslik & Pollack, 2002) perhaps allowing more opportunities for adolescents to be not children but not young adults. Young people may also leave their families of origin (a sociological marker of adolescence) and return back home a number of times before leaving in order to marry and raise a family of their own. As such they blur the definitions of adulthood and independence normally associated with childhood and adulthood (Heath, 2002).

Adolescence has also been conceptualized not as a blurring of the lines between childhood and adulthood, but as a mismatch between the societal and biological markers of adolescence (Griffin, 1993). Adolescents have reached the biological determination of adolescence (puberty), but they have not reached the cultural mark (a long-term relationship and a move toward marriage and parenthood.) As such teenagers are seen as being in crisis (Griffin, 1993).

Adolescents therefore have an in-between status, making it difficult for adults to know how to think about them. Aubrum and Grady (2000) suggest that adults therefore have two stances when it comes to teenagers. The first is an empathetic stance in which they feel sorry for teenagers because they look and act differently from adults. The second is an objectifying stance in which adults judge teenagers and are critical of them because of their differences (Aubrum & Grady, 2000).

This objectifying stance makes adults see teenagers in a negative light. Giroux (1996) sees adolescents as a fugitive culture, which is difficult to understand and has the potential to be dangerous. He says this displaced view of young people is caused by economic conditions that

close off opportunities for a better life to certain groups, as well as "a shared postmodern space in which cultural representations merge into new hybridized forms of cultural performance" (p. 31). Males (1996) sees adolescents as scapegoats for adult problems. When officials focus on youth smoking, youth drug use, and youth crime and do not give the same attention to similar problems plaguing adults, adolescents are made out to be responsible for all the problems in society. Larger societal issues, such as the breakdown of traditional authority, are often projected onto teenagers and in this way, negative feelings towards these issues or ideas are manifested in negative feelings towards teenagers. (Males, 1996). Young people are associated with specific "social problems" solely or primarily as a consequence of their youth." (Griffin, 1997, pg. 21).

Formation of the Adolescent Identity: While adults are figuring out adolescents' place in the world around them, adolescents are trying to figure out who they are. In western societies, forming a sense of identity is considered "a key developmental task for adolescents (Grotevant, 1992, p.73.) Erikson said that adolescents must "incorporate yet transcend all previous identifications to produce a new whole" that is different from who he or she was as a child. (as cited in Kroger, 2004, p. 11). The importance of identity formation in adolescence suggests the value in examining the ways in which the literature has explored identity formation in general and the formation of the adolescent identity in particular.

Hall (1992) suggests that identity has gone through three concepts. First, there was the Enlightenment subject who was fully centered, with an inner core that stayed the same throughout life. Then there were sociological views on identity that maintained the idea of an inner core, but said this core was related to those around the subject—that the subject was "stitched into the world around him, stabilizing both subject and his or her cultural world" (Hall, 1992).

This connection of the individual to the world around him has been approached both developmentally and socio-culturally. Erikson and those who follow his developmental theory believe that identity has an “inner core which is the self and which requires continuity” (Kroger, 2004) within the external world. Erikson outlines eight stages of identity development, stage five being accomplished in adolescence. In adolescence one transforms oneself into someone related to but transcending who they were before. Healthy adolescents become self certain rather than self doubting, and they believe they can achieve rather than assuming they are going to fail (Kroger, 2004).

Identity is also defined by the balance between that which is the self and that which is apart from the self, other (Kegan, as cited in Kroger, 2004; Kroger, 2004). Kegan (as cited in Kroger, 2004) says that the boundary between that which is self, “the intrapsychic framework into which one is embedded and from which one is unable to create distance,” and that which is “other” changes throughout the lifecycle (p.10). Although the process is ongoing, Kroger (2004) suggests that adolescence is a time in which there is a “heightened activity for most in this intrapsychic interpersonal juggling act” (p.10). Blos sees identity formation in adolescence as a second individuation in which adolescents must “unhinge the old intrapsychic arrangement of that which has been considered self and that taken to be other. (as cited in Kroger, 2004, p. 10). Kegan (as cited in Kroger, 2004) suggests that identity involves the ability to “throw away something that was once a part of the self and make it into an object to a new restructured self” (p.10). What we once were, we now have, and Kegan says that young people make this transition in later adolescence.

Identity formation has also been considered through a socio-cultural perspective. Baumeister and Muraven (as cited in Kroger, 2004) suggest that identity reflects an adolescent’s

adaptation to the world around him or her. Lerner (as cited in Kroger, 2004) suggests a developmental contextualism in which there is an interaction between the person and his or her surroundings, with both influencing one another. Kroger (2004) suggests that this developmental contextualism allows people to mold themselves within their context in a way that will serve them best.

Despite their differences, inherent in all the aforementioned approaches to identity formation is the idea that it is a singular identity that is created. The postmodernist approach to identity breaks with this idea, suggesting that the subject is fragmented, “composed not of a single identity but of several sometimes contradictory or unresolved identities” (Hall, 1992, p. 276-277). Thus rather than being unitary, the self has “a range of plural identities to be theorized” (Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005, p. 102).

Hall (1992) suggests that this postmodern identity is caused by the breaking down of traditional notions of class, gender, and sexuality that undermine how we think of ourselves as “integrated subjects” (p. 275). According to Hall (1992) the postmodern identity involves a de-centering of the self that creates the loss of a stable “sense of self” (p. 275). The Enlightenment subject, “with a fixed and stable identity was de-centered into the open, contradictory, unfinished, fragmented identity of the postmodern subject.” (Hall, 1992, p. 291).

Rattansi and Phoenix (2005) outline several ways in which this happens. First, the self is de-centered because of the “relational character” of any given identity (Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005, p. 103). An identity only gains meaning because of its difference from another identity and because each identity relies on another one, no identity can ever be at the center (Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005). Second, different social positions including race, gender, and class, result in a variety of identities that are salient in different contexts or the potential for the formation of

hybrid identities that cross over racial, class, or gender lines. These different identities may be based upon different interests (Essed, 1994), or upon the use of identity as a “partial transitory and temporary position to promote change (Burman, 1994, p. 155). Because there are multiple identities, there is no one identity that is at the center of an individual. Third, the postmodern self is de-centered because it is always metaphorically “under construction” but will never be finished or finalized. Brah (1992) suggests that this incompleteness or unfixed nature of identity is historically and culturally bound so that “our cultural identities are simultaneously our cultures in process, but they acquire specific meanings in a given context” (p. 142-143).

The ways in which teenagers identify themselves suggest that their identity can be seen through a postmodern framework. They develop a range of identities that are salient in different contexts. Grotevant (1992) suggests a distinction between those aspects of one’s identity that are assigned, such as race or ethnicity, and those that are chosen, such as religion or values. He (1992) suggests that the assigned components of one’s identity can influence those aspects over which a person has control. Adolescents may compartmentalize aspects of their identity at certain times in order to deal with other aspects of their identity. When this happens, aspects of an assigned identity do not serve as a context for a chosen identity (Grotevant, 1992).

Teenagers also identify themselves not with traditional notions of race, gender, and class, but with more fluid distinctions. Their lifestyle choices and their decisions about what to purchase are more relevant to youth than are categories such as race and class (Shildrick, 2002, p. 43). Instead, there is a focus on achieving an individual rather than a collective identity. (Giddens (1991, as cited in Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005). Maffesoli and Bauman (as cited in Rattanski & Phoenix, 2005) talk about the replacement of traditional institutions of identity such as race, class, and gender with the development of ‘neotribes.’ These neotribes exist in malls,

concert halls and sports venues and are the places in which young people fashion their identities. Identity in such a consumer culture has been explored with attention to issues including the use of illegal drugs to form an identity (Shildrick, 2002) and the manner in which adolescents' engagement with dance music allows them to frame a sense of self (Carrington & Wilson, 2002). These are non-traditional means of identifying oneself and therefore the teen identity can be seen as postmodern.

News Coverage of Teenagers

Larger societal views on adolescence and the manner in which adolescents formulate an identity, as well as the aforementioned organizational, cultural, and social factors that operate in and among news organizations, influence how journalists choose to report on teenagers.

Teenagers are a cohort that is not directly involved in the production and dissemination of television news and is oftentimes only the subject of it when they have done something very wrong or something extremely good.

Males (1996) says journalists adhere to narrative structures in reporting on youth. Journalists construct youth-related stories to fit into archetypal stories, such as the honor student falling from grace or the good kid turned bad. Information that is not consistent with these narratives--such as poverty, lack of education, or history of abuse among youths--is omitted from stories when this information doesn't fit within the parameters of these archetypal stories. (Males 1999). The societal factors are in a sense disconnected from the problem at hand. Doing this "removes responsibility from a social system that often sees youth as simply another market niche" (Giroux, 1996, p. 29). It is the individual who is failing society, and not the society that is failing the individual.

The reliance on certain voices in news coverage also influences the construction of youth-related stories in the news. A number of scholars found that adult experts were often given voice whereas teenagers were not. Dorfman and Woodruff (1998) found that in stories about youth violence, youth are rarely given the voice to tell their stories. Instead it is law enforcement officers or legal officials who talk. Their words, language, and values are therefore embedded in these stories about youth, with little opportunity for adolescents to talk about themselves. Tovares (2000) found that in reporting on Mexican American youth gang members, reporters relied on a small number of people for information, including police and public information officers. Mazzarella and Pecora (2007) found that news stories about adolescent girls used quotes from psychologists, authors, researchers, and other experts more often than they utilized quotes from the young girls who were the subjects of these stories.

The presence of adult and youth voices in news stories may also contribute to the tone of the stories themselves. Mazzarella and Pecora (2007) distinguished between optimistic, pessimistic, and hopeful stories, and found that those stories that included quotes from adults were more likely to be pessimistic than were those stories in which the girls themselves were quoted.

Teenagers are often reported on with what Males (1996) calls drive-by journalism, whereby journalists focus on a few high profile events rather than on the underlying societal factors that could play roles in these events. Dorfman and Woodruff (1998) found that criminal events involving youth were episodic—focusing on a particular crime without relating it to other possible factors, such as poverty and lack of education. The effect is that young people appear to be totally to blame for the bad things that happen to them.

The same is true when it comes to non-criminal events. Males (1996) says even problems that plague society are framed as youth problems, even when they are not unique to young people. He says that the term teen-pregnancy conveys the notion that it is young boys getting young girls pregnant, when in fact it is adult men who are largely responsible. The term youth crime suggests that young people are the ones responsible for the majority of crimes, when in fact it is adult males. The same is true of smoking, with officials framing the addiction to cigarettes not as something that is plaguing adults, but as a result of a poor decision to start the habit in adolescence. (Males, 1996).

These manners in covering teenagers in the news can be traced back to Males' (1996) notion of the teenager as a scapegoat. Teenagers come to be considered as the cause of violence and crime, as the root of problems in society. Journalists therefore may be less prone to "dig deeper" to find blame with a different group or with society as a whole. Blaming teenagers may seem natural, since society already believes them to be the cause of its problems. It may also be traced back to notions of adolescents as in crisis, as discussed by Griffin (1993).

This type of news coverage of teenagers can also be traced back to the organizational factors operating in newsrooms. A newsroom's reliance on business norms (Bantz, 1985) can contribute to what Males (1996) calls "drive-by journalism". Finding the underlying causes of teen violence, such as childhood abuse, family member imprisonment, or poverty, requires that journalists have the ability to thoroughly research a story to find these facts. Journalists need to have the time to do so, as well as the understanding that doing so will be valued. In a situation in which business norms are implemented—where story quantity takes precedence over story quality—journalists might not have the time to devote to uncovering these other factors that could play a role in teenagers' violent or criminal activities.

Entertainment norms (Bantz, 1985) could also influence such stories. If the audience and its reaction to a particular story play a role in what is covered and how it is covered—as would be the case in a news organization that operates under entertainment norms-- then there could be some impetus not to make these high profile cases appear to be the result of underlying problems. Males (1996) says that it does not behoove a news organization to upset a powerful politician or group. If events involving teen violence can be linked back to societal problems, then the message is that adults are failing youth, and that is not a good message to send. Therefore, journalists frame the stories in such a way that adults are empowered. Instead of blaming adults for creating a world that lets children be poor, uneducated, and abused, the news shows how adults are helping to solve the problem. The news shows how criminals are punished, how drug use is being curbed through certain initiatives and programs—quick fixes that allow adults to step in and help protect young people from themselves and others, and protect society from the problems brought on by youth (Males, 1996).

The employment of certain voices in youth-related stories, which contribute to the ways in which teenagers are covered in the news, may be a result of cultural influences on journalists. As Bird and Dardenne (1988) say, it is often people who have some sort of authority or power that are considered to be more qualified to speak on a certain topic. The women in Mazzearella and Pecora's (2007) study were given authority status in the sense that they had written books or conducted research in the area of adolescent girls and they were quoted in news stories imbuing them with expert status. And the news stories were often about these women's books or studies. It was a double sense of expertise in the sense that not only were these psychologists, authors, and scholars talking about young people, they were—through their books and research studies—

setting the agenda for what was important and newsworthy to talk about with regard to adolescent girls.

In addition to being an outgrowth of cultural factors establishing certain people as more important to the telling of stories, the fact that these experts were the ones talking in news stories about young girls may also be due to Moloch and Lester's (1974) notion of habitual access to journalists. Although these women were not rich or in high political positions, they were "powerful" in the sense that they were knowledgeable about an issue that was considered to be important in the 1990's. The idea of the state of adolescent girls was an important one, and that these women were knowledgeable in the field could have made them valuable to journalists. In addition, they made themselves available and easy to cover through publicity surrounding their studies and their publications. The fact that they are the ones that speak influence the manner in which these teenager-related issues come to be viewed because direct quotation is "a powerful journalistic tool that can be used to influence news media consumers' perceptions of reality and judgment of issues." (Gibson & Zillmann, 1993, p. 799).

The News Atmosphere

Newspapers and television news are just two sources through which people seek out information. The Internet is becoming increasingly valuable as a news source for both adults and youth. According to the Pew Foundation, (2004) the Internet is on par with traditional news sources when it comes to people searching out election-based news. This is particularly the case among youth. According to the Pew Foundation, Internet use among adolescents steadily increased from 2000-2004. In addition, young people report using search engines to look for news, and relying on email both to send news stories and to receive them (Pew, 2004).

Both teenagers and adults rely on the Internet for news, but they are accessing it at different times of the day. Adults generally go online for news during the day while teenagers are primarily online in the evenings—from about 6-10pm. Teenagers' online news engagement tends to be more frequent on the weekdays, when they say they spend about 2-3 hours looking at news (Pew, 2004).

A number of traditional media sources seem to have capitalized on the strength of the Internet. National news stations maintain websites as an ancillary to their news broadcasts where people can find additional information about stories and can link to related information. These sites may be incorporated into traditional news stories, with reporters and anchors directing people to the station's website in the course of the newscast itself. These sites affiliated with traditional news sources are valued by teenagers, with a majority of the teenagers in a Chicago-area study going to such sites more frequently to find news (Northwestern University, 2008).

Traditional media outlets, attentive to the movement of youth to the Internet, have devised Internet content geared specifically for teenagers and adolescents. PBS posts stories from the youth-oriented News Hour Extra to its website. There teenagers and adolescents can find some of the top stories of the day along with additional stories that can help them understand important events. CNN has a Student News page and Channel One posts transcripts of its youth-based programming to the web. Their websites also include special features for teenagers as well as for parents and teachers. Teenagers can link to additional information about things like careers, college, and education, and can find background information to help them understand a current issue. Channel One and News Hour Extra also post a podcast of the day's broadcast, as do many traditional news outlets. This video is perhaps a hook for teenagers, who

say that they pay attention to things like video and photographs and those features that “catch their eye” (Northwestern University, 2008).

In addition to incorporating content geared toward youth, the Internet also allows youth to be in the driver’s seat when it comes to creating and executing stories. The Internet site LA Youth promotes itself as “the newspaper by and about teens”, (www.layouth.com) and features a staff of more than 30 high school journalists from middle and high schools across Los Angeles County. New Youth Connections (NYC) is the newspaper “by and for New York youth.” (www.youthcomm.org). Shout Out is an Internet “newspaper by and for teens”. It “features in-depth reporting on cutting edge issues” as well as essays and poetry. It is based in California’s Central Coast. The Charleston Gazette (West Virginia) sponsors Flipside, the “site of all things teen”, which is also available online at flipside.com. The site features news stories and sports stories, as well as music and movie reviews by area teenagers. The Jacksonville Daily News (North Carolina) and the Modesto Bee also have teen sections in which teenagers do the writing. Stories are posted online making them accessible to teenagers across the country.

Theoretical Framework: Representation

The words used to talk about people or issues, as well as who is given voice to talk about such people and issues in news sources, both on television and online, contribute to the ways in which these individuals or topics come to be represented in our society. What we are told about something, and who it is that does the telling, have ramifications for what it is that we come to know about that person, group, or issue. Stories that are told become part of our culture, and the context against which we come to understand people, topics, and issues. For a large number of adults, the media is their only access to information about young people (Aubrum & Grady, 2000). The picture of youth painted by the media becomes all they know about youth, and this

mediated representation becomes a reality. Theories of representation can therefore prove useful for this project in elucidating how media portrayals come to represent adolescents both in news sources geared toward adults and those intended for a teenaged audience.

Representation is defined as the manner in which we make meaning of the concepts in our minds through language that we use to communicate these concepts and ideas (Hall, 2003). As such representation can be thought of as two processes. First, we organize concepts in our minds in a number of different ways, including organization by similarities and differences, organization by cause and effect, and organization by sequencing. Next, those concepts have to be linked to words or images, called signs (Hall, 2003).

These signs may resemble what it is they stand for (iconic) or they may be based upon an agreed upon cultural code linking them with that object or concept (indexical) (Hall, 2003). For example, we have linked the sign TREE to the object that is large, with a brown trunk, branches, and leaves. It is because we have decided that the sign and the object should be linked that they are. This object that we think of as a tree could just as easily have been linked to the sign DOG. The connection between the two is arbitrary (Hall, 2003).

In order for concepts or ideas to mean anything, they need to be communicated through language. There are three approaches to how that happens, and they differ on the notion of what or who brings meaning to an object or concept. The reflective approach (Hall, 2003) says that meaning is in objects and the language used to describe them reflects that meaning. The speaker does not play a central role in meaning-making, because what one is speaking about already means something. The intentional approach (Hall, 2003) suggests just the opposite; the object in and of itself means nothing. It is the speaker who gives meaning to the object by the language that he or she uses to talk about that concept or object. The constructivist approach suggests that

meaning is not in the object or in the words used to talk about the object or concept. Meaning is instead in the shared cultural systems used to make sense of the world around us (Hall, 2003).

Several scholars have suggested constructivist approaches to representation through language. Saussure suggests that language is culturally bound (Hall, 2003). People must adhere to certain rules when speaking in order to ensure that they are understood. Saussure's approach, known as semiotics, says that signs have meanings, and because cultures rely on meaning, cultures must use signs. By studying signs and what they mean, we can learn about that culture. Saussure looked at both signs and language as consisting of two separate parts. He said that each sign can be broken down into a signifier and a signified. The signifier is a word or image that you connect with an object. The signified is the concept that the word or image was linked to in your mind. Meaning lies in the relationship between the two concepts (Hall, 2003).

The relationship is culturally determined but is arbitrary. It also changes with time. For example, the signifier black at one time was connected to the concept (signified) of darkness or evil. When people started to use the phrase, "Black is beautiful", black, the signifier, came to represent something different—the concept of beauty (Hall, 2003). The change in relationship between signifier and signified changed the meaning of black from darkness or evil to beauty. Derrida (1977) suggests that there is never a final meaning, but meaning is always deferred by other meaning.

Because the relationship between signifier and signified is not fixed, Saussure said that makes interpretation important to representation. There could be multiple meanings to any given sign because of how it is interpreted. To use the above example, depending upon whether black is linked with darkness or with beauty, it will represent different things. In other words, the sign can represent more than one concept.

Saussure also said that it is only through its difference from another sign that any given sign achieves its meaning. According to Saussure, black means something because it is not white, feminine has meaning in its difference from masculine (Hall, 2003). But these binary oppositions are not neutral. One is always dominant, suggesting a difference in power between the two (Derrida, as cited in Hall, 2003).

Saussure also looked at language as consisting of two different parts. The first, the *langue*, are the rules that govern the language and allow for someone to be understood. The *parole* is the various utterances or phrases you can make using the rules governing the language. Although a person can say phrases that are unique to them and that have never been said before in that way, language is still not an individual process. People are still constrained by the rules of the language if they want to be understood by other people.

Barthes (1973) suggested a cultural level to representation consisting of two separate processes. The first, denotation, involved linking an object with a word or image. For example, if you see something made out of denim with a zipper and buttons, you link that to “jeans”. In the second step, connotation, “jeans” are viewed within a cultural ideology and come to represent something (Barthes, 1973). In our culture, jeans may be linked with being casual or informal.

Barthes (1973) suggests that this two-step process plays a role in terms of sustaining certain cultural myths. The manner in which something such as jeans comes to represent a concept in a culture is dependent upon the overarching cultural ideology in place. Barthes (1973) says what happens is that people link objects with signs in their minds, and then these signs become the signifier in the next step of representation. What the signifier comes to represent is dependent upon the ideology in place. For example, you see a person in sneakers and jeans, standing in a meeting room at an office. You determine from that that this is a person dressed in

jeans and sneakers for work. That then becomes the signifier and the signified—the concept this is representing—is that this person is dressed casually for work. In order for you to come up with that meaning for the person in jeans and sneakers at work, there would have to be the myth in place that Americans dress formally for work. In that case, this person is dressed casually. If this myth were different---if instead it were that Americans wear shorts to work—the person in jeans and sneakers would not be viewed as informally dressed.

Foucault had a discursive approach to representation, which suggested that meaning was not in language, but in larger cultural aspects called discourses (Hall, 2003). Foucault (1977) said concepts get their meaning from the discourses about them and, while they can exist outside the discourse, they cannot mean anything outside of that discourse. Discourse comes to represent our knowledge about a particular subject or concept at a particular time, and it is this knowledge that allows for the exercise of power by particular people at particular times (Foucault, 1977). Foucault's discursive approach to representation involves three concepts: power and knowledge, discourse, and the question of the subject (Hall, 2003).

Foucault suggests that power exists at three moments. First, there is the development of a particular knowledge base concerning a concept or subject. Next, based on that knowledge, there is a determination of what counts as knowledge about that topic or subject, as well as how to deal with the people who fit that topic or subject (Hall, 2003). The final step is subjectivity, in which people become represented by their relation to the discourse—as lecturer, student, patient or doctor, to name a few (Foucault, 1977).

Knowledge, according to Foucault, is a function of discourse on a particular subject or issue. It is through the discourse on a particular subject that that subject comes to be defined and to have meaning. Discourse, according to Foucault, gives us a way to: identify a concept or

subject; tells us how we can talk about that concept or subject (in other words what counts as knowledge about that subject or concept); tells us how we can identify people who fit into that concept or subject; and how to deal with those who fit into the concept or subject (Hall, 2003). For example, the discourse on AIDS would include what AIDS is, how we can talk about it, how we can identify someone who suffers from it, and how to handle those people who have the disease.

Foucault (1977) suggests that at certain points in time certain people are able to create the discourse while others cannot. He gives the example of psychiatrists and the mentally ill. Foucault says that psychiatrists were the ones who developed ideas about what constituted mental illness and then were given responsibility for identifying those who were mentally ill, based upon the characteristics that the psychiatrists themselves had established. Based on this knowledge, psychiatrists were then able to come up with ways to handle these mentally ill people so as to help them and to protect people from the possible dangers that they could inflict. “The same discourse, characteristic of the way of thinking or the state of knowledge at any one time will appear across a range of texts and as forms of conduct at a number of different institutional sites within society, something Foucault called the episteme” (Hall, 2003, p. 44).

Foucault suggests that there is a dominant discourse—a dominant knowledge—that influences how we regard people and therefore how they are treated. Foucault suggests that this dominant knowledge base can come about through a process of battle lines or one of contingency. By battle lines, Foucault suggests that at some point, several competing sets of knowledge exist on a topic but that one discourse or knowledge base wins out and institutions are formed based upon that knowledge. When another discourse wins out, new institutions form around that discourse (Foucault, 1977).

Foucault uses the example of the treatment of mentally ill people. He says that at first people who we would now say are mentally ill were deemed “mad” and were assumed to be irrational, just like criminals were assumed to be irrational. Because what was “known” was that “mad” people and criminals were the same, they were all treated the same way and placed in the same institutions. Then, a new discourse—a new knowledge—emerged that suggested that mentally ill people were not like criminals but were instead sick and needed treatment. As a result of that, the institutions that existed that held “mad” people and criminals together were changed—and asylums, specifically for those who were not “mad” but sick and needed help emerged (Foucault, 1977).

Another way that a specific “knowledge” comes to be dominant is when two seemingly different fields or ideas come together to the extent that the union of the two seems to be natural. Foucault says this was the case for psychiatry and the penal system. He said that these two fields did not really have anything to do with each other, but at a certain point, their dual purposes served one another. By studying patients, psychiatrists came to know things about them. In order to be able to control those who were criminals, information about them needed to be known. As a result, psychiatry and the penal system came to be able to work together to be able to learn about and control those who were sick or violent (Foucault, 1977).

Foucault suggests that dominant discourses cannot be overthrown by just trying to negate the elements of the discourse. In other words, people who are marginalized by the dominant discourse cannot try to “take back” the discourse that has marginalized them. Foucault says doing so can serve to strengthen the dominant discourse in two ways. First of all, negating the dominant discourse perpetuates that discourse. In addition, if you offer up counter arguments that

aren't organized into a unified discourse you run the risk that these opposing ideas will be incorporated into the dominant discourse, serving to strengthen it (Foucault, 1977).

He suggests that there needs to be a unified discourse that can replace the dominant one. He suggests that this can come about in two different ways, which he refers to as political genealogies. In the first type of political genealogy, a group becomes a collective "we" and then develops a unified oppositional discourse. This new knowledge can overcome the old knowledge and the institutions set up around the old knowledge fall apart as new institutions to deal with the new knowledge are created. In the second type of political genealogy, knowledge that was submerged comes to the surface and calls into question the dominant discourse. The dominant discourse is thereby weakened (Foucault, 1977).

Whatever this dominant discourse is, whoever "constructs" it, sets the knowledge which is then implicated in the exercise of power. According to Foucault, knowledge is at the center of the ability to control people. "Far from preventing knowledge, power produces it." (Foucault, 1977, p. 59). It is power-knowledge, the manner in which knowledge of something can allow for it to be modified or controlled in some way. Foucault says biopower allows for the operation of power-knowledge. Biopower is the way in which knowledge of aspects of life can allow for control, by curbing some things and promoting or encouraging others within society.

Foucault suggests that knowledge can actually make itself true. He talks about a regime of truth, which is what we believe to be true at a particular time. He says that once knowledge is acted upon in the real world it becomes true (Hall, 2003). The example that Hall gives is that of single mothers. He says that while it is not "true" that single mothers are bad in some way, if a community punishes single mothers then it becomes "true" that single mothering is bad (Hall, 2003).

Foucault's notion of power then is not as simple as the notion of right or wrong, legitimate or illegitimate. Foucault suggests that power is net-like, operating at all levels, from institutions such as schools and prisons, down to the power exercised by parents over their children (Foucault, 1977). He suggests the concept of disciplinary power which he says works not by enforcing certain ideas on people but by incorporating characteristics into the individual. In doing so, the individual becomes better at performing a task while at the same time becoming less autonomous through a process of normalization which separates normal from abnormal (Foucault, 1977).

Normalization works in the following way: In a setting, such as a factory, there will be a middle ground of performance. This becomes the norm or normal performance. Those who are at or above that level are considered to be normal and those below it, abnormal. Over time, this normal comes to be seen as the natural level at which a task can be performed and then that becomes the "truth" about how a person can perform. Once this has been established, people are then judged by how they conform. Those who can achieve that level are considered "good" and those who can't "bad". It is now not just an evaluation of someone's work, but a judgment of their worth as an individual. That move from judging performance to judging worth is what weakens people's ability to be autonomous (Foucault, 1977).

Foucault says that power always works on the body but there is a changing notion of the body. He uses the example of prisoners. At one time prisoners were punished by being tortured, to literally enforce the power of the sovereign onto their bodies. Then people realized that power could be instilled on the body by subjecting it to strict control and constant observation. Then there was the idea of panopticism (Foucault, 1977) in which prisoners were locked up in jails and watched, by a supposed man in a tower who could always see them but whom they could not see.

Because they felt they were always being watched, prisoners conformed to certain behaviors. This was in spite of the fact that the “panopticon” may have never been focused on them.

This idea of the “panopticon”—of being constantly watched—exists outside of the prison, Foucault suggests. He says we all live in a carceral archipelago in which we conform to certain behaviors because we feel that there is always someone watching us even if in reality, no one is watching. As such, we become disciplined to act in certain manners. Burke (1992) talks about how this disciplining power works on women within the confines of what Burke says is a patriarchal society. Women feel as if they are living with a panoptical male connoisseur who is always watching and who expects certain behaviors from them, such as wearing makeup or high heels. Women confine to these behaviors and the behaviors come to define who women are (Burke 1992). The female subject is therefore created.

Subjects are both created by and sustained by the discourse of which they are a part (Hall, 2003). People become something based upon what it is we think we know about them. Power over people comes through their being subjected by the discourse, as would be the case for women, in Burke’s example.

The subject is produced by the discourse in two ways: The discourse produces a subject, “figures who personify the particular forms of knowledge which the discourse produces. The subjects are specific to specific discursive regimes” (Hall, 2003). The discourse also produces subject positions—a place from which one must approach the text in order for it to make sense (Hall, 2003). This is analogous to the concept of putting oneself in someone else’s shoes. Hall (2003) uses the example of male pornography, suggesting that in order for the discourse about pornography to make sense, it must be viewed from the position of the male voyeur. From another subject position, this discourse would not make sense.

In the field of media studies, scholars have examined how news coverage contributes to discourses about youth and to the production of a teen subject. Bird and Dardenne (1985) say that the individual stories that journalists tell become part of a bigger story about our lives, how we know things about young people and how we talk about them. Among the youth-related discourses present in the news are those of the “imperiled youth” (Gilliam, 2001; Dorfman & Woodruff, 1998), youth in crisis, (Mazzarella & Pecora, 1995; Males, 1996), and “youth as alien” (Aubrum & Grady, 2000). Such representations of youth are often achieved through intra-story elements including: story language, voice, tone, and through the narratives associated with youth-related stories. These inter-story elements may often be tied back to organizational, social, and cultural forces acting within news organizations.

Gilliam (2001) suggests that the media contributes to a notion of imperiled youth based upon the types of stories that are covered involving youth as well as the manner in which they are covered. The imperiled youth discourse is that the world is dangerous and that adolescents are in jeopardy from themselves and from others around them. Only through various adult-created initiatives and through education can these dangerous behaviors be stopped so as to prevent harm to young people (Gilliam, 2001).

Stories about youth are placed into a master narrative of danger in the absence of adult intervention through the types of stories that are told about them. Aqtash, Seif and Seif (2005) found that children were rarely represented outside “the narrative of violence and conflict by which they are very much defined (p. 384). Dorfman and Woodruff (1998) and Gilliam (2001) see it as a result of the types of stories that are told. Gilliam (2001) sees this notion of youth in danger as an outgrowth of the types of youth-related stories covered in the news. The high rate of crime-related youth stories contributes to this notion of imperiled youth by portraying youth as

either the victims or the perpetrators of these crimes. Medical stories focus on things such as unsafe athletic equipment that young people may use or unsafe foods they may eat. The stories create a notion of impending danger for young people, danger that can be abated by initiatives such as crime-prevention and helmet laws, all initiatives imposed by adults (Gilliam, 2001).

This imperiled youth discourse could be an outgrowth of both organizational and social factors of news construction. The imperiled youth discourse (Gilliam, 2001) may play out well in a news organization that relies on entertainment norms—an organizational factor in which stories are based upon a notion of what the audience wants to see and hear (Bantz, 1985). In the case of network news, that audience is largely adults. The imperiled youth discourse (Gilliam, 2001) suggests that although young people are in danger, there are steps that adults can take to lessen this danger. Adults are therefore empowered. They have the ability to help keep young people from being harmed.

The imperiled youth discourse (Gilliam, 2001) could also be a result of the social factor of habitual access to journalists that Moloch and Lester (1977) describe. It would be powerful groups, such as child safety groups or public officials, who would be able to have access to journalists and who would be considered to be important enough to cover. After all, if the safety of adolescents is of concern to society, then those who are believed to know about safety would be considered important to talk to. Journalists would therefore have an impetus to go to a press conference by local law enforcement or consumer safety groups. The story that results will be geared toward that of the group. (Moloch & Lester, 1977). In the case of law enforcement, the idea that could be portrayed in a news story could be that only through that group's programs can we really curb the danger to young people.

Many scholars have also advanced a crisis discourse surrounding youth (Males, 1996; 1999; Mazzarella & Pecora, 2007). This crisis discourse suggests that young people are dangerous, violent, and troubled, and getting worse. Mazzarella and Pecora (2007) found that journalists conveyed a sense of young girls in crisis largely through the language used in stories. Journalists and the people whom they interviewed—psychologists and book authors, rather than the teenage girls themselves—used phrases such as “rocky road” or “risky business” when talking about young girls. They used comparisons between teens today and past teens to show that while young girls have many of the same body image and self esteem problems that have always plagued girls, things are worse for them today (Mazzarella & Pecora, 2007). Males (1999) says news stories inflate the number of youth offenders and drug dealers and play with statistics to make it look like crime and drug use are going up among young people, when in fact these two trends are on a downward slope.

This crisis discourse (Males, 1996; 1999; Mazzarella & Pecora, 2007) may result from both cultural and social factors associated with news construction. Bird and Dardenne (1988) suggest that cultural aspects involve whose story gets to be told and who gets to tell the stories. Adults, namely those who are considered experts in society—in this case psychologists and law enforcement officers-- are given the opportunity to do the telling. When adult experts are given voice to speak for girls the stories are more negative and more suggestive of a bleak outlook for young people (Mazzarella & Pecora, 2007).

These experts—police and law enforcement officers as well as scholars and writers—are also likely to have better access to journalists. Police officers and law enforcement officials are considered to be experts on crime. They can hold a press conference and are likely to attract

journalists who are looking for the story. These groups can, as mentioned above, package the story in the way that suits their purposes, thus influencing the story that the journalist tells.

A third discourse surrounding adolescence in society involves that of youth as alien, or “other” (Aubrum & Grady, 2000). When people hear about youth in extraordinarily bad (or good) situations in the news media, this becomes the norm associated with young people. As a result, normal adolescents who lead normal lives—going to school, doing homework, spending time with friends—come to be seen as abnormal. In this sense, the normal becomes abnormal or strange (Aubrum & Grady, 2000). Because many adults do not have first-hand exposure to teenagers, they have nothing to counter these media images.

Aubrum and Grady (2000) say that adults understand that teenagers are in-limbo—no longer children but not yet adults—however the media try to separate teenagers from adults. Mazzarrella and Pecora (2007) found an “us/them” dichotomy in the way that adults talked about young girls. The adult world and the teenage world were made to be separate. Heinz-Knowles (2000) found a similar pattern in prime-time television programming. Adults often referred to young people as youths or minors, distinguishing them from adults. Young people even referred to themselves in this dichotomous manner (Heines-Knowles, 2000).

Aubrum and Grady (2000) say this representation of alienation or “otherness” of youth may be a function of the structural elements of television news. Journalists’ desire to remain objective leads journalists to remain detached from the stories they tell, and to not offer any emotion. Because journalists are seen as role models for the audience (Bird & Dardenne, 1988), when journalists are emotion-less, the audience incorporates that stance as well. Viewers employ an objectifying gaze toward teenagers—judging them for what makes them different. Local news programs’ organization also encourages this objectifying gaze. New programs, particularly at the

local level, include a high number of short stories and the stories go quickly—leaving little opportunity for the viewer to empathize with the subject of the story. When the story subject is a young person, it means the adults do not have an opportunity to feel emotions toward this young person.

Research Questions

Given the role of traditional broadcast news in creating what it is we come to “know” about teenagers, coupled with the importance the Internet plays in news creation and news consumption among teenagers, this study seeks to explore the ways in which these news sources represent youth. What issues are addressed in stories in each type of news source and how do these stories represent teenagers and adolescents?

This study will examine news coverage of youth in three media sources: youth-related stories written by adults for a general audience on network news broadcasts on CBS, NBC, and ABC; news stories written by adults for youth and made available to them online through cnnstudentnews.com and channelone.com, as well as on television through each station’s daily broadcasts; and Internet news publications written by youth for youth audiences on the websites layouth.com, youthcomm.org, Modbee and Listen UP!. These sources on network news, adult-generated media for teens, and teen-produced Internet websites will be evaluated over a two-month time period (October-November 2007) to answer the following research questions regarding youth representations in this news atmosphere available to both youth and adults:

RQ1: What issues regarding youth are covered in network television news, adult-generated news sources geared towards teenagers, and youth-produced Internet webzines geared toward a youth audience?

RQ2: What are the representations of teenagers and adolescents in network news, adult-generated news sources for teenagers, and youth-produced Internet webzines geared toward a youth audience?

RQ3: How do these representations fit into the established youth news discourses?

To answer these questions a textual analysis will be conducted of youth-related news stories on network television news, adult-generated news sources for youth, and youth-produced webzines geared toward youth.

As with much qualitative research, the findings of this study depend upon what I, as the researcher, bring to the research, and how I position myself with regard to my data. I am a graduate student and researcher, unaffiliated with any of the news sources that I am examining. I was not involved in the story production process, nor did I witness any of these journalists producing their stories, so I do not know anything more about the stories than what I read. I do not know why such stories were chosen over others, or what information was left out of any individual story. The patterns and the themes that I see in the texts, and the ways in which I see these manifest and latent meanings contributing to the representations of teenagers are not influenced by any of this extra knowledge as it might be if I had been involved with these stories prior to their broadcasting or printing.

On the other hand, I have first-hand knowledge of the news production process through my past experiences working as a news producer for a network affiliate. I therefore understand

some of the restrictions that are put on journalists in terms of how they are able to tell their stories, as well as the guidelines that are implicit in any news organization. I recognize that what I see in a news story is not necessarily what “might have been”, and that stories represent not necessarily the story that the journalist wanted to tell, but the story that they were able to tell. A number of factors can get in the way including but not limited to strict procedures in the newsroom, as well as just being unable to find the people whom you want to find in order to tell a particular story. This makes me very attentive to not just what is in a story, but what is left out.

I am also familiar with some of the challenges that come with covering teenagers. As a news producer I was told on several occasions that teenager-related issues amounted to feature stories or evergreen stories that were not practical to cover when resources were limited. I was told that teenagers are covered when there is something specific that they have done. Witnessing first-hand this approach to the coverage of teenagers definitely made me look for news hooks when pitching a teen-related story as a journalist. It is likely that it will influence how I think about teen-related news, and therefore how I interpret the meaning of teen-related stories, perhaps making me more sensitive to the larger implications of individual teenagers’ stories.

While I am approaching these news texts as someone who had no part in their creation, I cannot divorce myself from my own journalistic experiences, and the influences that my years in the newsroom will have on what I “see” in the texts that I analyze. It is therefore important that I recognize my own position as wearing if not two, then maybe 1 ½ hats. I am a researcher, but I am also a former broadcast journalist who, just a few years ago, was selecting and writing the same types of stories that I am now analyzing.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

This chapter will first outline the analytic framework that informs the study of news representations of teenagers in network news, adult-generated news for teenagers, and teen-produced Internet webzines. It will then outline the manner in which the three news sources were selected for inclusion in the study, how individual stories from each of the media sources were chosen, and how prevalent teen-related stories were in each of the three media sources under investigation. The prevalence of teen-related stories in any one medium is important to consider because the amount of time devoted to teenagers is an indication of just how important they are in each of the three media sources.

Story Analysis: Textual Analysis

A text is anything from which we make meaning and textual analysis involves examining a text to try to find the likely ways in which a particular culture at a particular time would make sense of the text or find meaning in it (McKee, 2003). Hall (1975) called texts “literary and visual constructs employing symbolic means, shaped by rules, conventions, and traditions intrinsic to the use of language (p. 17), and he distinguished between their manifest and latent meanings. Textual analysis has as its focus getting at those latent meanings, at what the text emphasizes, rather than what can be quantified by it (Hall, 1975).

Hall (1975) suggests that news texts “employ verbal, rhetorical, visual, and presentational means” to give news significance (p. 18). He says that the styles of individual reporters or of the new organizations themselves involve “a system of meaningful choices” (p. 18). It is therefore

important to consider writing styles, language, and the means through which news is presented in a newspaper, or in other news sources, in order to understand the meanings in the text. It is a literary-linguistic approach to analysis of a text (Hall, 1975).

Textual analysis has been undertaken from a variety of approaches. A structuralist approach begins with defined patterns and categories and places elements of the text within those categories (Saukko, 2003). This most closely resembles what Hall (1975) suggests is content analysis. McKee (2003) calls these the deep structures that are in the text but that aren't directly apparent. The realist perspective to textual analysis considers one text to be the most real and judges other texts against that one, (McKee, 2003) while the post-structuralist approach (McKee, 2003) looks for differences between texts assuming that there is not one correct text or analysis. Post-structuralist textual analysis (McKee, 2003) begins with a question in mind, and from there, only the bits and pieces of the text that can help to answer this question are included in analysis.

Textual analysis has also been undertaken with a cultural studies approach in which the text is seen in relation to the time, place, and cultural in which it was produced. Dow (1996) suggests that television texts can not "be extracted out of their historical or cultural milieu and given timeless meaning." (p.7). Her study of feminism in television programs in the 1970's, 1980's and 1990's includes analysis of the programs as well as analysis of articles in the news media. Saukko (2003) says that this inter-textuality allows for a better and more grounded analysis of any text. In an analysis of the launch of Sputnik Lule (1991) says the following:

In the final analysis, the press selected its primary themes, its main actors, its own drama to enact.....The language of the press drew from cultural contexts to explain and report Sputnik. By use of that language, the news confirmed and sustained that context. (p. 85).

Hall (1975) suggests that in analyzing a text, one should “work back to the social and historical process through the necessary mediations of form and appearance, rhetoric and style” (p. 21). It is this understanding of the “deep structures” that allows for an understanding of the text in relation to the society in which it is produced (Hall, 1975, p. 24). Once you know what it is that the text means, you can look at this meaning within a larger context.

Media accounts have proven useful for meaning-making. They have been used to understand representations in the discourse about certain groups of people and to learn about the acceptable behaviors and norms of particular cultures (Esterberg, 2000). They have also been utilized to: gain an understanding of how women negotiate the meaning of feminism through popular television programs (Dow 1996), and to answer questions about the femininity of women’s magazines (Hinnant, 2007).

News sources, specifically, have been extensively examined as texts, on issues including: the space race (Lule, 1991), foreign nations, (Lester-Roushanzamir & Raman, 1999; Lester, 1994), terrorism (Lule, 1993), and race (Lule, 1995). Lester (1994) says that the focus of textual analysis is to reveal not how a version of the news compares with what really happened, but instead to examine the constructed nature of that reporting and what some of the dimensions of that construction are. In the examination of printed texts, Hall (1975) says “significant stylistic, visual, linguistic, presentational, rhetorical, features” are suggestive of how the text is to be understood” (Hall, 1975, p. 22).

Among these features is a focus on language in news texts. In newspaper stories, language includes an analysis of words and phrases used by journalists in the context of the stories that they write (Lule, 1993, 1995; Lester, 1992); analyses of journalists’ language in combination with the language of those people interviewed within the context of news stories

(Lule, 1991); as well as the discourse of an individual reporter through news articles that he or she writes about a particular subject (Lester, 1994).

The language of a text has often been examined with regard to its role in the creation of otherness, a construction of an “us” and a “them”. This comes about in different ways, often with regard to foreign nations and peoples. They may be represented as quaint, fabulous, or deprived, or solely through their relationship to the United States (Lester, 1994). This is akin to what Hall (1975) says were the discursive strategies utilized by Europeans in the new world. “Others” were talked about as an object of fantasy and idealization, lumped into the description of “Indians” despite coming from very different cultures. “The Europeans stood vis-à-vis the others in positions of dominant power. This influenced what they saw and how they saw it as well as what they did not see” (Hall, 1992, p. 249). Language has also constructed otherness through a focus on the journalist or author, with the use of first-person construction or the use of words that put an emphasis on the writer and her presence in the story (Lester, 1994).

Hall (2003) says that there is a “secret fascination of ‘otherness’” because of the importance of representing difference. Difference is central to meaning in language. The linguistic tradition of Saussure depends upon difference because signs only get their meaning from their differences from other signs (Hall, 2003). The system of binary oppositions gives meaning to things, but does so through what Derrida (1977) says is non-neutral means. Following Derrida’s conception of difference, male is dominant as is White and it is the non-maleness that makes one female, or the non-whiteness that makes one black. This preoccupation with difference also has a basis in the psychoanalytic tradition of Freud and the necessity of the “other” in constructing sense of self (Hall, 2003).

In addition to constructing otherness, the language of news stories also constructs themes within the text through the inclusion of certain words and phrases both from the reporter and from the people whom they interview in the context of their stories. Lule (1991) found a theme of U.S. defeat and mortification in a study of newspaper coverage of the Soviet Sputnik mission. Feldstein and Acosta-Alzuru (2003) found that the language used to talk about Argentinean Jews following an attack on the Israelite Argentinean Mutual Aid Association represented them as scapegoats and served to separate them from non-Jews in Argentina. Language has also constructed themes of dramatization (Lule, 1993).

This study follows Stuart Hall's (1975) method of textual analysis. It takes a linguistic approach to uncover latent meanings in the text, examining language in the texts and the ways in which elements of the text are emphasized to create meaning about teenagers. This study will examine representations of youth in the following: network news texts generated by adults for a largely adult audience, adult-generated news for teenagers, and four teenager-produced Internet webzines (LA Youth, New Youth Connections, BUZZ, and Listen UP!) geared toward a youth audience.

Texts were analyzed on two levels: to explore their manifest meanings, and their latent meanings. A text's manifest meaning was the issue that the story covered. A story's manifest meaning—the issue it addressed—was determined by reading the story. The second level of analysis involved examination of the text's latent meanings.

I tried multiple organizational frameworks and labels in order to categorize the latent meanings. I came up with the following: Texts were read several times paying attention to the strategies that journalists use to tell their stories that emerged in a number of stories. These were called patterns. Once identified, the patterns were examined collectively to look for common

ideas and ways in which they might fit together to tell a larger story about teenagers. This “larger story” was called a theme and included ideas such as adolescence as a time of learning or that teenagers “get things” from adults.

The themes were then examined collectively along with the issues covered in the story. In this way the theme could help to inform these issues. It was these manifest meanings and latent meanings—the issues and the themes--that were taken together to create a teen representation. Lastly, these teen representations were examined against the existing literature on teen representations in the news media to see how they could inform our knowledge and understanding of the teen subject. This is similar to Hall’s (1975) idea of examining a news text and then looking at how it stands in relation to the society in which it is produced. The representations in these three media texts—the meanings in the text—were then examined in relation to what it is that we already think that we know about teenagers.

In answering my research questions, I allowed prior research to guide me in my analysis of representation and to help me to begin to formulate language elements to focus on in analyzing these media texts. I was not limited by what has been found in other studies in exploring latent meanings within each of these texts but rather used them as a starting block or first-step in analysis.

Selection of News Story Sample

Selection of the story sample was two-fold. News stories broadcast on television or published on the Internet have both written and visual elements. The first step in selecting the sample involved choosing whether to include written elements, visual elements, or both. Then a timeline for examining news coverage had to be determined.

Visual vs. Written Elements

This analysis was limited to the written texts of network news stories, adult-generated news stories for teenagers, and teen-produced Internet webzines. There is much value in analyzing the visual elements of a text along with its written elements. Faigley, George, Palchik, and Selfe (2004) suggest that we are used to seeing pictures along with words, and the two together can provide meanings that each alone would not be able to achieve. When it comes to television news texts, the placement and angle of the camera can contribute to meanings. Hartley and Fiske (1987) point to the way in which a subject who is looking directly at the camera is less believable or credible than one seen in profile. Camera angles can also make subjects look imposing, or can cause the viewer to look down at them, and thus influence how they are seen, apart from what it is that is written about them or described in the written text of a news story.

The pictures in television news add a sense of immediacy to the story and may be the reason why certain stories are covered and others are not (McQueen, 1998). Pictures also add credence to news because pictures are “evidence” of the event that happened (Goodwin, 1990, as cited in McQueen, 1998). In other words, it is more believable that something has happened because we are able to see it, rather than just read a description of it. Pictures are therefore important elements of a television news text in that they may play a hand in the story actually being covered, and they influence what it is that we get out of the story.

Despite this importance, in this study there were methodological, theoretical, and practical reasons for my reliance solely on the written elements of the texts. I will first outline these reasons and their implications for this study, and then will explain the manner in which I selected my news texts for analysis.

Methodological reasons: A number of the same concepts are used to “read” visual and written texts, including emphasis, point of view, and proportion (Faigley et al, 2004). These concepts involve different processes for analysis. Emphasis in writing involves sentence structure, boldface, and typesetting. These last two are themselves visual in nature. Emphasis in a visual text involves arrangement of elements within the physical space. Point of view in written texts involves narrative style, like first or third-person, while point of view in visual texts involve “vantage point” (Faigley et al, 2004, p. 42), the position from which we see the picture.

The texts in this study were to be analyzed by looking for patterns—similarities between the texts. By including visual elements as well as language elements, there would need to be two different sets of patterns: those for the written textual elements and those for the visual elements. This creates a methodological challenge for this study in that only two of the sources (network news and adult-generated media for teenagers) have these visual elements to any real extent. There are a few still photographs included in webzine stories, but the majority of stories do not have any visual elements. This means that there would be additional criteria for analysis in adult-generated media for teenagers and network news, than there would be for teen Internet webzines. Even if the photographs from teen webzines were examined still pictures and video cannot be analyzed in the same way. The differences between still and moving pictures have not been researched in this study but it is safe to say that different methods would need to be employed.

In addition to adding a level of analysis to adult-generated media for teens and network news texts that is not included in teen webzines, inclusion of visual elements would also impact the ways in which the written elements of the text would be examined. Faigley et al (2004) suggest that pictures and words often work in tandem to create meanings that would not be seen if the two were analyzed separately. Given that, I, as the researcher, would be unable to prevent

the visual elements of the text from influencing how I received the written elements. I would need to look at both visual and written elements in order to make meaning. There would be an interplay in network news and adult-generated media that would not be present in teen webzines, meaning that my methods of analysis would be different in the webzines than in network news texts and texts from adult-generated media for teenagers. I would not really be able to compare them. It is the comparisons between the three sources that is the focus of the study so it would be difficult to achieve that with different levels and “amounts” of textual elements to consider for each one.

Theoretical reasons: There are also theoretical reasons for leaving out visual elements involving the differences between written and visual texts. One difference is that visual texts are open (Faigley et al, 2004). This means that we are not seeing everything that is there—what is beyond the bounds of the photograph or outside of its frame. “An open form suggests the image is not completely self contained...there is something more beyond the visual space that viewers should be thinking about.” (Faigley et al, 2004, p. 107). This can also be applied to video, in that we are only seeing what is in the camera lens, and not what was outside of the shot at the time that it was taken. The meaning of the text is therefore partially tied into what it is that we as viewers think is beyond what we are seeing, and how we process that “extra” information in accordance with what it is that we do see. With a written text, you have the whole thing in front of you. There are meanings below the surface that are open to interpretation, but the whole text is in front of you. The interpretation is based on what one sees in what is presented, rather than what one sees in what is presented and what is absent. There is thus an added level of openness to a visual text that makes it not the same as a written text.

Another theoretical challenge is that we are more personally involved with visual messages than we are with written messages. Fox (1994) discusses the movement from messages dominated by words to those in which words and images are used together, to those in which visuals dominate, and says that visual images involve “the most internal participation by viewers” (p. 72). Fox (1994) considers television to be equally dominated by words and images, meaning that it involves more interpretation than does a solely written text, as would be those in teen Internet webzines. This presents a theoretical problem because consideration of visual and written elements of the text would mean that a higher level of interpretation would be needed for the television texts than for the written-only texts. I would be at very different levels of analysis.

Practical reasons: In addition to the methodological and theoretical reasons for leaving out visual elements, there was also a practical reason for doing so. Incorporating visual elements of the texts would have required obtaining taped copies of all of the stories that ran on Channel One, CNN Student News, and the network news channels. Channel One newscasts are available in their entirety online, as are CNN Student News videos. Obtaining taped copies of network news stories would have required either purchasing the 51 stories from the networks, or taping all of the network news programs during the two-month period and then analyzing those that were teen-related. The first option would have proved financial costly, while the second, costly in terms of time to gather all the stories for the sample.

Consequences of eliminating visuals: While I recognize that analyzing the visual elements of news stories as well as the written or language elements would make for a richer study, it was not feasible for this project. It is however important to note that while there are reasons for leaving out visual elements there are consequences for doing so. If, as Faigley et al (2004) suggest, we have become so used to seeing words and pictures together, then by focusing

just on language, there are likely to be missed messages that could come from seeing the people involved in the story, or the situations in which they find themselves. In his analysis of Oliver North's testimony on the Iran Contra dealings Costanzo (1994) says, "His words may seem unimpressive in print but that solemn face, the soldier's posture, and the decorated uniform...captivated a nation of viewers" (p. 108).

Having the visual image of North therefore changes the message and transforms the event. It is not the same event, and it does not have the same consequences for us when we can both see it and read about what transpired. Having just the printed story would cause us to miss out. Herbeck and Mehlretter (2005) found an importance placed on the visual narrative when it comes to candidates for election and their appearance. Although that study examined the Kennedy-Nixon debates, and the differences between auditory and visual cues, it testifies to the importance of the visual image in communicating media messages. Without the visual elements of a news media text, there are other meanings that could be significant and that could be missed.

Focusing on just written elements leaves out the elements of photojournalism in a story—camera angles and positioning of the camera. Much like the language and emphasis in a text that contribute to its latent meanings, so too do these visual cues. The consequence of leaving them out is that these meanings are missed. The meaning in a text—it manifest and latent meanings—is therefore different when we are looking just at those meanings that are produced through language compared to those that are produced through the interaction of language and pictures. I may not be seeing everything that I could have seen if I had both written and visual cues. I may also miss out on the interaction between visual and written elements, which could change what it is that I see in a text.

Timeline for Study

A two-month time period, October through November 2007, was chosen for the study. Prior studies that have examined news coverage of youth vary widely in terms of timeframe: one week (Dorfman & Woodruff, 1998); one month (Gilliam, 2001); six weeks (Aqtash, Seif & Seif, 2004); three months (Heinz-Knowles, 2000); and five years (Mazzarella & Pecora, 2007). All of the aforementioned studies have examined youth portrayals by looking at individual television or newspaper stories that dealt with youth or youth issues. A two-month sample falls well within the parameters of former studies that have sought to explore teen news coverage.

The specific time period was chosen for several reasons related to the inclusion of both adult-generated and youth-produced media. The month of November is a ratings period for network news programming, and stations often “pull out all the stops”, producing special reports and in-depth investigations in addition to the “news of the day”. It was thought that including stories broadcast during such a time might allow for the inclusion of stories related to teenagers that might not ordinarily run on network news. Because October is not a ratings month, stories covered during that time would be more typical, allowing for both a typical and an atypical month to fall under the umbrella of this study. Ratings occur four times a year making it possible to choose another two-month period: July (ratings) and August (non-ratings); or November (ratings) and December (non-ratings). Summer months were avoided because students are not in school during that time. It was thought that during the summer months, students might not be involved with creating webzines or news products and news sources geared toward them might also be less prevalent. December is also atypical for students due to the long holiday breaks.

I began collecting data in late October. Because the time period under study began October 1, I relied on story archives for each of the three media sources in order to obtain stories from those days which had already passed by the time I began my research.

Network News: News transcripts from national news broadcasts on ABC, NBC, and CBS over the two-month period were accessed through a Lexis-Nexis search using four terms that are often associated with young people: “kids”, “teenagers”, “youth”, and “adolescents”. A separate search was done for each broadcast network. A list of stories was then compiled for each news network. There was some story overlap in which two different search terms came up with the same story. For example, an ABC News story entitled “Dangerous Online Plot: School Shooters Connect” was generated through the search term “teen” as well as the search term “adolescent”. There was also repetition of stories from one program to another on a given news network. CBS ran a number of stories several times within the same day on different news programs, including stories about teenagers’ Internet safety and about the availability of birth control pills in Maine middle schools. Stories that were repeated, either among different search terms on the same network or on different programs on the same network were eliminated so as to create a master list of stories for each network.

Each story on each station’s master list was then read to determine whether or not it was teenager-related. Teenager-related stories were those that dealt with teenagers and the issues that affect their lives. For the purposes of this study, teenagers were considered to be those persons ages 12-18. While 12 year-olds are not officially teenagers, they are often included in stories about young teenagers due to the fact that 12 year-olds often attend schools with children who are slightly older. Lexis-Nexis pulls up any stories that contain even one mention of the search term in the body of the story so the master lists from each network included a number of stories

that, after being read, were found to not be teenager-related. Of the 81 stories that turned up in the search using the aforementioned search terms only 51 were about teenagers or about teen issues. The other 30 stories were removed from the study.

I included in the study teenager-related stories from each of the evening news programs as well as stories from the following magazine-style shows and morning news programs: Nightline, Good Morning America, The Early Show, and The Today Show. There are other magazine-style shows from which no teenager-related stories were generated, and so these shows were not represented in the story sample. Although the evening newscasts are intended to be the newscasts of record—including the most important news events of the day—stories from these other programs are often included in network news programming and network news stories are often included in these programs—a sort of cross pollination of stories. To exclude the magazine-style programs or morning show programs would have amounted to potentially leaving out a portion of the news of the day. These programs are also included under the umbrella of news on each of the station's websites, meaning that the stations themselves consider these programs to be news programs. Magazine-style shows have also grown in popularity for young viewers, with 26% of younger people citing such programs as sources for political news (Pew, 2004). A break-down of network news programs that included teen-related stories are included in Table 2.1, and their corresponding number of stories are included in Table 2.2 on the following page:

Table 2.1: Network News Sources Covering Teen Stories

| Network | Morning News Program | Evening News Program | Magazine-Style Programs |
|----------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ABC | Good Morning America | World News Tonight | Nightline |
| CBS | The Early Show | The CBS Evening News w/ Katie Couric | |
| NBC | The Today Show | The NBC Nightly News | |

Table 2.2: Teen-related Stories in Network News Programs

| Network News Stations | # of Stories | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|--------------|----------------------|--------------|
| | Morning News | Evening News | Magazine-Style Shows | Total |
| ABC | 8 | 4 | 1 | 13 |
| CBS | 11 | 8 | 0 | 19 |
| NBC | 15 | 4 | 0 | 19 |
| TOTAL | 34 | 16 | 1 | 51 |

Adult-generated Media for Teens: Adult-generated news sources geared toward teenagers were accessed through a web search using the terms “news for youth”, “youth news websites”, and “news for teens” News sources were considered to be adult-generated news for youth/teenagers if the sites could be identified with a traditional adult-generated media source, such as a web component affiliated with a news station, and if they promoted themselves as news

providers to young people. Sites were only considered if they included teen news stories on a range of topics including, but not limited to, education, self esteem, and health.

The search turned up 25 sites. Of those sites, a number were geared toward people younger than 12. Others were geared toward teenagers, but did not provide access to archived stories published during the time frame under examination or did not provide a date stamp on stories to indicate when they were written or posted. CNNStudentNews.com, the website component of CNN Student News, and ChannelOne.com, Channel One's Internet site, were chosen for several reasons: their websites suggest that their broadcasts and web content are geared toward students in middle and high school who are typically between the ages of 12 and 18; they provide links to archived stories that ran on the station's television broadcasts during October and November 2007; and archived scripts available on the sites included stories on a broad range of topics including international and national events, health, education, and community service.

The homepages of both websites include featured stories from that day's television broadcast, as well as special features, including links to college and career information and links for students to post information about happenings in their home towns. Many of these special features are not updated daily nor were they date stamped. It was impossible to tell whether or not they ran/were posted to the web, during the October-November 2007 time period or whether they had been there beyond that time. To be sure that the stories under analysis were produced during the aforementioned time period, the transcripts for each day's television broadcast were included in the sample while the other stories were eliminated.

The show transcripts were then read and stories were eliminated if they were not teenager-related. As was the case for the network news transcripts, teenager-related stories on

adult-generated news sources for teenagers were those that were about specific teenagers or about issues that were presented as impacting teenagers' lives. Stories were also considered teenager-related if they included interviews with or sound bytes or quotes from teenagers. As was the case for network news, these stories were limited to those that pertained to youth ages 12-18, those in which the subjects of the stories were referred to as teens, and those stories that would have been posted on the Internet or broadcast in a traditional news program during the period of October 1-November 30, 2007. Stories that were not about teenagers and the issues that affect their lives were eliminated and a master list of teenager-related stories for both Channel One News and CNN Student News was then compiled. Of the 200 stories covered during the two month period, there were a total of 82 teenager-related stories on CNN Student News and Channel One News during October and November 2007. The number of teen-related stories in each news source is outlined in Table 2.3 below.

Table 2.3: Teen-related Stories in Adult-generated News for Teens

| Adult-generated News for Teens | # of Stories |
|---|---------------------|
| CNN Student News | 27 |
| Channel One | 55 |
| TOTAL | 82 |

Teen-produced Internet Webzines: Teen-produced Internet news sites geared toward youth were accessed through a web search using the terms, “teen news”, “news by teens”, and “youth news”. A preliminary search using these search terms generated more than 20 youth-

generated websites. Several of these websites were found to be geared toward youth younger than 12. Others did not provide access to all stories posted during October and November 2007 or did not clearly delineate which stories were recently posted and which ones had remained on the site for several weeks or months. Other sites were narrow in focus, geared toward niche groups of teenagers such as those who are interested in the outdoors or those interested in art. It was thought that such publications would not provide an adequate variety of stories to allow for a representation of teenagers in general.

Four youth-generated websites were chosen based upon the ability to identify and retrieve stories covered during the time period and the presence of stories on a variety of topics including education, relationships, and health. The four websites chosen were: layout.com, a webzine created by students in Los Angeles County; New Youth Connections or NYC (youthcomm.org), produced by New York City youth; BUZZ, a teen section of the Modesto Bee newspaper that is also available online; and Listen Up!, a teen-written section of the Jacksonville Daily News ((North Carolina) that also maintains a website with stories from the print version of the teen section. All of the stories present on layout.com, youthcomm.org, and Listen Up! that were written during October and November 2007 were included. The BUZZ homepage included links to stories that were not part of the BUZZ section. Only the BUZZ stories were included in the sample. BUZZ also included several stories that were written by adult reporters either on the Modesto Bee staff or on the staff of another newspaper. These were not included in the sample. There were a total of 80 teen webzine stories included in this study. A look at the number of stories in each webzine is outlined in Table 2.4:

Table 2.4: Teen-related Stories in Teen-produced Internet Webzines

| Internet Webzine | # of Stories |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Listen Up! | 11 |
| La Youth | 20 |
| New Youth Connections | 19 |
| BUZZ | 30 |
| TOTAL | 80 |

The story sample included a total of 213 teenager-related stories which are the subject of this analysis. Although it is interesting to note the number of stories that came from individual news sources (ABC vs. NBC or CBS; Channel One vs. CNN Student News, etc.), for the purposes of analyzing news stories I considered only which media type the stories came from. In other words, it was not important to this analysis which teen webzine included which stories, only that a particular story came from a teen webzine versus a network news channel or an adult-generated news source for teenagers. Individual sources are at times indicated in the following chapters, but they are included solely as a means to better identify and describe a particular story.

CHAPTER 3

BACKGROUND ON MEDIA SOURCES

This chapter will provide background about teen webzines, adult-generated media for teenagers, and network news sources included in this study. Included in this chapter will be information about how these media sources were chosen, as well as how they operate and function as news sources for their intended audiences.

The chapter will begin with a discussion of the four teen webzines because these sources have the most teen involvement. The stories are written *by* teenagers *for* other teenagers. Following the teen webzines, the chapter will address adult-generated media geared toward teenagers, because this source involves adult-generated content intended for youth. Network news sources will be discussed last because these sources are produced by adults for a largely adult audience. This same order will be used throughout this research project. All news sources will be discussed in alphabetical order within each of the three categories in this chapter.

Teen Webzines

This study examined news coverage in four teen webzines: BUZZ, LA Youth, Listen Up!, and NYC. The webzines were accessed through a web search using the terms, “teen news”, “news by teens”, and “youth news”. These four webzines were chosen from among the 20 generated by the search because a review of their homepages showed that these webzines had stories on a variety of topics including education, relationships, and health. The webzines also had easy access to archived stories. The webzines will be discussed in alphabetical order, and will include any stated goals or objectives about the webzine when available.

BUZZ

BUZZ is a special section published in the Modesto Bee newspaper every Thursday and updated daily online at modbee.com/life/buzz/. In the print addition of the newspaper, BUZZ is in the life section, along with stories about health and fitness, travel, taste, and the horoscope section. High school students write articles for this section of the paper as part of the Modesto Bee “Teens in the Newsroom” Program. “Teens in the Newsroom” participants meet bi-monthly to discuss story ideas and are paid for their stories. Although the majority of BUZZ stories are generated by teenagers, Modesto Bee staff writers do contribute stories for BUZZ. Wire stories that focus on teenager-related issues and topics are included as well.

The BUZZ homepage includes a list of about 20 stories with links to the full text of each of these stories. In addition, there is a link to past BUZZ news stories generated over an approximately two-month period. BUZZ news stories range in topic from school-related stress and being eco-friendly, to making the prom affordable. The website is updated several times a month according to information provided on the BUZZ website.

There are also links to several special topics stories, including a BUZZ “Teen Hall of Fame”, “13-Things you Need to Know About Me”, and “WUZZ UP?”. The “Teen Hall of Fame” feature profiles a local middle or high school student who has contributed to his or her community in some way. Adults can nominate teens who attend any public or private school, or who are home-schooled in the Modesto area. Each profile includes a small biography of the student, as well as the student’s answers to questions including: the student’s biggest fears, his or her advice for other teenagers, and the student’s 10-year plan for his or her life. The “13-Things You Should Know About Me” feature provides teenagers with an opportunity to talk about themselves including their hobbies, fears, favorite television shows, and famous people they

would like to meet. The “WUZZ UP” section honors local students’ achievements including scholarships, national and state awards, and Eagle Scout awards. These special sections are compiled by the “Teens in the Newsroom” Program.

The homepage of the website also includes links to other stories in the Modesto Bee that are not part of the BUZZZ section, but that may be of interest to teenagers. These include a blog by a local teenager, as well as a link to stories about high school sports teams. These stories were not included in the story sample.

LA Youth

layout.com is the Internet component of LA Youth, “the newspaper by and about teens” from Los Angeles County. LA Youth was first published in 1988 with a press run of 2,500. Today it has a readership of 400,000 in print and about 45,000 online visitors a month. It is the largest independent U.S. newspaper written by teenagers for teenagers. (www.layout.com).

LA Youth is a non-profit organization and raises money through corporate gifts, donations, advertising and foundation grants. According to information on LA Youth’s website, the organization has had more than five thousand contributors in its 20-year history. Supporters have included the Annenberg Foundation, The California Endowment, The Ford Foundation, and the Coca Cola Company.

The LA Youth newspaper is published six times a year. Stories from the newspaper edition of LA Youth are posted on layout.com. LA Youth has a staff of about 80 teen writers and senior writers, representing middle and high schools from across Los Angeles County. That includes a number of Los Angeles County magnet schools. LA Youth has five full-time adult staffers who serve as editors for the online and print editions.

Teenagers interested in writing for LA Youth attend a Saturday news meeting with the adult editors during which time they discuss issues in their different communities and story ideas they are interested in pursuing. They also learn to write headlines and are assigned stories to research and report for issues of the paper. The teenagers spend several weeks working on their stories. During that time they meet with the adult editors to revise their stories, design the newspaper, and maintain the archives. Adult staff members update the website with the teen journalists' stories, and are responsible for distributing the paper and finding donors to help support the organization. Each issue of layout.com has between 12 and 15 news stories on a range of topics including community service, self esteem, education, sexuality, and relationships with parents. LA Youth also publishes winning entries from its sponsored essay contests and photo contests. There is also a web poll for readers each month.

Each issue of layout.com also includes stories written by teenagers in the foster care system in Los Angeles County. These stories are part of the Foster Youth Writing and Education Project, which was started in 2003. The goal of the project is three-fold: to give youth in foster care an opportunity to write about their experiences; to bring to the public's attention the issues faced by foster youth that are not reported on in mainstream media; and to provide youth in foster care with the opportunity to develop writing and social skills. Topics written about by foster youth include issues of sexuality, relationships with family, and concerns about the future. LA Youth's foster program is modeled after Represent, a bi-monthly magazine with stories written by youth in the foster care system. Stories written through the Foster Youth Writing and Education Program may be published in Represent, as well as in LA Youth and layout.com, giving foster teens in Los Angeles a greater audience for their work.

In addition to the news stories published on layout.com, there are also readers' letters in response to published articles and entertainment stories from previous issues. The site also includes links to other stories on related topics, and other stories by each of the featured teen journalists, as well as resources for parents of teenagers and for teachers who wish to use LA Youth in the classroom. There are also links to past issues of layout.com going back to 2002. LA Youth and layout.com have been recognized with a number of Los Angeles Times High School Journalism Awards. LA Youth/layout.com journalists have won more than \$27,000 in scholarships for their work. In addition, stories from LA Youth and layout.com have been reprinted and referenced in media sources such as CNN, National Public Radio, the Los Angeles Times and Time.

LA Youth was founded in response to the United States Supreme Court decision *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier* in January 1988. The decision upheld the right of administrators of Hazelwood East High School in St. Louis to censor stories about teen pregnancy and divorce from a student newspaper sponsored by the school. The decision was in contrast to court decisions from the previous 15 years which had given high school newspaper reporters extensive First Amendment protections. According to LA Youth Executive Director Donna Myrow, many school newspaper programs were devastated by the decision and LA Youth "filled the void with a program that fosters critical thinking, writing skills, literacy, and civic education" (www.layout.com).

Listen Up!

Listen Up! is a page of the Jacksonville Daily News "by, for, and about teens" published weekly. Stories published for "Listen Up!" are available online at www.jdnews.com/sections/listen/. The Listen Up homepage includes recently published stories

as well as links to about 90 past stories published within the last 14 months. The Listen Up! program has been in place since 1997, and topics covered by teen journalists include drugs and school violence, family relationships, and peer pressure. In reporting on and publishing their stories, the teen journalists work with advisors, who are reporters training to be editors.

In addition to news stories published in print and online, there are several special story topics. These include the “Teacher Feature”, and “Listen Up Talks To...” The “Teacher Feature” is a profile of a local high school teacher, and “Listen Up Talks To...” profiles a local high school student. Both features are based upon interviews with members of the Listen Up! staff. Teachers speak about their educational background, what inspires them, and what they would be doing if they were not teaching, and students talk about their high school experiences and career goals.

New Youth Connections

New Youth Connections, (NYC) a magazine written by New York City teenagers, was founded in 1980 and since then has inspired a number of youth media projects across the nation. The magazine is one of three published by Youth Communications, a non-profit organization. New Youth Connections is published seven times a year and is distributed free to all public schools in New York City, but it is an organization separate from the New York City school system. Content from the magazine is posted on Youth Communications’ website, youthcomm.org. Circulation for the magazine is about 55,000-70,000 with an estimated readership in print and online of 150,000-200,000 people.

The magazine is geared toward 13-19 year olds. Writers are all from New York City and are all between 15 and 20 years old. A majority of students who write for the New Youth Connections publications are African-American, Latino, or Asian, and attend New York City

public high schools. According to Youth Communications' website, most writers leave the organization once they graduate from high school, at around age 18. About 80 teenagers work on New Youth Connections each year. They write stories, take photographs, and help design illustrations. There are also adult staff members who serve as editors and work with teenagers as they write their stories. The adult staff is responsible for designing the layout of the magazine and website. Teenagers are also involved in helping to hire adult staff members.

The teen writers have a good deal of control over story development. Students propose stories during group meetings and then work one-on-one with the adult editors during the weeks and months that they write their stories. Students write three types of stories for New Youth Connections—personal stories, commentary, and reported stories. Personal stories include those about dating, relationships with family, and concerns about peer pressure. Stories that would be considered commentary include a story about the treatment of hip hop and rock music. Reported stories include efforts by New York City youth and officials to improve mental health services for teenagers. According to information on its website, New Youth Connections seeks to include stories that are not typically found in other teen-oriented media.

The website youthcomm.org has about a dozen articles from each printed issue of New Youth Connections. The stories in each issue focus on a common theme, such as peer pressure or the impacts of advertising. Teenage writers tackle different aspects of these issues in each of their stories and each writer has a byline for his or her story.

In addition to New Youth Connections and youthcomm.org, Youth Communications also publishes Represent, and Rise. Represent Magazine is written by teenagers in foster care in New York and nationwide. It is published six times a year and was the model for LA Youth's Foster

Youth Writing and Education Program. Rise is a magazine by and for parents who have been involved with New York City's child welfare system.

Youth Communications, which publishes New Youth Connections, is managed by a board of directors and eight board members who work for private companies including The New York Times and IBM. It operates with a budget of about \$1 million a year, 30% of that going toward rent, printing, delivery, and supplies and 70% to salaries and benefits for employees. About 75% of that money comes from donations and grants. The organization has dozens of funders, including IBM Corporation, Morgan Stanley Foundation, the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development, State Senator Tom Duane, Starbucks, and Random House Bertelsman. The New York Times assists with printing of the organization's magazines.

Adult-generated News for Teens

There were two adult-generated media sources included in this study—Channel One and CNN Student News. They were accessed through a web search using the terms “news for youth”, “youth news websites”, and “news for teens” These sites were chosen from about 23 others because they included stories on a range of topics including education, self esteem, and health. The websites also allowed for easy access to archived stories.

Channel One

Channel One Network first began broadcasting its programming in 1990. Its news programs air on the Internet at channelone.com and on televisions in public and private middle and high schools in 48 states, as well as in Washington DC every Monday through Friday. The schools receive the programming for free. With their membership, they also receive a satellite dish, cable distribution system, and one wall-mounted television set for every 23 students in

grade 6-12. Channel One installs and maintains this equipment for member schools for free.

Teachers at member schools receive Channel One Connection, which includes hundreds of hours of video content related to math, science, and literature. They also have access to learning materials and lesson plans that they can use along with the daily news broadcasts.

Each broadcast of Channel One News is 12 minutes long and includes two minutes of corporate sponsorships. On the Channel One website, program producers say that they are “very restrictive” in choosing sponsors and that they “maintain clear distinctions between editorial and sponsored content.” Past sponsored content has included health and beauty, beverages, retail, and anti-drug messages. It is this sponsorship that Channel One says allows it to provide resources to schools at no charge.

Channel One reaches an estimated six million teenagers each day. According to channelone.com, 30 percent of all American teenagers are exposed to Channel One News in their school, amounting to a teen audience that is 10-times larger than that of cable news networks and network evening newscasts combined.

According to its website, the mission of Channel One is “to spark debate and discussion among teens, and also discussion between young people and their parents and educators, on the important issues affecting young people in America.” To that end, the 10 minutes of news in each newscast includes national and international news, as well as stories on such topics as education, health, and the Internet. The newscasts are reported by three anchors, all of whom have come to Channel One following years of television news experience at networks and cable news operations. A typical newscast includes both reporter-generated packages, as well as shorter stories with video that are voiced over by the anchors. Each newscast has three news blocks, separated by two commercial breaks.

In addition to the “news of the day”, the Channel One broadcasts also include viewer-generated content that highlights accomplishments and contributions of teenagers nationwide. “Finding Strength” encourages students to email Channel One and “spread the word to millions of students and teachers” about activities and projects they are doing to help in their communities (www.channelone.com). Teenagers can also send an email to nominate other students and schools for their community work. The words “finding strength” often appear at the start of these stories and are usually mentioned in the tag of the story, serving as boundaries on the story and helping to identify those stories that are included in this branding. “Finding Strength” stories include: a teenager collecting socks for homeless people in New Jersey; two sisters who collect DVD’s to donate to the pediatric ward of their local hospital; and a teen who raised money to build a school in Cambodia.

The “Your Turn” feature allows teenagers from across the country to weigh in on hot topics covered in past Channel One broadcasts. Students can email their responses to questions or they can send in video sharing their opinions. These viewer responses are then included in the broadcasts either as part of a larger story on the topic, or as stand-alone features within the newscast. Among the “Your Turn” questions and responses included in Channel One broadcasts: “Is it fair that some colleges won’t consider your S-A-T score along with your application?”, “What is your school doing to keep you safe?”, and “Do you think it’s dangerous to text while driving?” Teenagers’ sports accomplishments are included in a feature called “Gatorade Player of the Year”.

Another special feature of Channel One is The 1 Voice Program, designed to educate teenagers about the Constitution and their first amendment rights. Words and phrases in the introduction or in the tag of the story serve to indicate which stories are to be considered under

this category. Stories include: a teenager who was benched during a soccer game because she refused to take off a headscarf that was part of her Muslim faith, and an Illinois high school student suing her school to do away with a daily moment of silence during homeroom class. The 1 Voice feature, a partnership between Channel One and the Knight Foundation, began airing in September 2005, in response to statistics that showed teenagers were largely uninformed about their constitutional rights.

Links to these special features are available on channelone.com, allowing students to log on and submit their opinions and story ideas. The website also offers background information to help students understand current news stories and to allow them to dig deeper into those stories that are of particular interest to them. The website also has links to information about paying for college, as well as contests and quizzes. The website also provides a link to channelonenetwork.com, where students can access transcripts for past shows. Transcripts dating back seven months are available on channelonenetwork.com. The site also has resources for teachers including lesson plans, interactive quizzes, and discussion questions to tie into the issues and topics addressed in the daily newscasts.

Channel One has proven to be a first step for several well-known journalists including Anderson Cooper and Lisa Ling. The station and its website have received several awards for their teen-directed programming. Channelone.com received two Webby Awards from the International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences for Best Youth Site. Channel One received two Peabody Awards, one in 1993 and a second in 2004, as well as both a Gold Hugo Award and a Silver Hugo Award from the Chicago International Television Awards.

CNN Student News

CNN Student News is a 10-minute news broadcast geared toward middle school and high school students. It runs commercial free Mondays through Fridays on CNN Headline News from 3:12-3:22am, and is also available on the Internet at <http://www.cnn.com/studentnews/>. The newscasts include national and international stories on subjects including education, health, crime, sports, and entertainment. There are two news anchors, and each anchors the newscast solo.

CNN Student News is part of Turner Learning, which “provides news and information for the classroom”, and creates outreach programs within the Turner Broadcasting System (TBS). Turner Learning “seeks to inspire youth to understand the world in which they live.” (www.timewarner.com) CNN Student News is also part of CNN’s contribution to Cable in the Classroom. Cable in the Classroom has the goal of using cable to help children learn, through such programs as media literacy education, access to free educational television programs and online resources, and free cable and broadband connections for schools and libraries (www.ciconline.org). The Internet component of CNN Student News, cnnstudentnews.com, is produced in partnership with Harcourt Companies. Harcourt sponsors the website and is licensed to use CNN content in textbooks and other learning materials. “Harcourt Education is a global education company serving students and teachers in Pre-K through grade 12, adult learners, and readers of all ages.” (www.timewarner.com).

The CNN Student newscasts are largely made up of reporter packages from CNN reporters across the country and overseas. In addition to the news stories, each newscast includes a Shout Out. The anchors pose to students a question that is related to a news story. Students then have a few seconds to “shout out” the answer before the anchor gives it away. Sometimes the

Shout Out is directed at students at one specific school. An example of a Shout Out question that ran in October: Following a story about a man who circumnavigated the globe using only his strength, the students were asked: “Whose ship was the first to sail around the world?” Many of the newscasts end with a “Before we Go” story. These are interesting stories from across the country, including an Eagle Scout who saved the life of a woman who was bleeding along a hiking trail, and a teenager who recreated The Situation Room for a project about Lord of the Flies.

The CNN Student News homepage has links to some of the day’s top stories from CNN and CNN Headline news, which are updated at least once a day. There is also a link to a podcast of the day’s news broadcast, and to show transcripts for the last five months of CNN Student News broadcasts. In addition, the website also provides links to education-related stories that ran on CNN and in sources including Money Magazine and Fortune Magazine. These stories are not part of the Student News broadcasts and are not updated daily. There are also links to curriculum materials that teachers can use along with the student news broadcasts. The homepage also has a link through which students can submit I-Reports, pictures and video of news events that they see.

Network News

The three network news channels, ABC, CBS, and NBC were included in this study. Transcripts from news broadcasts including evening news programs, morning news programs, and magazine-style programs were accessed through a Lexis-Nexis search.

Evening News Programs

NBC, CBS, and ABC each produce an evening news program during the week and on weekends. Each network’s evening newscast runs 30 minutes, and includes national and

international news, as well as stories on special topics. On its website, CBS News promotes the CBS Evening News with Katie Couric as “the most experienced corps of correspondents in network journalism covers the events that matter most from wherever they happen in the world.” (<http://www.cbs.com>). CBS News broadcasted its first evening newscast in September 1963. CBS also runs two weekend evening news broadcasts. ABC broadcasts World News Tonight with Charles Gibson. The station also broadcasts a Saturday evening news program and World News Sunday, which are both similar in format to the weekday nightly news broadcast. NBC runs the Nightly News with Brian Williams. All of the network news evening news programs include a mixture of stories produced by reporters in the field, as well as shorter voice over stories anchored from the news desk.

Morning News Programs

In addition to the nightly news programs, ABC, CBS, and NBC, each run a morning news program: NBC’s The Today Show, Good Morning America on ABC, and The CBS Early Show. On its website, NBC’s Today Show promotes itself as a program that “provides the latest in domestic and international news, weather reports, and interviews with newsmakers from the worlds of politics, business, media, entertainment, and sports.” (<http://www.nbc.com/today>). The show first launched in January 1952. A Sunday edition of The Today Show began in September 1987, followed by a Saturday edition in August 1992. The first three hours of the show are anchored by Meredith Viera, Matt Lauer, Ann Curry, and Al Roker and the fourth hour is anchored by Ann Curry, Natalie Morales, and Hoda Kotb. The CBS Early Show is anchored by Harry Smith, Julie Chen, Russ Mitchell, Maggie Rodriguez, and Dave Price. On its website, the CBS Early Show promotes itself as “the fast growing network morning newscast”. ABC’s

Good Morning America program is anchored each weekday morning by ABC's Diane Sawyer, Sam Champion, Chris Cuomo, and Robin Roberts.

Magazine-Style Shows

All three networks run one or more magazine-style primetime shows. CBS's 60 Minutes first premiered in 1968. CBS promotes the show as "hard-hitting investigative reports, feature segments, and profiles of people in the news (<http://www.cbsnews.com>). NBC broadcasts Dateline, which runs several nights a week. It was first broadcast in 1992. Anne Curry is the main anchor. ABC broadcasts two magazine-style shows: 20/20 and Nightline.

CHAPTER 4

TEEN WEBZINES

The teen webzines LA Youth, NYC, BUZZ, and Listen Up! included 80 stories during the two-month period from October-November 2007. The issues that are addressed in these stories and the manner in which these issues are presented contribute to our knowledge about teenagers, telling us what they are like and how we can deal with them, and thus creating a subject. Because teenagers write these webzine stories, they are empowered to create this knowledge and to define themselves as teen subjects through the news texts that they create.

Examination of these texts required study of both their manifest and latent meanings. As discussed in Chapter 2, the manifest meaning of a news text was the issue that it addressed. The latent meanings were the patterns journalists use to tell their stories, and the ways in which these patterns construct several themes regarding teenagers—similar ideas about teenagers and what they are like. What it means to be a teenager--representations of teenagers--have roots both in the issues that count as information about teenagers—the texts' manifest meanings--and in linguistically-based themes that are the texts' latent meanings.

This chapter will examine the teen-related issues in LA Youth, New Youth Connections,(NYC), BUZZ (modestobee.com), and Listen Up!, (JDNews.com), as well as the linguistically-based themes that emerge in these webzines. It will conclude with an examination of how the manifest and latent meanings in the texts construct three representations of teenagers: teenagers have problems, teenagers have limited abilities to solve their problems, and the teen identity is one of convenience.

Manifest Meanings in the Text: What Issues Were Covered?

After the story sample was selected by the process outlined in Chapter 2, each story was read and analyzed for the issue it addressed. When applicable, stories were then further analyzed as to their sub-issues. For example, what were the different issues related to education in teen webzine stories? There were instances in which more than one issue was discussed in an individual story. In these cases, the issue that was addressed more prominently, that accounted for more discussion in the story, was the issue that was determined for the story. For example, the LA Youth story, “I Couldn’t Take it Anymore” addressed both acceptance and education, because it was about one teenager’s struggle to make his classmates respect and accept him due to his being gay. The story was considered an acceptance story, because the teenager devoted more words and space in the story to the discussion of acceptance than to that of school and education.

There were 80 teen webzine stories and they addressed 13 issues which will be discussed in terms of their prevalence within the webzine texts, starting with the most prevalent issue and moving toward those issues addressed in just one webzine story. The 13 issues were: acceptance, relationships, fashion, education, media, career preparation, community service, teen achievements, individual spotlight stories, foster care, hobbies, health, and sports.

Individual Spotlight: (14)

Individual spotlight stories were structured like an interview with a student or teacher responding to a series of questions. These included the “Teacher Feature” on the Listen Up! website; “Listen UP Talks To...”, a feature in which staffers interview a current high school student; and the “13 Things You Should Know About Me” feature from the BUZZ. Teachers answered questions about their careers and their interactions with students. Teenagers profiled in

the “13 Things You Should Know About Me” feature answered questions about their dream jobs, their most embarrassing moment, their strangest habit, and the historical figure they’d most like to have dinner with. Individual spotlight stories were only included on Listen Up! and BUZZ.

Hobbies: (11)

There were eleven hobby stories appearing in LA Youth, NYC, BUZZ, and “Listen Up! Hobby stories were those that dealt with teen involvement in organized clubs and extra-curricular activities, as well as activities that teenagers could do on their own just for fun. Such stories included: a BUZZ story about ballroom dancing; stories about acting/drama performances; a profile of a school debate team; good places to skateboard in the Modesto area; a BUZZ story about good places to hike in and around Modesto; a robot-building competition; and “Driving on Sunshine” in LA Youth. The last story was about a solar car competition. Listen Up included the story “Engineering Fun” and BUZZ had the story, “I Didn’t Win but I Sure Had Fun” about a teen’s participation in the Young Idol singing competition. Other stories included “Soaring Performance: Teen Takes Over Lead in Peter Pan”, “Meet the Latest Teen Idol”, and “Local FFA members show well” all in BUZZ.

Relationships: (8)

Relationships were the topic of eight stories on teenager-generated webzines. These stories included both the positive and negative aspects of family relationships and dating relationships. Many of these stories that dealt with dating relationships were posted on New Youth Connections (NYC) in November. “Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places” was about one girl’s search for a boyfriend who shared her goals, who was motivated, and who would not “pull me back down” into the street mentality that she said she was trying to escape. Her search

was fraught with guys who she felt did not share her goals, until she met her latest boyfriend. The stories, “Ignoring the Stares” and “More than Friends With Benefits” were about the difficulties that two teenagers had in the beginning stages of their relationships. “More Than Friends With Benefits” details the writer’s discomfort with being in an interracial relationship and her concern that those around her do not approve of it. The writer in the second story faces a tough time in his relationship until he realizes that his relationship with his girlfriend does not need to fit into a specific category.

There were two stories that concerned abusive relationships. “My Abusive Boyfriend” was one writer’s experiences with a controlling and violent boyfriend. “What is Dating Abuse” is an interview with a peer educator about the warning signs of abusive relationships, and how to help yourself or someone who is in such a relationship. LA Youth had a web poll question about relationship abuse as well. “Get In, Get Money, Get Out” was about the writer’s unhealthy relationships based on using people for money and finding herself treated in much the same way by a long-time boyfriend. “Why Can’t Boys and Girls Be Friends”, written by a teenager about her time at school in China, discusses how her friendships with boys while growing up in China negatively impacted her schoolwork and influenced the way in which she deals with boys as a teenager in the United States.

Among the stories that involved family relationships were the Listen Up story “Learning a Lot from Missing Sibling”; and the LA Youth stories, “My Sister is More than Her Disability”; and “My Mom Rules at Home and at School”. “Learning a Lot from Missing Sibling” is about the change in relationship between the writer and his brother and sister once his older sister goes away to college. “My Sister is More than Her Disability”, is about the ways in which having a sister with Cerebral Palsy impacts the family life of a California teenager. “My Mom Rules at

Home and at School” is about on the relationship between a teenager and her mother as a result of her mother working as a security guard at her school.

Education: (7)

There were seven education stories. These stories dealt with the learning process and curriculum, as well as school policies and post high school issues. The LA Youth story, “Testing My Patience”, which ran in October, was about the focus on testing at one California school that the writer said kept her from learning to think for her self and from developing critical thinking and writing skills. The same writer also conducted an interview with a teacher to learn how this particular teacher manages to help her students think while still meeting state-wide testing requirements. The NYC story “Students Criticize School Survey” was about a city-wide survey of schools that New York City teenagers say did not ask the right types of questions. “The Daily News Taught Me English”, which was also posted on NYC, was about how reading the Daily News newspaper helped a Mexican American teenager to better assimilate into American culture. In the Listen Up story, “Learning the True Rewards from Reading”, the writer credits the fact that she was forced to read in elementary school with helping her to learn lessons that she still uses as a high school junior. The BUZZ story, “Charting a New Course” detailed how a charter school’s programs, such as its small size and the availability of college classes, can help students who struggle at more traditional schools. Listen Up! had the story, “Home School Life Important Preparation for Life After High School”, about the pros and cons of homeschooling from a student who has been in both types of settings. The one post- high school issues story, LA Youth’s story “Facing the Future” addressed teenagers’ concerns about life after high school. “Parents Seek to Ban Conroy Books” in the BUZZ dealt with a school district’s decision to stop carrying one author’s books in the library. BUZZ also ran a story about how teenagers use text

messaging shorthand in their school papers and how such practices lead to poor writing skills and poor grammar skills for teenagers.

Teen Achievement: (7)

Teen achievement stories were those that highlighted the accomplishments and contributions of individual teenagers across a wide array of areas both community-based and school-related. The “Teen Hall of Fame” stories that ran on the Modesto Bee BUZZ website were this type of story. They detailed a particular student’s interests, career goals, and involvement in school and community-based activities. BUZZ was the only teen webzine that included teen achievement stories. BUZZ also ran the story “Troop 13 Scout is Eagle” about a local teen who received his Eagle Scout badge, the highest rank in the Boy Scouts of America. Another teen achievement story was “Teen Showcases Talent on ‘iCarly’”, which ran on the BUZZ website. It was about the actress who plays the title role in the Disney Channel show.

Acceptance: (4)

Acceptance stories dealt with diversity issues or with the treatment of people from minority groups. One of these stories, “I Couldn’t Take It Anymore”, which ran in LA Youth in November, described the harassment that a gay teenager faced at a Los Angeles-area high school because of his sexual orientation. Two other LA Youth stories involved a magnet school that fostered diversity. “Embracing Diversity” and “Could the Supreme Court’s Race Ruling Affect L.A. Schools” were written by the same student. “Embracing Diversity” was about the writer overcoming her own stereotypes of people from different racial and ethnic groups, and how attending a small school with students from different backgrounds allowed her to form close friendships that she feels might not have been possible at a larger school. “Could the Supreme Court’s Race Ruling Affect L.A. Schools” is about the potential impact of a Supreme Court

decision regarding race as an admission criterion in magnet school admissions on the writer's diverse magnet school program. Listen Up included a story about a gay couple that had been elected to the homecoming court at their high school. There were four acceptance stories in teen webzines.

Media: (4)

There were four media-related stories in teen webzines in this study. Media-related stories included those in which teenagers discussed the role of television or music in their lives. Among the media-related stories included in teen webzines was a story about an NYC writer's reactions to Truth Campaign public service announcements. This story also included information about the factors that lead teenagers to smoke. NYC also conducted an interview with a communication professor about the impact of advertisements on teenagers and what teens can do to become more media literate. The LA Youth story, "Reality TV Sucked Me In" was about the allure of reality television for one teenager and her friends and the difficulty she faced trying to break her habit. The NYC story "My Love Affair With Indie Music" was about the ways in which one teenager sees her musical tastes as defining who she is.

Career Preparation: (4)

Career preparation stories dealt with teenagers learning about potential jobs as well as their experiences doing internships in different fields. Among the career-preparation stories on teen webzines were: one teen's internship with a cartoonist; BUZZ staffers' visit to a local radio station to learn about disc jockey careers; a teen's experiences working as a hospital volunteer in preparation for a future career in medicine; and an LA Youth story in which an aspiring chef interviewed her favorite professional chef. There were a total of four career preparation stories in teen webzines in this study.

Community Service: (4)

There were four community service stories and they involved teenagers' efforts to help out in their own communities or in other communities through individual and organized programs. Community service stories included: a California teen's volunteer work at a local animal shelter; a teenager's experiences as an AIDS educator; a student-organized concert to benefit Uganda's forgotten children; and a teen's trip to Africa to help those affected by AIDS.

Fashion: (3)

Fashion-related stories dealt with the role of clothing in teenagers' lives, including the effects of peer pressure on teenagers' attire. These stories were all on NYC. "Buying Name Brands to Fit In" and "Starbury, the New Status Symbol" are about teenagers' concern about what their friends will think of the clothing they wear. The writer in the first story, who is a Chinese teenager, struggles, upon beginning school in the United States, to learn about popular clothing to avoid teasing from her friends. She struggles to "fit in" and wear the right clothing until she enters a new school. The "Starbury, the New Status Symbol" writer researches a new, inexpensive sneaker brand that he says he would not wear because of what people might think if he wears such a shoe. "Hooked on Ralph and Calvin and..." is about a teenager's self-described addiction to designer clothing.

Foster Care: (2)

LA Youth had two stories about teenagers' experiences in the foster care system. Both stories were written about the living conditions in Los Angeles group homes. "My Group Home Staff Were Like My Mothers" highlights some of the positive aspects of group homes for teenagers, and "You Call This Home", discusses the restrictions and drawbacks for teenagers

who live in group homes in the Los Angeles foster care system. The foster care stories were part of that publication's special foster care program.

Health: (2)

These stories dealt with teenagers' physical and mental health, and were fairly rare, compared to some of the other issues that were addressed in teen webzines. The BUZZ story "Battling Lupus" was about a teenager's experiences living with the illness and "Someone to Talk To", which ran on NYC, was about teenagers' involvement in a New York City rally to raise awareness for better mental health services in public schools. There were two health stories in teen webzines.

Sports: (2)

There were just two sports stories in teen webzines and both were in LA Youth. The story "Streetball vs. The NBA" was about the differences between professional basketball tournaments and street ball tournaments. The story "I Love to Watch Wrestling" was about one girl's love of televised wrestling and what wrestling has meant to her life.

Miscellaneous: (8)

There were a few issues that were addressed in the context of just one story. One of the issues, self esteem, was addressed in the LA Youth story, "Don't Baby Me". The story is about the ways in which a girl's self esteem is influenced by people focusing only on her physical attributes. LA Youth also ran a story about one girl's experiences trying to make people accept her dislike of dogs called, "I Don't Like Your Dog, Okay?" LA Youth also had an essay contest in which teenagers talked about the places where they feel most comfortable, and a story with tips for home-made gift giving. There was also a "Question of the Week" feature in BUZZ, in which teen journalists posed questions that were then answered by other teenagers. Questions

included: “What do you wish you were good at that you’re not?”, “What is the biggest problem facing teenagers today?”, and “How effective are schools at teaching sex education?”

Latent Meanings: Patterns and Themes Concerning Teens

After the issue of each story was analyzed, each story was then analyzed for its latent meanings. This required several readings of each of the stories. Attention was paid specifically to the language of individual stories as Hall (1975) says language is one of the ways in which texts produce meaning. Patterns in the ways that teen journalists tell their stories emerged. These patterns involved the language they used in their stories as well as story organization. These patterns included: repetition of words and phrases; shifts in tenses within stories; use of words and phrases that indicate common ideas such as sickness, learning, and giving; the inclusion of “extra” information on a specific issue; and the inclusion of “expert” interviews. These patterns were seen among stories about several different issues and in one or more of the different webzines. Some patterns were prevalent in a large number of stories and others limited to a few stories or to stories dealing with a particular topic or issue. There were a total of nine patterns in teen webzine stories.

Once identified, the patterns were examined collectively to look for common ideas, and ways in which they might fit together to tell a larger story about teenagers. Despite inherent differences in the patterns, and the manners in which they manifested themselves within individual stories, these patterns coalesced around four broader themes regarding teenagers: that teenagers experience feelings of being trapped; that adolescence/teen years are a time of growth and learning; that teenagers’ identities are “in-flux”; and that teenagers “get things” from adults. These four themes, and the ways in which they are each developed through the patterns in the teen webzine texts, will be discussed in this chapter.

Teenagers as Trapped

Teen webzine stories construct a theme of teenagers as trapped, both physically and metaphorically. They are not free to make decisions and are unable to control the things that happen to them. They also cannot control their behaviors and actions, and are unable to move forward in their lives. This theme is manifested in two language patterns teenagers use in telling their stories: language that emphasizes restriction or confinement and that is pathological in nature; and language that stresses repetition and sameness.

Restrictive and Pathological Language: Teenagers use language that suggests they are confined or restricted, or that they are in some way sick or not in control. In the LA Youth stories, “You Call This Home” and “My Group Home Staff Were Like My Mothers”, about the experiences of teenagers in the foster care system, this restriction is physical, with the writers describing themselves as imprisoned. In “You Call This Home?” the writer and the other girls with whom she lives talk about feeling like they are “on lockdown” in their group home, and describe their home as a “jail” where “if you want to get away for a little while, you can’t.” She writes about being “trapped” and “stuck” in her home and says that there is “no freedom” to be a normal teenager. The writer in “My Group Home Staff Were Like My Mothers” says “I am glad to be out of my group home because I have freedom.” The implication is that if he has freedom now and he is no longer in a group home, then he experienced a lack of freedom while living in a group home. He says of the group home experience “Let us take a shower when we want and eat when we’re hungry.” In writing about his experiences in school as a gay student the writer of the LA Youth story “I Couldn’t Take It Anymore”, describes himself as “going through a maze” at school where he could not avoid being picked on. The phrase “going through a maze” creates a metaphor of entrapment, of being unable to get out. In describing himself in this way, the writer

is saying that he is trapped in his environment and prevented from escaping the teasing and harassment from other students.

Teenagers also write about themselves as metaphorically trapped because they are not free to make their own decisions about their actions and behaviors. In the LA Youth Story, “Facing the Future”, the decision-making involves her education. She is not able to make her own decisions about her schooling because these decisions have already been pre-determined for her by adults in her life. The teen author describes herself as being “brainwashed” to fill the role of a kid with “potential”, to use fancy words and to aspire to attend a prestigious college.

I never knew that people didn't go to college. My entire life, I have been told the stages of education are elementary school, middle school, high school, then college; removing it [college] from this equation was unheard of...I know that I will end up going to college, not necessarily because my goal is further enrichment or a promise of a high salary, but because if I don't go to college, I don't know where else I will go.

She suggests that she has only one path to take—that of a college education, and by saying that she has been “brainwashed”, she indicates that she is not making this choice for herself—that someone else is controlling the decisions she will make as she progresses toward becoming the person that she has been made to think she must become. She is thus trapped in a life trajectory that leaves her with no other options. She says of the college brochures and letters she now receives that “I used to associate with freedom.” College is not longer a source of freedom because her very attendance is a result not of her own desire to be there, but of her understanding that she has no choice but to go to college.

In the NYC story, “More than Friends with Benefits”, the decision-making involves his relationship with his girlfriend. For the writer in “I Couldn't Take It Anymore” he is not able to make decisions about how to respond to those who tease him. He says that he “felt like I was

inside a videogame and whoever could make me go off the most wins.” By saying that he is “inside a videogame” he indicates that someone or something outside of him is in control of how he behaves, that they are deciding how he is supposed to act by moving the controls, just as would be the case for a real video game.

Teenagers use pathologic language when talking about their behaviors and actions. They thus indicate that they are not freely making decisions about their hobbies and interests from designer clothing to music, to their tastes in television programming. These decisions about what to buy, wear, and watch are instead a result of a sickness or problem that the teenager needs to overcome or handle. In the NYC Story, “Hooked on Ralph and Calvin and...” the writer likens her interest in name-brand clothing to a drug addiction:

My name is Dee and I am a recovering junkie. I was hooked on the strong stuff. Ralph Lauren wore my pockets thin. Calvin Klein was no friend of mine. And then Guess? What--I finally got the monkey off my back, although it took me a while to get on the right track.

She goes on to talk about her purchase of name brands with drug-related language. When she buys clothing it is “a quick fashion fix”. Ralph Lauren is a “Polo pusher...who got me to join his posse.” She refers to herself as “sick”, saying she has a “problem”, and when she stops buying name brand clothing, she says she is “going through a withdrawal period”. Even the title of the story—with the word “hooked” suggests addiction to the “drug” of high-end clothing. Watching reality television and listening to certain types of music are also discussed not as freely made decisions but as the result of problems or sicknesses. In the NYC story, “My Love Affair with Indie Music”, the writer calls her love of the music an “addiction”. If she is addicted, then she is unable to not listen to the music. She is therefore not in control of her decision to watch it. In the LA Youth story “Reality TV Sucked Me In”, the writer discusses her interest in reality

television as an “obsession”, which “grew” and which “got even worse when VH1’s Flavor of Love premiered...” By calling it an obsession she says that it is something over which she does not exercise control of her decision making. Even the title, “Reality TV Sucked Me In”, suggests that the writer lacks control over her television-viewing habits. The term “sucked in” conveys the notion that, despite a desire not to do or watch something, one is unable to avoid it. In other words, she is watching reality television not because she wants to, but because she is unable to not watch it. Reality television is also described as a “drug. You know it’s rotting your brain when you watch it, but you have to watch it.” It also alters how one thinks as described in the following from the LA Youth story “Reality TV Sucked Me In”:

As our obsession with reality TV grew, and our tastes graduated to MTV’s Real World and Real World/Road Rules Challenge, what started as somewhat normal comparisons between our lives and theirs avalanched into a blatant ignorance of the line between ‘reality’ and ‘reality TV’.

Repetition and Sameness: Teenagers also use language to create a sense of repetition and sameness, contributing to their being trapped. One of the ways they do this is creating a repetition of experiences. They relate a present experience to a past one, or write about an issue they face now against the backdrop of a similar childhood experience. In the NYC Story, “Starbury, the New Status Symbol”, the teen writer addresses the question of whether or not teenagers will wear a new brand of sneakers that sells for \$15. In talking about peer pressure and its influence on teen clothing choices, the writer moves back and forth between talking about himself as a sixth grader who refused to wear inexpensive sneakers because “To my classmates, wearing an expensive sneaker was a fatal flaw,” and talking about himself as a current teenager, trying to understand the appeal of a new inexpensive sneaker brand. In organizing the story this way, he never really moves away from his younger self, who was afraid of being teased.

This connection with the past is evident in the similar description the author of “Starbury, the New Status Symbol” uses to dismiss both pairs of sneakers. The first statement is his feelings in elementary school, and the second, his present feelings about Starbury sneakers:

The real reason I didn’t want to wear the Sketchers? For starters they were ugly, covered with shiny material and indigo stripes and they reminded me of girls’ sneakers.

I like how the swoosh and Jumpman logo look on my Nikes. The Starbury logo which is, unsurprisingly, a stylized five-pointed star, seems too plain, too generic.

In the Listen Up story, “Learning the True Rewards from Reading”, the teenage author begins by talking about being bribed to read in elementary school and her decline in reading once she started high school. “As a sophomore, I realized how much I learned and how much I am not learning by not reading.” From then on in the story, she talks about a reading experience she had in the third grade:

I had a test on the word onomatopoeia and caterpillar. Determined to pass the test, I went home and pulled out “The Very Hungry Caterpillar” and read the book until I could remember how to spell c-a-t-e-r-p-i-l-l-a-r letter by letter...Unfortunately, when test day came, I had a nervous block...Then I remembered the books I had read and the words slowly shifted into my head.

In both of the above examples, the writer maintains a connection with his or her childhood self. In the story “Starbury, the New Status Symbol,” the writer uses the same criteria to evaluate the shoes both when he was in sixth grade and now that he is in high school. He evaluates the shoes based solely on their appearance. He has not changed in his outlook about the sneakers, or about what wearing them means, a notion that is evidenced when he says, “Things haven’t changed much since 6th grade.” In other words, he is still in the grips of the peer pressure that leads him to present himself in a certain way to avoid fallout from his friends and classmates. In “Learning the True Rewards from Reading”, the inclusion of this story about an

elementary school experience in talking about her present understanding of the importance of reading suggests that the writer has not progressed from her elementary school self. It is still a part of who she is, as evidenced by her next statement, “Today I still use onomatopoeia and whenever I need a reference I think back to the third grade when I took that test.”

The writers in both stories, through this storytelling technique, are metaphorically trapped in that they have not moved on and shed this part of themselves. The writer in “Starbury, the New Status Symbol” is still under the influence of peer pressure, just as he was in the sixth grade. The writer in “Learning the True Rewards from Reading” is still approaching her schoolwork in the same manner that she did as a third-grader.

This repetition of experiences is also constructed when teen writers discuss different experiences in similar manners, creating the notion of going through the “same” experience, over and over again. That is the case in the LA Youth stories “I Couldn’t Take it Anymore”, “I Don’t Like Your Dog, Okay”, and “Testing My Patience.” The first is about a gay teenager’s struggle in high school; the second about being criticized for disliking dogs; and the third, a teenagers’ dissatisfaction with her high school classes. The writer in “I Couldn’t Take it Anymore” describes several of his school experiences in the following manner:

The next day on the bus the same boy who had asked me if I was gay threw a marker at me. I got out of my seat and hit him and we started to fight....two kids broke up the fight and we both got sent home for two days.

One of the new kids said to my friend, who is a boy who dresses as a girl, ‘Man, that’s nasty.’ We exchanged words and got into a fight. Next thing I knew, I was getting carried out of the classroom by the teacher. “But the boy kept calling me names so I said ‘Shut the hell up’ and he whispered under his breath ‘fag’. I was so mad I picked up a stapler off the desk and hit his arm...The teacher sent me upstairs to the conference room for the rest of the day...”

In the story, “I Don’t Like Your Dog, Okay”, the teen writer describes encounters with her neighbor’s dog, her friend’s dog and another friend’s dog:

My hand got closer to the dog and the dog’s head twisted to get a nice view of my hand. I was afraid it would bite me...I slightly poked the dog in her back and I felt bones and then pulled away.

Touching this monster was absolutely out of the question. He was half my size just being on all fours, he licked like no other, and he could jump over the sofa. Not only did I leave the house immediately after they tried to get me to touch it, but I didn’t go to her house for weeks.

My friend Jennifer took me through the dog-liking process step by step. She kept him on her lap, then I touched him, and after half an hour, I started to high-five him and pretend to high-five him but pull away before his paw reached my hand...But he blew his chance when he licked me.

In the LA Youth story, “Testing My Patience”, it is about her experiences in classes at different grade levels:

I wanted to figure out what each line meant on my own and then have the teacher show us how to understand the meaning of the poem. Her handout made it seem like there was no other way to interpret the poem.

The year before that, another teacher lectured about the theme of generosity in A Christmas Carol without allowing us to figure out the theme ourselves.

Schaffer made me dislike writing since it seemed to imply that writing wasn’t meant for expressing yourself or for enjoyment—it was to see how well you could follow instructions.

In each story, the descriptions, from three different incidents, are written in much the same way. In “I Couldn’t Take It Anymore” someone says something to the writer, he gets into a fight, and he is removed from the situation either by being “sent upstairs”, “carried out of the classroom” or by being suspended from school. Each time, he is going through the same motions, suffering the same consequences, so it is as if nothing has changed. This “sameness” and repetition is suggested in the statement that “When someone would call me a name, I’d say

something back...we'd get in each other's faces and argue and get in-school suspension." The statement indicates that this happened a lot, and that the resolution was always the same. For the writer in "I Don't Like Your Dog, Okay?" this repeated experience involves the writer being encouraged by someone else on a number of occasions to interact with a dog. First it is her grandmother, then a neighbor who makes her live through a "second instance of torture", then a friend in what she calls a process of being "de-sensitized". These different experiences end with the same thing—being overcome with fear once she comes in contact with a dog. In "Testing My Patience" the experience is a constriction on her ability to think for herself. First she is not allowed to formulate her own analysis of the poem but must instead accept the analysis that has been "given" to her; second she is not provided with the opportunity to reach an analysis before one is provided to her; and third she must "follow directions", follow a set formula, rather than be free to express what she wants to say.

Two other teen webzine stories manifest this theme of being trapped in a different manner. The stories' language reinforces the writers as embedded in the situations from which they say they want to be free. In "Facing the Future", the writer says she has been "brainwashed" to follow a certain life trajectory, that has no options for her besides achieving a college degree. The story plays out this educational progression, with each paragraph using language that details another step along the aforementioned educational path that she said she could not imagine deviating from. She moves from describing her experiences as an elementary and middle school student, fielding questions about her future, to describing the questions she faces once she begins high school--about the benefits of college. The story moves from "second semester of my junior year", with its "flurry of college letters and invitations to attend this and that educational summer program", on to her feelings about her college prep courses, to "seeing myself among the

graduated seniors”, with their graduation robes “waiting for me”. She ends the story talking about college and its entrance to adulthood, and a “wait for the future to catch up with me”.

The story, as it is written, represents the writer against the backdrop of the very progression that she sees as trapping her. Writing the story may provide her a forum for expressing her concerns about her future, but through the language that she uses, she is represented as unable to free herself of the bounds within which she feels she moves through her education and toward her future. She is trapped within the confines of the life and goals that she says are expected of her.

The story “Hooked on Ralph and Calvin and...” in which the writer uses language that describes her as suffering from a drug addiction, is also told in a way that mimics a drug addiction. She moves through the stages of denial of her problem:

My mother told me I was messing up. Homework didn't matter anymore. Old friends were out. I was too fly to hang with them. Ralph offered me clout...I became a fiend for the attention... It was all about me and Ralph L...I didn't think I had a problem until the day my mom found the receipt in a shopping bag....I was looking good and that was all that mattered.

...To recognition of her problem.

On the road to recovery, I bought \$30 Levi's instead of \$70 Guess? jeans. As a reward, with the money I saved, I would treat myself to a Broadway play or a funky art museum. That made the withdrawal period less painful.

...To trying to educate others

To this day I see teenagers denying their addiction to Brand Names, even when the warning signs are obvious. If you or someone you love is going on four-hour bus trips just to get Brand Names; if you're selling drugs, stealing or spending hard earned money just to get Brand Names, get help.

Through the language she uses at each step along her path from buying name brands to refusing to do so, the writer recreates the experience of going through a drug addiction. She thus

reinforces the notion of not freely making a decision to buy expensive clothing. She is purchasing such clothing because she is addicted to it, because such clothing is like a drug that influences her to act in a certain way.

In all of these cases, the problems with which teenagers deal are personal problems, motivated by their own feelings. These problems may stem from a larger issue such as peer pressure or acceptance of difference, or school curriculum, but these issues are not really addressed. It is their own reactions to them—frustration, lack of control, anger—that are manifested in the language and organization of the stories. The bigger issues are not really the issues that the teenagers are tackling. They tackle intrapersonal issues.

Adolescence as a Time of Growth and Learning:

Another theme in teen webzine stories is that of adolescence as a time of learning and acquiring knowledge. This learning process is two-fold. Adolescence is a time of self realization, a period in which one grows by learning about oneself or acquiring new understandings and skills. It is also a time to learn about others and about issues and events. This theme of learning is manifested through three linguistic patterns in teen webzine stories: the framing of stories as personal lessons; the construction of teen webzine stories into “opportunities to learn” about topics and issues; and the construction of stories into interviews with “expert” information.

Personal Lessons: These stories are written in first-person and describe first a personal experience that the teenager had, such as being in a relationship, volunteering with an organization, or listening to certain music. The final paragraphs or sentences incorporate language that focuses on the teenager having obtained an understanding about his self or herself through the experience. The teens discuss what they “learned” or “realized” from the experience, or what the experience “taught” or “showed” them. The experience as a whole becomes

something from which the teen has learned something and has grown, progressed, or changed in some way.

This growth often involves an enhanced sense of self worth, of increased confidence in oneself. In the BUZZ story “I Didn’t Win but I Sure Had Fun”, the writer, who says she dreams of being a professional singer, describes her anxiety as she auditions for a young idol contest. Before an audition she says “panic and fear grew inside me” and that she “tried to keep her breakfast down,” that she even forgot the words to her song right as she was getting ready to go on. Her anxiety over her performance is suggested by the fact that she calls the waiting period to see if she made it “one of the most stressful things I’ve had to deal with.” She ends up missing the final cut and not making it into the show, an experience that she says helps her to feel better about pursuing her singing dream:

Even if I were last it wouldn’t matter because I’ve learned to accept the hard fact that with putting yourself on the line comes disappointments and wrong turns. On the road to success, there are bumps, flat tires, and time when you need to stop at a gas station to refill yourself with determination.

Her lack of success in the contest teaches her that even failure can be success because the act of trying for a dream brings it closer to happening. She refers to not making it into Young Idol as “another pit stop on my road map to success”, indicating that this is just a temporary delay in her making it down the road to becoming a singer. She “realizes” that even though she did not reach her goal, the fact that she tried to reach her goal is putting her closer to it. She therefore learns to see failure as a step in the right direction if it is brought on by reaching for a cherished goal. Her initial concern about her performance, about how she sings at an individual event, is replaced by an understanding that “even if I were last it wouldn’t matter.” It is about trying to succeed, rather than just succeeding.

This enhanced sense of self worth also involves teenagers learning to become more independent. The writers in the NYC stories “Buying Name Brands to Fit In” and “My Abusive Boyfriend” start out relying heavily on others to feel good about themselves. The writer of “My Abusive Boyfriend” says of her boyfriend that she “desperately needed him to cope with my own life”, that she “thought I’d be lost without him”, and that “as long as he was there I was alright.” She says of him that “I needed him there so badly, I let him change the things about me that made me an individual. I was becoming a clone of Danny.” The writer of “Buying Name Brands to Fit In” “followed in my friends footsteps” buying the clothing that they bought. She says that she “lost herself to fit in”, and that she “cared so much about what other people thought about what I was wearing” for fear that if she did not wear what others wore she would not have any friends:

I saw what happened to kids who didn’t fit in. When new students came to my school, the students would discuss what they wore, their hairstyles and behaviors...It would have been hard to be a person that other people discussed.

For the writer in “Get In, Get Money, Get Out”, it was a dependence on money and material things that defined her. She says her mother “paid the bills and bought me stuff but she rarely hugged me or spent time with me”, that her aunt “showed me her love through money” and that she “bought” happiness by getting boyfriends to buy her things but she “never wanted to stick around long enough to fall in love.” Then she fell in love with a guy named Jamal who bought her things but who “played” her, leaving her to deal with a miscarriage while he moved in with another girl.

The experiences described in these stories, while negative, have a positive effect in that the teenagers learn something from them, as evidenced by the manner in which the stories end:

Although it was a horrible experience, at least I learned a lesson from my relationship with him. The worst thing you can do is to depend completely on someone else. I will never do that again and I will never let anyone control or hurt me in anyway. I know now that you don't have to put up with that type of treatment.

My Abusive Boyfriend, NYC, 2007

I'm still glad I went through my fashion school phase. It was part of my life and process of growth. I learned a lot about fashion and how to be confident in myself...I still pay attention to fashion but it is not for other people anymore.

Buying Name Brands to Fit In, NYC, 2007

I realized that I deserved to be treated way better than how Jamal treated me...I need money for food, clothing and other things, but as far as being happy, I determine my happiness, not cash. That was a lesson I wish my mother had taught me, but I had to learn it for myself.

Get In, Get Money, Get Out, NYC, 2007

The lessons all three of the teenagers "learn" bolsters their sense of self worth. They live their lives on their own terms, rather than doing what they think others expect. The writer in the first story learns that she can be independent, that she does not need someone to tell her how to live her life. This sense of growth is suggested by her referring to herself as "a completely different person than I was when I was with Danny." For the writer in "Buying Name Brands to Fit In" she "learns" that she does not need others' approval and does not need to follow others to feel good about the person she is. Instead of gearing her appearance toward what others want, she now focuses on what her clothing and style do for her. Whereas she used to feel that she was "losing herself to fit in", she now dresses nicely because "it makes me feel good inside." In the last example, the experience of being with Jamal makes her realize that she does not have to deal with loveless relationships. Instead of buying happiness she is now "determining" it for herself. She is making herself happy rather than depending upon someone else to give her something to help her feel good about herself. This contentment is coming from within her rather than from an external source. In other words, she can make herself feel good. In these three stories, the

teenagers' negative experiences teach them that they do not need anyone or anything to be truly happy with themselves. They thus influence their own lives and are in control of what happens to them.

In other stories, this enhanced sense of self worth involves teenagers' ability to improve not just their own lives, but those of other people. For the teenager in the LA Youth story, "AIDS in Africa", it is a volunteer trip overseas that allows her to see her own influence. In "The Daily News Taught Me English", also in LA Youth, it is reading the newspaper that gives him an understanding of his own influence over other people:

I've realized that I can give these people more than a sack of grain. I can give them a voice. Now when I teach about HIV/AIDS back home in Los Angeles, I remind my peers of the people in Africa counting on them.

AIDS In Africa, LA Youth, 2007

I've learned that there are a lot of problems like discrimination and world hunger that need solutions. I'm still not sure how I've going to help. But because of what I've learned here, I now dream of finding a way to help our world become a better place.

The Daily News Taught Me English, NYC, 2007

Both teenagers come to recognize that they can make a difference, although how they can achieve this differs. For the writer in the second story, he "is not sure" how he will help, but that he "dreams" of finding solutions. That suggests that he feels he has the potential to help other people and to solve the problems that plague people both in his community and in other communities around the world. He has come to learn that he is able to do something even if he is not sure how or what he will do. The writer in the "AIDS in Africa" story learns more than just that she has the potential to help, but that she already has influenced the lives of others. Through her visits to Africa and the stories she tells to classmates back home in California, she can "give them a voice", can make these AIDS patients be heard far from the land in which they are living

and dying. She can bring their struggles to the attention of her friends and classmates and through her story in LA Youth, to the thousands of teen readers.

In other cases, this learning is not about creating a sense of self awareness but about learning something about one's relationship with other people. In the Listen Up story, "Drum Circle Symbolic Example of the Teenage Experience", the writer learns about the influence he has on others and others have on him. In the LA Youth story, "My Sister is More than Her Disability", the writer details her experiences playing with and helping her younger sister who has cerebral palsy. The writer begins the story by discussing her sadness over her sister. She says that "it was hard to watch" Natalie go through her physical therapy and other treatments, that she "prayed to God that He would heal Natalie", that she questioned why God "made Natalie like this." But for the writer of "My Sister is More than Her Disability, these experiences, and the time she spent with her sister helped her to learn not to be upset:

Everything my sister is, like being feisty, overshadows her disability. At first it hit me hard thinking that she was going to have a miserable life. After spending everyday with her I realize that she's not my disabled sister. She's just my sister.

While she was once upset about her sister's condition and felt her sister would be limited, she has come to "realize" that her sister has qualities that will allow her to be happy. Instead of pitying her sister for what she lacks, she recognizes what her sister can contribute. She even says that Natalie "had made changes in her life", and that with Natalie "I feel like my family has become more vibrant." She calls Natalie a "peacemaker who will always laugh and entertain" her family.

Music class and a sister away at college are also means through which teenagers learn about their relationships with people. The following are from the Listen Up! stories "Learning a Lot From Missing Sibling" and "Drum Circle Symbolic Example of the Teenage Experience",

the first about the relationship between the writer and his sister and brother as the kids grow up, and the second about the parallels between a drumming class and the teen experience:

I realized she wasn't always going to be downstairs reading the paper on Saturday mornings. She wasn't always going to be there to hit me if I said something inappropriate...My sister's absence in my life made me realize just how much fun we had together.

I had learned quite a bit about life and people while banging recklessly on drums. Everything about the circle was spontaneous—no one knew what was going to happen and the rhythm could have changed at any given moment...

In both cases the teenagers come to realize that they are influenced by their relationships with other people—that they depend upon their interactions with other people. The actions of others impact how they act. If someone changed the rhythm in music class, the writer in “Drumming Circle Symbolic Example of the Teenage Experience” would have to react quickly with his own drumming in order to keep the music going, just as he would need to react to a change that someone made in the real world. For the writer in the story “Learning a Lot from Missing Sibling”, his sister's absence leaves a hole in his life and changes their relationship. He says that “conversations now have less sarcasm” and that “we seem to have a dependency on one another that each of us acknowledges.”

In other stories, the learning involves acquisition of a specific skill or piece of knowledge. In the LA Youth story, “Cool Internship”, the writer says of his experience interning with an animator that “I got a much deeper understanding of what is involved in making animation. I learned that animation isn't just fun and games, but also a lot of hard work.” In writing about her homeschooling experiences in the Listen Up Story, “Home School Life Important Preparation for Life After High School”, the writer says that “homeschooling taught me a lot.” The writer of the story “Learning the True Rewards from Reading”, says that she was

forced to read when she was in elementary school, received prizes for doing so, and was motivated to read by teachers who rewarded her for doing so. She said this reward system was the reason that she read:

Reading through those grades has expanded my vocabulary and promoted my writing skills. As a sophomore I realized how much I had learned and how much I am not learning by not reading.

The writer in the story “Driving on Sunshine” says that building a car and racing it against other teams “made me realize the importance of listening to other people.” When teen journalists visited a local radio station they “discovered” what a radio career is like. They learned something about the industry that they did not previously know and have thus enhanced their understanding of broadcast journalism and what is involved in being a journalist. In all of these cases, an experience that the teenager had has allowed him or her to learn something that has allowed for growth.

Teenagers are also “learning” and being “taught” things by the media and books. The title of the story “The Daily News Taught Me English” emphasizes the “learning” or instruction that comes from a newspaper. And the way in which the writer talks about the paper’s influence on his life in the United States reinforces this idea. He says that “It opened up my mind and taught me about the imperfections of our world, the challenges that people face every day and the variety of people in the world.” In a book review in LA Youth, the writer refers to “lessons to be learned from Battle’s mistakes”, and says that the book “shows” that we can be let down by those whom we care about. In writing a review of another book, also in LA Youth, the teen writer says that the book “was telling me that we all have someone in our lives who cares about us and isn’t going to give up on us.” In a review of The Kite Runner in NYC, the book is said to help people learn about another culture. Teens’ experiences with music, namely different

treatment of hip hop music and rap music are also ways for teenagers to learn, as the writer of the NYC story “Is MTV Harder on Hip-Hop Than Rock?” says:

This inconsistent censorship sends a bad message to teens like me... We may not consciously realize what's happening when we hear words edited out of hip-hop music remaining uncensored in rock songs, but we definitely sense it. And it teaches us to apply different standards to different races.”

Through their interactions with these sources, teenagers come to know something that they may not have known before, and as a result they grow from their experiences in reading and listening to them. These newspapers, music, and books are inanimate objects however they are the result of adults' actions. Adults have written the articles or the books and adults are responsible for censoring music. These lessons, therefore, are coming to teenagers through the actions of adults. These inanimate objects are “telling” and “teaching” teenagers about other cultures or about interpersonal relationships and the expectations of others. They are, in effect, teachers and because they are a product of adult work, the adults are in a sense teaching teenagers lessons through their books and newspapers, as well as through their treatment of musical expression. These “teachers” are not people however they have a “people connection”. Music censorship, which is discussed as “sending a message to teenagers,” is a result of human beings, namely adults, who censor music. This “message” is then coming from adults. Adults are the ones who are, indirectly, teaching teenagers to “apply different standards to different races.”

All of the lessons, whether they come from a teenagers' own experiences, or from being taught something by another person or through a media source, are set against the backdrop of bigger, societal issues, such as dating abuse, treatment of people with disabilities, and pressure to conform. Teenagers are not addressing these bigger issues, or learning anything about them as much as they are utilizing them as a means to learn something about who they are. The issue

itself is not as important as what it has done for them as a person. They are not really engaged with the problem as much as with their own reaction to it, and their learning is limited to learning about their own psyche.

Opportunities to learn: Teenagers do extend their learning beyond their own responses to become aware of bigger issues in stories that are written as opportunities to learn. The writer first describes a first-person account of an experience he or she had. These stories end with information about a topic that is addressed in the story with phrases such as “for more information”, “to know more”, or to find out “how to” do something. The information may be provided in a list form at the end of the story or there may be a link to another website. These may be thought of as “opportunities to learn” because they are not part of the story but are an extra source of information, not necessary to full understanding of the story. A teenager’s personal story is not just limited to his or her intrapersonal growth but is the conduit through which others can learn something. This pattern, which extends learning beyond the individual’s reactions and responses are not as prevalent, happening in just a few stories on a few topics.

One such topic is school and community programs that are available to teenagers. The NYC story, “Doctor Dreams” details one teenager’s experience as a hospital volunteer and it ends by directing readers to an Internet site “for more information on the Cedars-Sinai Teen Volunteer Program”. In the BUZZ story, “Learning With Legos” readers are directed to the website firstlegoleague.org “for more information” on the program after being provided with information about the program itself. The BUZZ story, “Concert to Raise Money for ‘Invisible Children’” also follows this same organization. The story details the work of teenagers in organizing a benefit concert to help the invisible children and ends with language that creates an opportunity to learn more about the program:

For more information about Invisible Children Benefit or Modesto Choir...
Concert to Raise Money for 'Invisible Children', BUZZ, 2007

Opportunities to learn also involve teenagers' health and safety. The following are from the LA Youth story "Listen up About HIV and AIDS", and the NYC story "The Truth is Hard to Ignore". In the first story, the teen writer discusses her experiences as a peer educator and in the second story teen journalists write about their impressions of the truth campaign anti-smoking public service announcements:

Want to know more? Invite one of these peer-to-peer educator organizations to your school...

For more information on the truth campaign, go online to thetruth.com. For more information on quitting smoking contact the New York State Smokers' toll-free Quitline, the National Cancer Institute's Web-based program to quit smoking (www.smokefree.gov) or the American Cancer Society (www.cancer.org).

Teenagers also have a few opportunities to learn about helping out in their communities. They learn "how to stop harassment" through the LA Youth story "I Couldn't Take It Anymore". The story is about one teenager facing teasing because he is gay. Readers come away with information that can keep them safe or help them handle a problem should they face a similar situation. Through the writer's experience, teenagers can "learn" a lesson. Teenagers can also learn about stray animals and how they can help through one girl's recounting of her own experiences with strays and adopting her own dog in the LA Youth story, "Strays Need Our Help". The story ends with a list of ways that teenagers can help at animal shelters to save stray animals' lives.

In each of the aforementioned stories, the experiences of one or a group of teenagers provides for the introduction of new information from which teenagers can learn something. They can learn about helping charities overseas, about how to become involved as a hospital

volunteer, how to quit smoking, and how to protect themselves from those who might tease or threaten them. The stories become potential lessons for teen readers. The availability of this “extra” information, be it at the end of the article itself or “teased” from another site, makes the story more than just the detailing of a specific teen’s experience or of an event. It is the conduit through which readers can take away some information. The teen’s experience is the link to this lesson for all teenagers.

These stories, like the personal lesson stories, are about one person’s experiences, be it with community service, harassment, or involvement in an internship. Instead of the learning being focused inward, on what the experience did for the individual who had it, the lesson in these “opportunities to learn” is geared toward helping other teenagers to take something away. Rather than the writer focusing just on his or her growth, there is an emphasis on what others can get out of their experience; in other words what other teenagers can learn from “me” as a more general lesson.

Interviews from “Experts”: There is a small focus on more general teen learning in a third language pattern in teen webzines—the expert interview. These interviews are of two types: those that are centered on providing information about specific issues; and those that focus on individuals such as teachers or students. The former type of interview story accomplishes this goal of teaching others.

This learning goal involves protection. An interview with peer educators in the NYC story “What is Dating Abuse?” provides information on how teenagers can know if they are experiencing dating abuse, how to prevent it, and how to help someone else who is suffering from it. The interview arms teenagers with information they would need to identify a problem and deal with it and thus it enables teenagers to protect themselves from this problem that,

according to the article, affects a large number of teenagers. An interview with a communication professor in the NYC story “What’s Wrong With Red Bull Ads?” is a means through which teenagers can learn about their own vulnerability to advertising messages and the reasons why they become a target of advertisers. It also provides information through which teenagers can fight back against this advertising pressure. Another lesson involves career preparations. Teenagers interview professional wrestlers, professional chefs, and teachers. These experts give teenagers an understanding of the jobs; the training involved; and some of the challenges that are faced in these fields. These pointers can help other teenagers who are also interested in such careers.

These expert interviews account for a very small amount of expert interview stories, with most of the stories focusing on learning about an individual. Teenagers interview one another, and interview teachers, and they learn everything from a student’s favorite feature about their self to their teacher’s favorite book. Teenagers also share information about themselves—their career aspirations and favorite foods. The “Teen Hall of Fame” feature, which is not a product of teen journalists’ interviews, is nonetheless providing a window into an individual. The personal information at the end of the story—career goals, family, etc.—are again means through which teenagers are coming to learn about one another and to share information about themselves with other people.

It is not just personal characteristics that are the focus on adolescent learning. They are also focused on learning about others’ opinions on a variety of issues. The Question of the Week provides for information ranging from the problems that teenagers face, to the things they wish they could do better, to their favorite foods. These stories are a conduit through which teenagers share information about themselves with other people, thus allowing others to learn about them

or to be introduced to them and their personal characteristics. These stories are limited to just individuals. They are much like the personal lesson stories that focus on individuals' experiences. Both are stories that are "all about me" when it comes to growth and learning.

Learning and growth are important aspects of the teen years as evidenced in the emphasis of this theme in a large number of stories in several webzines. Much of this learning, however is focused just on individuals—what one person takes away from a given experience, and how something from disabilities, to AIDS, to peer pressure affects one's own feelings. There is little learning about these bigger issues. Learning does extend beyond individuals; teenagers have the means to find out about issues such as harassment and about community service opportunities, but such instances of broader learning are significantly less emphasized in these teen-produced news texts. There is thus an emphasis on personal growth or personal achievement, an emphasis on what I have learned or discovered about myself.

Teen Identity "In Flux"

A focus on oneself is inherent in one of the most prevalent themes in teen webzines—that of the teen identify as being in flux. In the language of their stories teenagers are negotiating who they are and how they see themselves—their identity—against the backdrop of experiences they have and issues that they face. This process is two-fold; a negotiation between who they are now and who they used to be; and a negotiation of their sense of individuality and group membership. This theme of being in flux is manifested through two linguistic patterns: language that shifts between past and present tense to construct for teenagers old and new selves; and language that shifts between first, second, and third person to construct distinctions between a teen as an individual and a teen as a part of a specific group.

Past and Present Tense-Old and New Selves: Teen webzine stories are written in a combination of past and present tenses. The writer begins the story in past tense but at a point in the story shifts to present tense. The story then remains in present tense. This shift in tenses serves to divide the story into two parts--that which happened in the past and that which is happening currently. At this point in the story the writers illustrate, through their language, a change from who they feel they used to be to who they believe they are now. As such this point in the story may be thought of as a demarcation between the writer's old self and the writer's new self. The new self is comprised of the characteristics the writer feels she or he currently embodies as compared to those characteristics that the writer suggests he or she no longer possesses.

In some stories this shift from the past to the present tense—from an old self to a present or “new” self—coincides with a writer realizing that he or she can have an influence over others' lives. In the LA Youth story, “Reality Television Sucked Me In”, the realization involves the writer's role in perpetuating reality television. She begins the story in the past tense, saying that she “loved every minute” of the finale of Flavor of Love, and that the show “allowed” her and her friends the feeling of being in on a joke. She writes that she “felt sophisticated” watching the show with her friends and she goes on to describe an obsession with reality television that “grew” and “graduated” to other programs and more discussion with her friends. She says that she watched the shows with friends despite the fact that they “felt guilty” watching the programs and felt that she “wasn't any better” than the reality television stars themselves:

The more we watched these meaningless reality television shows, even if we were criticizing them, the more we legitimized the types of behavior these shows portrayed. Maybe the only way to really criticize these shows is not to watch at all.

In this statement the writer comes to realize that criticizing the shows is not enough, that by watching these programs she is giving them credibility, even as she talks about their negative impact. The way in which she talks about herself shows that she realizes that she needs to change her behavior. In the course of making this realization the writer shifts from using the past tense to talk about her relationship with reality television (and therefore talking about a past time), to use of the present tense and therefore talking about what is happening now. It is from this point on in the story that the teen writer uses present tense to talk about her new relationship to reality television, as seen in the final paragraph of the story:

It's hard not to indulge in this guilty pleasure and to gush about all the ridiculous plots but I feel better now that I have given up reality TV. Yes, reality shows may be entertaining, but it's also embarrassing to waste my time passing judgment on people I don't know, people who have absolutely no impact on my life. Comparing myself to them is even worse.

This realization statement on the part of the writer marks a movement from the past to the present, from the person she used to be to her present self. Before that she writes that she “felt” guilty and that she “loved every minute”. This language suggests that she no longer feels this way. This love and guilt are no longer a part of her life. She writes about her obsession as if it is in the past, that it “grew” and “graduated”. She ends the story by speaking about herself as she is today, with language that indicates her feelings are in the present time, that “it’s hard not to watch but that not doing so makes her “feel better”. She has moved from her old self who indulged in the programs and identified with the characters to her new self who no longer watches reality television and who now feels that “comparing myself to them is even worse.” She is no longer the teenager who, while criticizing reality television, could not seem to turn it off, but is instead someone who thinks that it is “embarrassing” to watch and compare oneself to these people.

For the writer of the LA Youth story “AIDS in Africa”, it is a realization that she can be proactive in helping AIDS patients overseas that coincides with this shift from talking about the past to talking about the present. She writes that Africa “first called to me two years ago”, that she “saw death” in the photos of AIDS patients in Africa and that she “felt a yearning” to see the AIDS crisis first-hand. She says, on her initial trip to Africa she was “confronted with chaos”, that she “was overwhelmed” and that she “was shocked by the harsh conditions I saw”. Then she says the following of her interactions with AIDS patients:

We would always ask the people we met whether they had any message they wanted us to take back to the United States. Some asked for people to come and help them...and others asked that their existence be made known. I’ve realized that I can give these people something more meaningful than a sack of grain. I can give them a voice. Now when I teach about HIV/AIDS back home in Los Angeles, I remind my peers of the people in Africa...

This point marks a realization by the writer that she can be more than just a witness to the suffering. Instead of being “overwhelmed” and “shocked”, she can “give them a voice”. She can educate teenagers in the United States and help them to learn about the problem thousands of miles away. She can tell the stories of those who are suffering in Africa to a group of people who could work to make a difference from afar. After this moment, the writer talks about herself in the present tense. She says that “I worry that I won’t be able to make a difference” but that “it’s my calling and I plan to follow it.” She says that “I never forget to remind my peers about the virus and about my experiences”, that she “feels useless” when she is not in Africa fighting the virus and that she “knows” that she will return to Africa many times in the future.

The writer’s realization that she can “give them a voice” is the dividing point between her description of herself in the past and herself as she presently is. Before that she “felt overwhelmed” and “was shocked”. In writing in the past tense, she indicates that these feelings

were once how she responded to the AIDS crisis in Africa but that she no longer feels this. Such feelings are not with her now. In talking about herself in the present tense—that she “worries”, and that she “plans to follow” her crusade in Africa, the writer indicates that these are the feelings that she currently embodies. The shock and the feeling of being overwhelmed are replaced by worry that she cannot do enough, and also by determination to “never forget” to remind people about the victims. This point in the story—the realization the writer makes regarding her role—therefore becomes a demarcation between an old self and a present self.

In other stories this shift from an old to a new self coincides with teenagers’ realization that they control their own lives and their relationships with others. In the NYC story, “Get In, Get Money, Get Out”, the writer begins by talking about herself as a person who used money and material things to substitute for love. She says that she “felt unwanted” by her mother who was only nice to her when she could give her mom money; that she “felt special” around her boyfriend who bought her clothes; that she “played along as if everything was the way it should have been” when her boyfriend seemed to be losing interest in her. The critical point for this writer is a move back to her hometown and the opportunities that it afforded her:

I got to go to a red carpet celebrity event. I also began writing for NYC. I’ve met great people who I value for their opinions, not for their money and I’m enjoying life.

In describing her work experiences she shifts from talking about the past to talking about herself in the present. The final paragraphs in the story are in present tense. She says that “I define my happiness”; that “she wants” to be there for her children when she has them and that she “will give” her kids the things they want, but that she “wants my spouse and me to be involved” in the lives of their children. At the end of the story she is describing her present feelings and present goals rather than referring to how she “felt” at an earlier time or how things

“should have been”. Her language indicates that she has come to feel that she has control over her life and that she can be a better parent than the example that was set by her own mother. She talks about her planned parental involvement and what she will “give” to her children, which is in contrast to the manner in which she dealt with her own mother. She says that “I want my spouse and me to be involved” with her children and the life that they build which is in contrast to her decision to “play along” with relationships in the past that made her feel alone and did not afford her a feeling of connection to her significant other.

In the stories “Hooked on Ralph and Calvin and ...” and “Buying Name Brands to Fit In” the shift in tenses coincide with evolving sense of self control, specifically, the realization that they do not need to wear expensive clothing to be happy. The writer of “Hooked on Ralph and Calvin and...” starts out talking about herself in the past tense, saying she “was hooked on the strong stuff.”, that “Calvin Klein was no friend of mine,” that she “had a problem”, and that “it took a while to get on the right track”. The writer in “Buying Name Brands to Fit In” says that she “realized” that in order to fit in she “had to know those popular brands”, that she “felt if I knew more about the fashions they liked and wore some of the same clothes I could be closer to them.” She says that she was “confused” by all the name brands, but that she “didn’t act like I didn’t understand”. She says she “tried to act normal” and that she “felt like I lost myself to fit in.”

The writers then reach a point at which they realize that they do not need to dress in such clothing. For the writer in “Buying Name Brands to Fit In” it is moving to a different school. For the writer of “Hooked on Ralph and Calvin and...” this critical moment occurs when the writer realizes that when it comes to a brand name clothing addiction, “I could only save myself”. She realizes she can’t make her friends stop buying expensive clothing.

Brand names is a powerful addiction that has destroyed many young lives. I was lucky. One outrageous receipt and an angry mother saved me from a life of make believe self importance. From now on, my money is going to stay in my name. A nickel bag--\$500—remains in my checking account...

Addicted to Ralph and Calvin and..., NYC, 2007

Two years ago I started High School at Flushing International High School...with all sorts of people speaking different languages the community has become more important to me than clothes. It's a new and small school...

Buying Name Brands to Fit In, NYC, 2007

As was the case in the aforementioned stories, these moments of realization begin in the past tense and then move to the present tense. They also mark a point after which the story as a whole shifts from past to present tense. The writer of “Buying Name Brands to Fit In” says that she “can feel the care from teachers and students”, that “I don’t have to worry anymore”; that dressing in nice clothing “makes me feel good inside”; and that she wants to dress nicely for herself as “I grow into a young woman”. The writer of “Hooked on Ralph and Calvin and...” says that she “no longer looks the part because I am too busy living it”; that “I entertain myself with the finer things in life”; and that “\$500 remains in my checking account”.

Through this shift in tenses, the writers partition their lives into a past and a present. That the writer of “Hooked on Ralph and Calvin and...” says she “had” a problem indicates that she does not currently have this problem. That she “was hooked” on designer clothing suggests that she does not currently suffer from such a proclivity. The writer in “Buying Name Brands to Fit In” talks about her confusion and her feeling that she lost herself to fit in with her friends in the past tense, indicating that she has stopped experiencing such confusion and feelings at the present time. In addition to employing these shifts in tenses, both writers also use phrases such as “from now one”; “no longer”; and “anymore”, which suggest a division in their lives between who they used to be and how they used to act, and how they feel about themselves now.

For the writer of the stories “Ignoring the Stares”, and “More than Friends with Benefits”, which both deal with dating relationships, the move from an old self to a new self involves acquisition of self confidence. The shift from past to present tense occurs in the course of a conversation between two teenagers regarding their relationship. They begin by describing this conversation in the past tense and then shift to talking about their relationship as it is now:

I felt silly when I heard his thoughts on it. I felt better knowing that I hadn't been paranoid about people's reactions, because he'd seen them all, too. Since then, I've started using Jeremy's approach whenever we get the odd start. I ignore it.
Ignoring the Stares, NYC, 2007

We embraced and kissed and I knew things would be different this time. There was no longer a need to impress or hold back because we took each other for who we really were imperfections and all.
More than Friends With Benefits, NYC, 2007

It is at this point that both writers change from using the past tense to using the present tense and as such describing themselves as they currently are. Prior to writing about the conversation with her boyfriend the writer in the first story says she “felt all eyes on me” when she went out with Jeremy in his neighborhood, that she “still got the feeling “; that people were looking at the two of them together in public, and that she herself “felt weird” about her relationship with Jeremy.

Following her discussion of the conversation with Jeremy she writes about their relationship in the following way in the story:

I know interracial dating is still an issue to some people, but Jeremy and I refuse to let it get to us. We go to restaurants and ignore the few stares we get. We hold hands walking through the mall. We take the stupid things some people say about us and turn it into a good laugh.
Ignoring the Stares, NYC, 2007

At the beginning of “More Than Friends with Benefits” the writer says the following of his relationship with his girlfriend:

I knew what I wanted, but I was afraid of expressing it to Carmen. I didn't know her that well yet, and I assumed she wanted one of the other types of relationships I'd seen. I thought that I was the only one who imagined a relationship like I did. I was afraid that if I made the wrong assumption, I might lose her.

More than Friends With Benefits, NYC, 2007

After the point in the story in which the writer tried to "fix" their relationship by talking about it, he moves to the present tense. He says that "we're no longer afraid of being vulnerable"; that they "feel good" when they spend time together; that they "share" personal things and "still have our other interests". He says of his situation with Carmen that "I'm in the relationship that I always wanted to have."

In each of these stories the writers indicate a more self assured person regarding his or her relationship. Where before there was doubt, now there is certainty. Where the writer in "More than Friends with Benefits" "was afraid" of expressing his relationship and "was afraid" of losing his girlfriend if he spoke his mind, he now "feel[s] good" in the relationship. He can "share" personal things with her and be comfortable. By saying that he "was afraid" that Carmen would not want the same out of the relationship as he did, he indicates that he used to be afraid, that he used to think these ways. His timidity has been replaced by assurance and confidence, changing the way that he sees himself and the relationship. For the writer in "Ignoring the Stares", in talking about her response to her relationship in the present tense, as she does at the end of the story, she indicates that this is the way she currently feels. In the story she shifts from a situation in which she "felt weird" about her relationship and always "felt all eyes on her", to one in which she and her boyfriend "refuse to let it get to us", and in which they "ignore the stares." The conversation becomes a pivotal point at which her prior concerns about the relationship yield to her feeling more confident and sure of herself in her relationship with

Jeremy. Where there was once discomfort in her interracial relationship there is now comfort and resolve.

Each teenager has moved forward or progressed in some manner. They have gained something on an intrapersonal scale that makes them better or solves a problem that they faced, making them “different”. The negotiating of identity therefore implies a forward movement: who they are is better than who they used to be because they feel better about a problem they had or about their own influence to fix something that went wrong. They have not changed the issue, just how it influences them on a very personal scale.

Individuals and Part of a Group: Teen webzine stories also utilize language that identifies writers both as members of a group and as individuals. Writers use first and third-person construction to distinguish between something “I” do, versus the actions of “teenagers” and “students”. They use first and second-person construction to define my” actions versus what “you”—teen readers—do. They also use word such as “we” or “our” to align themselves with a group, be it teens in general, classmates, or friends. Teen writers also use multiple types of first-person construction to distinguish between their own actions or beliefs and those that they share with others—something “we” do or that is “ours”. These shifts in language serve to distinguish between points at which teenagers see themselves as unique or separate and points at which they identify collectively.

This shift between identifying as individuals and as members of a group--between identifying oneself as part of teen culture or as separate from it-- often involves negative behaviors. By alternating between first person and third person, teenagers can both associate with and dissociate from teenagers as a group, as in the following examples, from the NYC story, “The Truth is Hard to Ignore”, which is about the impact of the tobacco companies’ truth

campaign anti-smoking ads. The writer shifts between writing about teenagers as a separate group, in third person, and writing about her and her friends' identification as teenagers, in first person construction:

According to the truth campaign, smoking gives some teens a way to express themselves or rebel. Our teenage years are a time of transition into adulthood and we're trying to take control of our own lives.

Some teens smoke because their friends smoke. During our teenage years, most teens want to fit in. And once they have that first experience of smoking, they have the second and third and...they're addicted.

At the beginning of the statements the writer talks about "teens" smoking and about the role that "their friends" play in the process. The use of this third person construction serves to separate the writer from the group of teenagers as she talks about smoking as rebellion and about teenagers succumbing to peer pressure. It is not part of her and her friends' collective experience but is instead something concerning "teenagers" or "them". She is not identifying as a teenager in the context of youth smoking. She then shifts to considering herself as a teen in general discussing "our teenage years" and talking about taking control of our lives as something that "we're" attempting to do during this period in one's life. In the second statement the writer talks about smoking addiction and in doing so, shifts back to third person describing teenagers as "they" and saying that "they're addicted". This negative consequence—addiction—is therefore not associated with the teen writer who is not part of this "they" that takes up smoking. When teenagers are associated with this negative behavior, she is not identifying herself as one of them.

In the same way she separates herself from teenagers when she writes about the effect of the ads as not telling "teens" to stop smoking, but trusting "teens" to "take away their own message." She says that when adults "tell some teens" that they should not smoke "they" might wonder why adults smoke but teens should not smoke. She also separates herself from the

teenagers who are the intended audience for this article when she writes in the second person. She says that the ads show “what can happen to you if you follow through with smoking; that the design of the ads “helps you want to watch the ads and not to forget them; and that “the younger you are when you start smoking, the more likely you are to smoke as an adult.” In using “you” she is addressing teenagers who are reading her story, but is not including herself among this group of teenagers in general.

The end of the article includes “some hard facts about smoking”, and even this list of statistics and information indicates this separation of the teen writer from teenagers in general related to the negative aspects of teen behavior. She uses third person to talk about youth smoking, saying that each day “more than 4,000 teens try their first cigarette and another 2,000 become regular daily smokers”; that “100 high school smokers think they will be smoking five years from now” and that “28% of high school students” say they used tobacco. The writer does not talk about “me” or “us” or “we”, when referring to teenagers’ behaviors and as such does not place herself in this group of teenagers. As she writes about cigarette usage and potential addiction among teenagers she remains separate from this group. She does not use language that includes her under the umbrella of this teen behavior.

In shifting between talking about “teenagers” as a group and talking about “our teenage years” the writer changes how she identifies herself. When the behavior is negative—when it involves addiction, smoking, rebelling—it is happening to “teenagers” or to “you” the teen readers. In this way she is not considering herself as part of this group. When the behavior is positive or innocuous, as is the case for teens fitting in or transitioning, or taking control of their lives, the writer considers herself to be part of this group. When the context changes, she changes

the way in which she identifies herself as either part of the teenage culture or as an individual separate from it.

In the stories “Consider Merit, Not Popularity”, and “Testing My Patience”, these negative teen behaviors involve teenagers at school. In “Consider Merit, Not Popularity”, such behavior is students’ propensity to vote based on personal feelings about candidates instead of their potential to serve. In “Testing My Patience”, it is teenagers’ focus on grades and test scores at the expense of real learning that is regarded as negative. Through their language, the teen writers dissociate themselves with teens in general when discussing this phenomenon. The writer of “Testing My Patience” says that “students” at her school use education to do well on the SAT’s; that “they” read books that they don’t enjoy “just so they have something to write about on the essay portion of the SAT.” She says that the point of an education isn’t about grades or tests but that “a lot of students” do not realize this. The writer of “Consider Merit, Not Popularity” says that “most students practically refuse to look at the academic and personal skills” of potential class officers; that “students” should focus on candidate platforms; and that while class elections “are a stepping stone, introducing students to the concept of voting” a number of students waste such an opportunity. He separates himself from teenagers who consider popularity the sole means for making someone a class officer. The writer in the LA Youth story “Testing My Patience” also uses first person in her story.

I don’t want to just take a test and get into a good college. I want to learn to be able to think for myself...I form my own conclusions when I read newspaper articles and discuss them with my friends.

Using third person they separate themselves from these teenagers and students. She is not considering herself to be part of these groups which do not value learning, and who are focused solely on getting high marks and good test scores. These attitudes--studying for the purpose of

learning and thinking for oneself—are behaviors and attitudes that are, through the writer’s use of first person, attributed to her, in contrast to the behaviors of “students”. She marks herself as an individual, as acting in a manner that sets her apart from other teenagers.

The writer in “Testing My Patience” uses first person to identify herself as part of a group, however it is her classmates with whom she identifies, rather than teenagers in general. She says of her teachers, “It was like she didn’t even care if we learned or not as long as we could pass the test” or that “we were analyzing poetry and learning grammar” because the tests required it. These are not negative behaviors, but instead reflect a notion of teenagers as being ill-served by teachers in their public school. She identifies as part of a group of Walnut High School students who have a common experience—namely that they are not challenged to think for themselves at school. It is not that students are doing something wrong by not wishing to learn, but that they have been deprived of the learning environment to do so. In this context—poor education and inadequate preparation for high school—the teen writer identifies with others with a common “experience”. It is when this is happening that the writer identifies with other students, namely with her classmates. When it is something bad, the writer discusses teenagers in third person, as a separate group, and she is not identifying with this group.

This shift in construction within webzine stories, by which writers both identify with a group and as separate from it within the context of negative behaviors, also manifests itself in the opposite manner. Teenagers use language that unites them with a group when they are doing something negative. In this way, the negative behavior is a function of a group versus being something the individual teenager does. In the story, “Reality TV Sucked Me In”, it is in the discussion of an enjoyment of reality television—the fact that it has an influence on her life—that the writer identifies herself as part of a group. After saying that “I loved every moment” of

reality television programs she says that such shows “allowed the viewer” an experience different from other shows; and that they “allowed us to feel special.” Later in the story she writes that “we the viewers were why reality TV existed”; that “we watched these meaningless shows even if we were criticizing them”; and that in doing so “we legitimized the behaviors seen on the shows. In using “we” and “us” to talk about reality television viewers, it indicates that the writer considers herself to be a part of this group. She identifies herself as one of many people who legitimize these meaningless shows, and who feel special from watching others’ misfortunes.

In addition to identifying herself as part of the group of viewers, the writer also identifies herself as part of a smaller group—her reality television watching friends. She writes that “our obsession with reality television grew”, that she had friends who considered “our obsession” with reality television to be unhealthy, and that “what started as somewhat normal comparisons between our lives and theirs [reality television stars] avalanched into a blatant ignorance of the line between ‘reality’ and ‘reality TV’”:

We’d use Tonya’s TV persona to characterize someone prone to psychotic freak outs...we’d talk about how we thought Mark should consider retiring.

That she calls reality television an obsession, that she says she and her friends developed a “blatant ignorance” of the line between reality and what they’d seen on television, indicates that the writer finds watching reality television to be an unfavorable behavior. It is something that she is not proud of having done despite enjoying the shows’ content. In writing about her love of the show, the way watching made her feel, and the manner in which the shows became an increasingly bigger part of her life, she connects herself to other people who are doing the same thing. It is as if she is saying that while watching reality television is problematic she is not alone

in doing so. She identifies herself as part of the group, as just one of a number of people who are acting this way. Her negative behavior is not just hers but something that other people do as well.

The same thing occurs in the LA Youth story “Facing The Future”. The writer identifies herself with other teenagers when talking about the struggle of trying to act maturely and still be innocent like a child, the conflict between wanting independence and needing parental direction.

The definition of teenager is a muddled one because we (as teenagers) are supposed to be able to cope with the trials and tribulations of being an adult, but with the optimism and happiness of a child. From adulthood on, there is no parent to blame for things and no one to tell us what to do. And even though all teenagers claim to hate parental advice and nagging, we all secretly need to know what we are supposed to do in trying times.

These conflicted feelings, this sense of being between childhood and adulthood is then part of adolescence and something that many people share. The writer makes it so that she is not the only one who is struggling with this. It is a problem teenagers have, rather than a problem with her. When she talks in first person—that “I am afraid to jump off”, it is not that this uncertainty is her uncertainty but her feelings are something that other teenagers face. She says, “I have become increasingly bad at being able to look into my future”, but this inability is not her problem alone because “my friends act the same way.” She says, “We are all trying to avoid anything beyond the now.”

She is saying that she may be uncertain but it is only because most teenagers are or because her friends are. She says that she molds herself to things around her, is easily influenced by what she reads, and that she takes on inflections from books but “I see my friends doing it too.” She says that this is “odd” which suggests that she is not proud of it. However, she links her own behavior to that of her friends, so this weakness, this strange, abnormal behavior is not unique to her but becomes just a factor of adolescence. She is not strange—she is just like other

teenagers. In this way, this tendency to be impressed upon and influenced, of being easily changed, is something that others deal with, so it is not just her weakness, but something more widespread.

This shift between identifying oneself as an individual and as part of a group is absent when she talks about her own achievements—her high test scores, her high grades, and the interest expressed in her by colleges. These facets are then associated with her personally, rather than with others. She is distinguished in the “positive” things about herself.

In the LA Youth story “Listen UP About HIV and AIDS” it is a volunteer experience that results in this shifting in how the teen writer identifies herself in relation to other teenagers. The writer begins by identifying herself as part of teenage culture, through the use of first person construction saying, “we had sex education. We learned how to protect ourselves as teenagers.” Then she mentions her involvement in a teen education program and from then on, the use of the word “we” is limited to her place as a teen AIDS educator:

We begin with the nuts and bolts to make sure kids have a good idea of how the virus operates... We then present some statistics...

But instead of simply throwing out scary facts, we focus on how teens can protect themselves and the people they love. We go over the ways you can contract HIV.

The “we” then refers not to teenagers in general, but to the group of AIDS ambassadors. She is no longer affiliating herself with the teen culture as a whole. Instead of using first-person construction to talk about teenagers, she shifts to third-person construction. She says words like “teenagers” and “themselves”:

We focus on how teens can protect themselves and the people they love...

We give a lot of information about how to protect yourself sexually. This is often the most engaging part because it’s most applicable to teenage life.

We usually hand out paper and have them submit questions...I always hope that people will be uninhibited with their questions.

The change from first to third-person construction represents a change in how this teen writer identifies herself. The writer has come to identify not with teenagers in general, but as a member of these teen AIDS ambassadors. And this change in identity goes along with a change in context—the writer's entrance into this select group of students for which she was "chosen". It is as if the knowledge and training she acquired through her participation in the AIDS ambassador program allowed her to identify herself differently, as perhaps more informed than average teenagers, and therefore separate from them.

This identification with the AIDS ambassadors, rather than with the teen culture as a whole, is also manifested through her identification as separate from the teen audience as well. Throughout her story she addresses the audience, using second-person construction. The use of the word "you" in talking to the potential readers of the story (who it is assumed would be teenagers because it is a news source geared toward teenagers), represents the writer as not being part of this group. She is identifying not with the collective teens to whom her advice is directed but instead identifying with the AIDS educators.

She then shifts her identification again, using second person construction to establish a link between herself and teenagers in general, and to establish herself as "one of them."

While we all may come from different backgrounds, we have our generation in common; I know I feel more comfortable talking about it with someone my own age.

This shift coincides with a statement that she feels "teens respond better when it is coming from teens". There is, again, a shift in context in that now the author needs to be part of the teen culture in order to identify with the teenagers to whom she, as an AIDS ambassador, is

speaking. The shift to first person represents her as identifying with teenagers in general, in the context of doing her job. Again, she has shifted her identity, her sense of self, in response to a change in her context. She separates herself from teenagers in general in that she knows more, is better educated, and more aware of AIDS, however when the job calls for her to be a typical teenager, she sees herself as such.

Who teenagers are is therefore intertwined with some sort of problem they see around them, because it the presence of a problem—smoking, fears about the future, ineffective educational preparation—that brings on this change. Teenagers are not doing anything to address the problem. Instead they are addressing the negativity surrounding it, and identifying themselves in a manner that lets them disassociate themselves from a bad behavior or lets them find “comfort in numbers” when they are directly connected with a negative behavior or action.

Teenagers “Get Things” from Adults

A fourth theme in teen webzine stories is that teenagers get things from adults. Through their interactions with parents, teachers, and members of their communities, teenagers are able to acquire skills or knowledge, or are enabled or helped to do things that enrich their lives in some way. This theme is less prevalent than the other three themes, manifesting itself in a smaller number of stories. Although it is less frequent, its occurrence has implications for the representation of teenagers that will be discussed later in this chapter. This theme of teenagers as “getting” things from adults is constructed through two language patterns: the use of anthropomorphism to indicate that non-human entities, all created by adults, are “giving” or “offering” teenagers opportunities; and the use of words and phrases that suggest adults themselves are doing the “giving”, “helping” or “offering”. Teenagers are therefore getting things from adults both directly, through the giving, helping or offering that adults do

themselves, and indirectly, through adult-generated establishments that “give”, “help”, or “offer” things to teenagers.

Indirect “Giving”—Anthropomorphism: In their stories, teenagers use words such as “offer”, “help”, and “give” when talking about schools, and other organizations and institutions with which teenagers interact. This “giving” and “helping” allows for teenagers’ lives to be improved in some manner. One of these improvements involves making teenagers more tolerant of others’ differences. The writer in both “Could the Supreme Court’s Race Ruling Affect L.A. Schools” and “Embracing Diversity” discusses an initial lack of understanding of other cultures, which her school allows her to overcome. The first story centers on the writer’s concern that her magnet school, which fosters diversity, might be adversely affected by a Supreme Court decision in Washington State that would ignore race as a factor in magnet school admissions. She writes that schools like hers “are important because they bring together people of different cultures so we can all learn from one another.” In “Embracing Diversity” the writer says that when she was in middle school “I didn’t really know a lot about other cultures” and that caused her to develop stereotypes, specifically regarding Asian and Latina students. After being in a middle school class with a Latina girl who she says always talked about boys and always wore lots of makeup “without even realizing it I started thinking that was how all Latina girls acted and dressed.” She says that she also “had a stereotype of quiet Asians who do all their homework and stay in on weekends.” It is her school and the friendships she has formed there that she says “have helped change my views about stereotypes” and contributed to her forming close friendships with two girls whose cultures are different from her own culture:

If I didn't attend a small magnet school, I don't think I would have gotten so close to Amy and Judy. Magnet schools like mine which are small and diverse, allow kids to be more open to different types of people and break down their own racial stereotypes.

Embracing Diversity, LA Youth, 2007

In both of these stories, the school systems are credited with helping students be more open to other cultures and races. In this way, the schools, which are inanimate objects, are taking on human characteristics. The tolerance and acceptance of people from other cultures is given to students by their school environments. They lack it initially but acquire it through the community created by the school. The schools are thus imbued with the human actions of teaching and helping, actions that make students better people, thereby improving their lives.

In the BUZZ story "Charting a New Course" it is not tolerance of others that students receive from their school, but academic success. Valley Charter School in Modesto, California is the answer to poor performance that may occur at traditional schools.

At traditional high schools, amid distractions and large classes, some students falter. At Valley Charter they blossom and thrive. The school, with about 250 students, prides itself on helping teens learn about themselves, their strengths, and what they want to do later in life.

The school "offers unique opportunities" and its programs "provide our students and graduates with skills to be successful in life." The school "prides itself in giving students individual attention" and on "helping" high school students. Valley Charter students interviewed in the story say of the school that "it will help you meet your goals" and that time at Valley Charter "helped me with college classes" taken as part of the school's curriculum.

Attending Valley Charter School "helps" teenagers to be better students now and prepare for their futures. The school "gives" them individual attention allowing for success. It "provides" and "offers" opportunities to students that would not be available in more traditional school

settings. Students' academic experiences are richer, and they benefit in terms of performance.

The school takes on human characteristics and human actions, which result in improvements in teenagers' success at school.

Non-human entities such as television and music are also credited with having a positive impact on teenagers, such as helping them define what they want to do with their lives. In the LA Youth story, "Doctor Dreams" about a teenager's growing interest in the medical field, it is the television show *House* that "showed me how interesting a medical career could be". He says of *House* that "I never expected a TV show to influence my life and help me figure out what career I wanted."

In this story, a television program, something that is not human, is credited with performing the human actions of "showing" him about a career and "influencing" his decision to pursue that career later on. Before watching the show *House*, he is not sure about his career path, saying that he entertained the idea of being a lawyer but told everyone he planned to be a doctor in order to get them off his back when they asked him what he wanted to do when he grew up.

Inanimate objects also improve teens' lives by making them more creative. For the writer in the NYC story "My Love Affair with Indie Music", the music "inspires me to become a good writer" and has "made me more defined and inspired." Through her interaction with Indie music she gets something that improves her life in some way. She describes herself as better or improved for having had this genre of music in her life.

In the BUZZ story "Rio Arts Center", the programs encourage teenagers to flex their creative muscles:

If you have any ideas—like writing a play—or if you want to stage something like a battle of the bands, Rio Arts will help you do it.

In the webzine stories that teens write, television programs, musical genres, and after-school programs are able to help and inspire them. Participating in the Rio Arts center can give teenagers an opportunity to organize a show or a musical program, which can help them in a possible future career. Listening to certain music is the impetus for a teenager working to improve her own writing skills. For the writer in “Doctor Dreams”, his favorite television show provides an early introduction into the field of medicine and gets him interested in a volunteer program at the hospital where his father is on staff. By watching television, he learns about his interests, and it is a lesson that will help him later in life. *House* has therefore helped him, just as Indie music and a community organization also help other teenagers with their potential goals and interests.

In all of these stories, it is schools, organizations and other non-human entities that are described as doing the teaching, helping, inspiring, and showing. All of these entities, however, are adult-generated entities. Teachers, administrators, and even parents, in the case of charter schools, have created the schools and are responsible for their operations and organization. When the writer of “Embracing Diversity” says that her school “helped change my views about stereotypes” and that magnet schools like hers “allow[s] kids to be more open to different types of people”, she is indirectly crediting the teachers and administrators who are responsible for the school and its makeup. Teenagers are being given this sense of tolerance and open-mindedness from their school, and therefore from the adults’ actions in making these schools happen. If magnet schools make it so that “we can all learn from one another”, as the writer of “Could the Supreme Court’s Race Ruling Affect LA Schools” says, the learning that is a function of the school is really an outgrowth of the adults in that school who are creating a diverse student body and encouraging such learning about people of different backgrounds. Valley Charter School

“helps” teenagers to meet goals, and to succeed in college classes later on. Although the school is responsible for these positive changes in students, the school is an outgrowth of adults who have created it. The individual attention from the school and the opportunities that it affords its students are a product of the adults who teach there and who have formed the school. The “help” that improves the lives of Valley Charter students is therefore coming from adults.

Just as adults have created and organized these magnet and charter schools, they have done so for the Rio Arts program. They have also created the Indie music and the television show *House*. When Indie music “inspires me to become a good writer” and House “influenced by life”, teenagers are crediting adults—those behind these inanimate objects—with doing the inspiring, teaching, and influencing that makes teens’ lives enriched in some manner.

Direct “giving” by adults: Teenagers also use language that suggests a direct “giving” of opportunities, and “help to teenagers by the adults in their lives. Adults “give” and “offer” them opportunities, and “allow” teens to do things. In some cases, this adult intervention allows teenagers to solve a problem. Such is the case in the NYC story “Someone to Talk To: Teens Rally for Mental Health Services”. The problem discussed in the story is that New York City teenagers have inadequate support in their schools for dealing with mental health issues. The story is framed around a specific emotional problem the writer had—dealing with the suicide of a classmate without a good deal of support from adults.

Despite the title of the story it is adults, and not teenagers, who are behind this rally. The writer says that “teens invited by school-based health centers around the city joined NYC Council member Gale Brewer and youth advocacy groups.” The teenagers are not the focus of the action, but are instead ancillary to it, and dependent for their participation on adults taking them in, “inviting” them. The writer uses the word “they” when talking about the different health

organizations and youth advocacy groups involved and enumerating their goals. Teens are not included in this list and therefore remain separate from the groups, not part of the “they” that is affecting change in the New York City school system. The “help” being provided to improve teens’ mental health access is a result of the adults’ involvement and their organization of the rally to draw attention to and support for this issue.

The things that adults do for teenagers, either directly or indirectly are largely intangible. They involve teenagers’ feelings and attitudes regarding problems or issues that teenagers face. What adults give to teenagers is in a sense helping them to grow by making them feel better about who they are or how they treat people. And it is individual help that is focused on the teen who is writing the story.

Teen Representations

Both the manifest and latent meanings in the texts contribute to their overall meaning. It is the meaning of texts about teenagers that contribute to our knowledge about them by creating a discourse that comes to define them as a subject. Teen representations—what it means to be a teen—therefore requires examination of both the manifest and latent meanings of the texts. The analysis was done in two steps. First the issues were examined for larger ideas about teenagers. The themes were then examined collectively along with these larger ideas to see how the themes in stories could inform these ideas and contribute to the construction of the teen subject. There were three teen representations created through teen webzine stories: that teenagers have problems, that they are self absorbed when it comes to fixing problems, and that identity is a matter of convenience for teenagers.

Teenagers Face Problems

There was one overwhelming idea that emerged based on the issues that were covered in teen webzines-- that teenagers have problems. Many of the issues covered in teen webzines presented negative aspects of teens' lives involving their experiences and their feelings about those experiences. Teenagers face problems when it comes to their relationships. Teenagers' relationships are troubled by nature. They have trouble finding someone who is right for them and they become involved with people who are no good for them, or who abuse them. They also feel bound by societal notions of what is considered a proper relationship. In other words, their relationships are troubled by nature, and they must do some "work" either with the other person or within themselves in order to have healthy, positive relationships that allow them to grow and to be happy. For teenagers, finding compatibility is never without issue.

Teenagers also face trouble in school academically, psychologically, and socially. Schools do not teach them to be critical thinkers. Charter schools are mentioned as alternatives to public school where teenagers get some of the things that are lacking in traditional high schools. School is also a restrictive place for teenagers both because of teachers and other students. Teachers punish them for acting in certain ways, and their classmates make it difficult for them to be popular or to succeed if they do not conform. School is also a source of peer pressure for teenagers in that they need to dress or act in a certain way when they are there. Having the wrong types of clothing, not being familiar with the latest brands, or wearing "cheap" clothing can make you unpopular, or can lead to teasing and taunting as can being different in any way from the majority of other students.

Teenagers are also unsure of their futures and are concerned with figuring out what they want to do when they grow up. They feel pressure to have things figured out in their teen years.

Questions about what is ahead after high school are a worry and a concern. It is the pressure to figure things out that motivates involvement in internships and other efforts to try to map out their futures. For example, the writer in the LA Youth story, “Doctor Dreams” discusses how his family always asked him what he wanted to do for a career and he started to say medicine just to get them to stop bothering him.

Teenagers also experience a problematic world around them—one plagued with sickness, adversity, and danger. They are at risk for contracting HIV and AIDS, or becoming addicted to cigarettes. They are vulnerable to media messages that may deceive them. They are also vulnerable psychologically. They face problems at home, such as the lack of a stable family unit. Collectively, these stories represent teenagers as vulnerable in many areas of their lives. They also experience adversity second-hand, witnessing family members struggle with disabilities or seeing people suffer from serious diseases, or seeing animals struggling. They do reach out to help others who are facing such adversity through organized activities. While this community service is happening, there are just a few instances of it, indicating that giving back is perhaps something that few teenagers are engaged with.

Teenagers also experience internal problems dealing with how they feel about themselves. They lack a sense of being in control of their lives and a sense of confidence in who they are and of their self worth. These internal problems are at the root of problems in their relationships, and problems involving peer pressure or social pressures at school. Teenagers also write about feeling unsure of themselves and their abilities, and feeling that they are not capable of doing enough to help other people. This is the case when it comes to involvement in community service activities and reaching out to help others in their communities or to help loved ones. They express feelings of inadequacy and frustration at feeling that they can not affect

change. It is as if by trying to tackle a large problem, like disease, teenagers end up creating a problem for themselves.

Even normal behaviors and activities that would not be considered problems become problems because teenagers use pathological language to talk about them. Activities like fancy clothing, watching reality television, or enjoying certain types of music become things over which teenagers have no control. They do these things not because they want to but because they have to. Their hobbies are things that cause them trouble--sicknesses or weaknesses that must be overcome for teenagers to be well or happy.

Collectively, these stories represent teenagers as having problems in many areas of their lives. These problems are largely self-motivated, meaning that teenagers bring them on themselves. They are choosing to become involved in relationships, and it is in doing so that they experience hardship, frustration, even physical and psychological harm. They also pressure one another to act or dress in certain ways. This need to conform is something that teenagers themselves create. They have set up these bounds of what is acceptable and what is not—rules that are of their own creation. And they are the ones who enforce the rules when they are broken—ostracizing someone who does not dress a certain way, or who does not wear expensive sneakers, or teasing someone for not being straight.

Teenagers' intrapersonal problems—their feelings of inadequacy and their lack of confidence-- are also self-motivated. It is not that someone is telling them that they are not doing enough, or telling them that they are not good enough. These are feelings that they manifest on their own, and that infiltrate their relationships, that leave them vulnerable to peer pressure, and that influence how they view their service to their community. This is not to say that teenagers are at fault for being unsure or uncertain, but to note that these intrapersonal problems are not

situations that someone else has created for them, but rather something that they have created for themselves. This is not to blame teenagers for the problems that happen to them, but instead to recognize that teenagers are initiating many of the problematic situations in which they find themselves.

Teenagers do face problems that are not of their own making. They are not responsible for schools not teaching them to think critically, or for curricula that focus on standardized testing at the expense of student learning, or for the rules that restrict their behaviors while at school. The sickness and adversity that is a part of their world—either first-hand or through someone with whom they have close contact—is not something that teenagers have caused. They face sickness and disease, and are exposed to it, both in their own homes, and in other communities—situations that they have no hand in making happen. These stories are in the minority however, so the representation of teenagers is that much of the problems that afflict them are of their own doing.

It is also interesting to note the types of problems that are not part of teen webzines. There is no mention of the societal issues that are often associated with teenagers—drug use, smoking, teen pregnancy. These are issues that one brings on him or herself, or that one causes to happen. In teen webzines, these issues are completely absent. There is only one story that involves smoking, but it does so in the context of tobacco advertising. Teen smoking is a part of the news text but it is a very small minority of the issues that teenagers face. In the context of teen-produced news, it is as if these issues do not even exist for teenagers. The teen subject is one that does not deal with such issues.

Teenagers Are Self Absorbed When it Comes to Fixing Their Problems

When these problems are examined along with the themes in teen webzine stories, a representation emerges of teens having limited abilities to solve their problems. The themes show us that some problems are handled while others are not. Teenagers are primarily able to fix problems that are intrapersonal, involving such things as self confidence and control over one's life. It is the themes of adolescence as a time of learning and growth and of identity in flux which contribute to this representation of teenagers. The negative experiences that they have—bad relationships, peer pressure—are not springboards for discussing the larger impact of such issues, but instead for learning a lesson about oneself. They are personal lessons. Teenagers come to understand that they do not have to put up with bad treatment from someone who claims to love them, and that they deserve happiness. They do not need someone else to make them feel special or to feel good enough. A bad experience has enabled them to become stronger or better than they were before because it has shown them something about themselves. They have learned and grown in that they gain more self control and are able to be more self confident. If a lack of self confidence is teenagers' problem, or if they feel that they do not have control over their own lives, then once they learn to be self confident, and that they can control what happens to them and how they allow themselves to be treated, they have, in essence, solved their problems.

Teenagers' volunteering experiences are also framed as lessons that teach them that they are not helpless with regard to adverse situations that touch their lives, such as disease and conflict. It is not so much that these problems exist that is troubling to teenagers as it is about the fact that there is nothing that they can do about the problems. When they learn that they can make a difference, albeit small, this negative experience moves them forward. The negative

experience allows them to progress, and makes it so that they have taught themselves how to fix what it is that was initially wrong in their lives.

When it comes to problems of self confidence, self control, and self efficacy, it is not just that teenagers' experiences teach them how to overcome the problems but that they write about themselves as being changed by these experiences. The shift from an old self to a new self that exists in a number of webzine stories involves a forward progression for teenagers. They are no longer suffering from such problems but have moved beyond them. The new self has a sense of control that the old self did not have, or a sense of confidence that was missing before the teenager had such an experience. The fact that they are moving from an old self who struggles with an issue or problem, to a new self who does not have this same problem, represents teenagers as fixing their situation. That their identities are shown to be in flux in these stories is what allows the shift from old to new that represents teenagers as overcoming a personal problem.

The experiences that they have are therefore focused just on what they have done for them and how these experiences have allowed them to overcome their own reaction to the problem. In writing about these experiences there is little mention of how others can learn something to help fix the problem. It is almost as if the big issue is not the problem itself, but instead the teenager's feelings regarding the problem are the main issue. The problem is solved because the teenager has overcome his or her own personal problem with regard to the bigger issue. The problem itself is still there. It has not gone away. The teenager just is not dealing with it or concerned about that issue anymore.

Teens are less able to overcome larger issues. The theme of adolescence as a time of learning and growth shows this. Teen stories are a conduit for learning about such problems as

health and safety. The opportunities to learn that are constructed in stories about smoking, AIDS, and dating abuse, represent teenagers as able to solve these problems on a personal level.

Teenagers can call a smoking hotline or log on to a website to find out how to quit smoking, and they can also find information about peer education, and speakers who can teach high school students about the risks of HIV and AIDS. Such information can enable teenagers to kick their smoking habit, and can be a conduit for teenagers learning valuable information that could keep them from contracting a serious disease. They are also provided with steps to take to stop harassment if it is going on in their schools, and with information about protection for those who are in an abusive relationship. The same is true of expert interviews that are included in teen webzine stories. An interview with a peer educator can help teenagers learn if they are in an abusive relationship, and how to handle such a problem. Teens can also learn about their vulnerabilities to advertising messages and how they can avoid such pressures, through an interview with a communications professor.

This learning is focused on the whole problem versus an emphasis on one teenager's response to it. However these stories are significantly fewer in number than those stories that involve teens' personal experiences indicating that fixing societal problems is less important than is fixing one's own problems. Also, these problems are not truly handled by teenagers alone. Adults are intervening to help them. Through their interviews, these adults answer questions about how teenagers can avoid being taken advantage of by the media, or how they can handle dating abuse for themselves or someone they know. The information that is provided about dating abuse, or about media literacy, provides steps for teenagers to take to overcome these problems and thus adults are providing the information that teenagers need to handle these problems. It is through the intervention of adults—answering teen questions and pointing

teenagers in the right direction for help--that teenagers can find out what they need to know. Teenagers can handle such problems or can protect themselves from becoming victims through incorporating advice from adults. Adults are therefore providing a solution to these teen problems. Teenagers are not really fixing these bigger problems. These bigger problems are discussed but to a much lesser extent than are “personal” problems and issues. This suggests that problems which extend beyond one’s own feelings and experiences are not as much a focus as are personal problems.

The collective of these stories show teenagers as being somewhat self absorbed. The larger issues that touch teens’ lives—disease, adversity, intolerance—are addressed largely through how they have impacted the teenager who has written about them. It is the manner in which one teenager deal with a particular problem that becomes the central issue and the means through which it is determined that the problem is fixed. There is little focus on utilizing one’s own experiences as a means to champion a bigger problem—to make one’s personal experience larger than oneself. It is as if the majority of issues with which teenagers deal only extend as far as their responses to them. Teenagers are not seeing past themselves to the problems that are in their world, focusing just on what such issues mean to them rather than what it may mean for someone else. They are looking inward, not focusing attention on larger problems that might impact others.

I Am Who I Want to be...Right Now: Teen Identity as Convenience

The ways in which teenagers deal with both the internal and interpersonal problems that befall them also represents teenagers as having convenient identities. Teenagers see themselves as being who they want to be when they want to be a certain way. It is the presence of a problem in their lives that motivates changes in how they want to see themselves and have other people

see them. They change their identity with two objectives. They make themselves look better to others, and they make themselves feel better about who they are and what they are like. In other words, identifying oneself becomes an opportunistic endeavor.

In order for teenagers to change their identity, “conveniently” or otherwise, their identities have to be capable of changing. The language-based theme of teen identities as “in flux” shows this change process as both post-modern and developmental. Looking at teen writing through both frameworks shows that adolescents are using identity in opportunistic ways.

With their language, teenagers create distinctions between the person they used to be and the person they are now. They construct demarcations between an old self and a new self manifested in the use of both present and past tense to talk about a problem they had, and centered on an experience that “changed” them in some way with regard to this problem. The experience is a turning point, after which the teenager is no longer the same person that they once were.

That this “turning point” occurs—that something in their lives can change how they see themselves indicates that teenagers’ sense of self—their identity—can change. When examined through a postmodern framework, these turning points show one way in which the teen identity is de-centered in that it is “in-progress”. Teenagers’ identity is not intrinsic in the individual but is instead related to what is going on around them. Experiences alter them. Another “turning point” can change their sense of who they are yet again. In this manner, who teenagers are is always metaphorically “under construction”, rather than being finished or finalized.

The postmodern framework suggests that one does not have a central or core identity, but instead multiple identities that become salient in different contexts. In teen webzines, these different contexts do not involve race, gender, or ethnicity, but rather involve distinctions

between seeing oneself as an individual who is unconnected to others, or as a member of a group with characteristics that link him or her to other people. And these changes involve one's dealing with a problem. Teenagers also use language that shifts from "me" or "I" to "us" or "we" and from "me" or "I" to "they" and "them". In this way they shift from individual to group identity.

That their identities are both multiple and "in-progress" represents teen identity as fluid, as being able to shift or change. And teenagers seem to shift this identity in a manner that is convenient to them, a manner that makes them look better to those around them and that lets them feel better about themselves.

Their multiple identities involve being part of a group with feelings and behaviors that are common to other people, and individuals whose thoughts, feelings, and actions distinguish them from others. This movement between one and the other, in the context of writing about both internal and interpersonal problems, serves to disconnect teenagers from some of these problems or negative teen behaviors and attach themselves to good behaviors. They change how they identify themselves so that they can be seen in the best light. And this "best light" is different in different contexts.

In the story, "The Truth is Hard to Ignore", the problem is teen smoking and teenagers giving in to peer pressure to use cigarettes. She writes that "some teens" smoke because their friends do; that "some teens" see smoking as a way to express themselves. This use of third person makes them separate from her, just as her use of the word "you" when discussing teen smoking, separates her from the teenagers who would be reading her story. She is not one of them. She also writes about non-negative teen behaviors, such as transitioning to adulthood and trying to take control of their lives. In this context—of teens as in-between childhood and adulthood—she identifies herself with them. She is part of this group and this experience.

These two identities—that of the average teenager and that of the person who is not a typical teen—serve to make her look better. Identifying as a teenager—as she does when talking about transitioning and gaining control-- sends a message to the readers that, “I am one of you.” She forges a connection to the reader that could help to strengthen her message. She can speak about the power of these ads and the struggles of adolescence because she is one. She is going through some of the same things that other teenagers are experiencing, so what she says can be of greater importance to a teen audience. She also makes herself look better by disconnecting herself from the negative behaviors that teenagers engage in. They may smoke and be easily influenced, but I am not like that.

The same is true for the writer in “Testing My Patience”. She faces an academic problem of feeling that she must learn to the test and focus solely on test scores and grades. In the context of this focus on academic performance—test scores and reading books just to ace the SAT’s, she does not identify as a typical teen student. She is different from that. While “students” do not realize that there is more to education than grades “I don’t want to just take a test and get into a good college.”

She does identify herself with other students when it helps her to do so. When she talks about not being challenged in school, about feeling like the school put too much pressure on her to do well, she makes herself a typical student, one of the group. In identifying with other students she is bolstering her argument, reinforcing that the problem of teaching to the test is not just something that affects me, but something that a lot of teenagers go through. This is something that she has control over—she does not have to play along with the idea of just learning things to spit back on a test.

For the writers in “Reality TV Sucked Me In” and “Facing the Future”, associating oneself as part of a group allows the young women to lessen the negative impact of some of the behaviors that they do not like about themselves or that make them look weak. The writer in “Facing the Future” is dealing with the problem of feeling uncertain about her future. When she identifies herself as part of a group--saying that “we just want to be back in kindergarten”--she makes herself part of a group that is dealing with these problems. She is therefore not the only one who is unsure about the next steps in her life, who wishes to be back in kindergarten when college and careers were not a worry. Other people feel that way too. It is a common experience, and not a negative quality in her. She thus makes herself look better to others, the readers who are learning about her struggles. She puts herself in a better light and improves her image.

In “Reality TV Sucked Me In”, the problem is an obsession with reality television, a feeling that she should not watch such programming but that she really, really wants to. She uses the word “we” to talk about some of the things that all viewers do that are perhaps negative. In writing about herself in this manner she is not the only one who is comparing herself to reality television characters and contestants, a behavior that she is not proud of. Her friends do it too. So do reality television viewers outside of her group of friends. It is something that “we” do. This behavior, about which she is embarrassed, therefore becomes something that is true about many people. It is not a blemish on her character alone.

In addition to making themselves herself look better in the eyes of the readers, these writers also change their identities in a manner that can make them feel better about themselves. By identifying themselves with other teenagers when they are exhibiting behaviors that they would see as negative or bad, their actions are not something that makes them bad or weak, but rather something that is just a result of being a member of a group. The writer in “Facing the

Future” is not flawed because she is uncertain about her future, because she wants to go back in time and be a child for a little longer, because she is worried about college and her fast-approaching independence. This is something that her friends feel, that is true of teenagers. She is therefore not alone. For the writer in “Reality TV Sucked Me In”, aligning herself with others who also watch, and who compare their own lives to those of contestants lessens the impact of these behaviors which she sees as faulty. She too is not the only one who is doing something that is problematic.

When the writers are either not ashamed of their behavior, or proud of it, they talk about themselves as individuals. The writer in “Reality TV Sucked Me In” expresses conflicted feelings about watching such programming and when she does so, she writes about herself as an individual, as an “I” rather than a “we”. She does not connect herself with her friends or reality television viewers. This discomfort with reality television—a good thing-- therefore sets her apart from others who enjoy watching and are not ambivalent about their hobby. She therefore makes herself feel better about what she is doing. She may be watching television that objectifies people or hurts their feelings, but she is ashamed of doing so. She recognizes that her habit has negative consequences so what she is doing is not as bad, for her knowledge of its drawbacks. In other words, I have a problem but I know that I have this problem, so the problem is not as serious as it would otherwise be. She is not removing herself as a reality television viewer. She is instead showing herself to be better and more socially conscious than the typical reality television viewer, thereby easing her own conscience and also improving how others might view her. This separation from reality television viewers therefore serves her doubly well.

The writer in “Facing the Future” identifies herself as an individual when it comes to her high test scores, good grades, and the interest expressed in her by colleges. She is therefore

showing herself to be successful, to be better than other students and teenagers. Because the focus is now on achievement, it makes her look better to put the focus on herself as an individual, to say this is something that I have done and that sets me apart from the average teenager. It therefore behooves her to make it all about her with this emphasis on achievement.

The writers in the LA Youth story “Listen Up about HIV and AIDS” and the Listen Up! story “Consider Merit Not Popularity” also identify as members of a group when it helps them to do so. The “Listen Up about HIV and AIDS” writer shifts from talking about “we” the elite group of educators to “we”—teens in general—when it helps her to do so. When the fact that she is a teenager connects her to high school students and therefore makes her a better AIDS speaker, she identifies as one of them. By associating himself as a high school student in the story “Consider Merit, Not Popularity”, the writer makes his story more effective because he relates it to his own experience.

Teenagers therefore shift between identifying as individuals and as members of a group in order to achieve different interests. They identify as individuals in order to separate themselves from negative behaviors of a group with which they may ordinarily be associated and to highlight something about them that would distinguish them from members of a group. They identify themselves with these groups when doing so can help improve how other people will see them, or enhance how they feel about themselves by diminishing their own negative qualities.

They are representing themselves in two ways: first they are showing themselves as separate from the group when the group is doing something that would be considered negative, or when they are doing something that they consider positive. Second, they are using collective language like “we” and “our” to represent themselves as part of a group when it helps them to identify as a typical teenager or as part of a group. When the context changes or when their goal

changes, they shift how they identify themselves. Sometimes it is advantageous for them to be teenagers or to be part of a group, be it students, reality television viewers, or peer leaders. At other times, this group membership can bring them down, and can chip away at their sense of themselves or the image they believe others might have of them. In these cases, they do not identify themselves as part of this group, but instead as an individual with something unique about him or her. Who they are—individual or group member—is therefore a matter of what is convenient for them to be, what will help them achieve both a better image to others and a better feeling about their own qualities and actions with regard to the ways in which they deal with and handle the struggles and problems that they face in their lives.

That teenagers' identities are "in-progress" also allow them to both feel better about themselves and to appear in a better light to others with regard to a problem that they have faced or experienced. They change from an old self to a new self, the distinction between the two centered on the fact that the "new self" does not suffer from the problem that initially befell his or her "old self".

In some cases, this problem involves self confidence. For the writer in "AIDS in Africa" her old self is marked by a lack of confidence in her ability to affect change. Her new self realizes that she can help fight the crisis, that she can raise awareness even from afar, that the stories she brings back home to California can inspire action. In this way, she is not powerless. But it was not eradicating AIDS as much as overcoming the lack of confidence she had in herself to make a difference that was the writer's problem. That she transforms from someone who is overwhelmed in the face of the crisis to someone recognizing her own abilities to make a difference, shows her readers that she is able to beat her problem, thus bolstering her image. She is also able to feel better about herself. She does not need to get rid of AIDS in order to help. She

understands that her small actions in visiting patients and in spreading awareness of the disease are what will fight AIDS.

The writers of “Ignoring the Stares” and “More than Friends With Benefits” are also “in-progress” and this element of their identity shows them overcoming a lack of self confidence. The writer in “Ignoring the Stares” begins as someone who sought out approval for her interracial relationship and this lack of approval made her feel bad about being in such a relationship. Her new self realizes that she does not have to listen to other people, and that she can be with Jeremy even if everyone around her is against it. This constructs her as a stronger, more self-assured person. She is above societal pressure.

In addition to showing herself to be strong and independent—something that would enhance how others see her—she also is able to feel better about herself, and about going against the grain with an interracial relationship. In showing how she has progressed, she appears in a better light. The young woman who once needed others’ approval and sought acceptance for being with someone of a different race, is gone. The writer in “More than Friends With Benefits”, was fearful in his relationship, concerned about doing something wrong or making a wrong assumption. He was afraid of being open about his feelings. He lacked confidence in himself to sustain a relationship with his girlfriend that would make her happy. His new self does not identify with the scared person that he was, the person who felt he had to hold back. He has become stronger, more self assured. The writers in “Buying Name Brands to Fit In” and “Hooked on Ralph and Calvin and...” also become stronger. They change from basing their happiness on material items to understanding their own ability to make themselves happy. They identify themselves first in a materialistic way, and then see their self worth and happiness as not coming from what they have but from how they feel about themselves.

The writers in “My Abusive Boyfriend” and “Get In, Get Money, Get Out”, change from identifying themselves as women who depend on others or depend upon money to be happy, to women who believe that they just need themselves to be happy. They realize that they can be happy on their own without needing to look for another person’s approval or influence. The writer in “My Abusive Boyfriend” has a new self that does not need someone to make her feel good about herself. Unlike the person she used to be—who sought approval and validation from another person—she is now independent.

For the writer in “Reality TV Sucked Me In”, she changes from someone who felt good about watching such programs, who “loved every minute” despite feelings of guilt, to recognizing that her reality television obsession has larger repercussions in society. Her need to watch television, and the fact that she incorporated what she saw into her own life, was the essence of her internal problem. She had to watch it. She comes to see herself not just as a viewer, but as someone who legitimized the behaviors she saw on reality shows, and who played a role in perpetuating these behaviors. She therefore shows herself as rising above the negative influence of reality television, as more socially aware than other people who are not critical of such programming. The person she presents to others through her story is someone who therefore becomes a better person. In addition to letting others see her in a more positive manner, she can also feel better about herself. She has come to understand that by not watching, she is benefitting society by not helping to reinforce the negative aspects of reality television. That she progresses from an old self to her new self shows growth, and improves who she is. By constructing herself with this evolving identity she can show herself as overcoming her obsession with reality television.

In the aforementioned teen webzine stories, teenagers construct a dichotomy between an old self and a new self in a manner that makes them look better to others and also feel better about themselves. Their old selves possess negative qualities, such as low self confidence, lack of independence, or lack of social consciousness. Without the presence of these old selves in teens' webzine stories, there would be no way for the teen to construct themselves as overcoming problems, as growing or enhancing who they are. Without the old self to show a beginning point, the new self would not emerge as somehow better or stronger. In addition to making them look better to others, this old self/new self dichotomy allows teenagers to feel better about themselves by constructing for the teen a representation of how much they have grown. Teenagers can employ both old and new to create an image of themselves, be it that they feel more self assured; that they do not need others to validate their worth; or that they are more confident in their abilities. That they construct themselves as "in-progress" represents teens' identity as being a matter of convenience.

Teenagers represent themselves through a postmodern framework that allows for them to shift their identities in order to make themselves look better. It is important, however, to consider their representation through a developmental framework, as this framework allows them to achieve the same objective of looking good. The developmental framework is useful in examining the meaning in teenagers' use of past and present tenses to create demarcations between old and new selves. This change from an old self to a new self is in keeping with Erikson's (as cited in Kroger, 2004) idea that in adolescence, young people transform themselves into someone related to, but transcending who they were beforehand. The changes that teenagers write about involve overcoming feelings of self doubt or uncertainty, and becoming more self assured. This would be in line with Erickson's suggestion that healthy adolescents are able to

become self certain rather than to possess self doubt, or to be able to achieve rather than feeling that they will fail. (Erikson, as cited in Kroger, 2004). Teenagers are therefore creating themselves in a manner that shows that they are developing healthily. They are fashioning their identities to illustrate what Erickson would consider to be a successful adolescence. They are transcending who they used to be to become someone different—someone who has navigated the identity conflicts of adolescence in a positive way. They have chosen to represent themselves in this manner—to incorporate both their past and their present into a discussion of their problems. In doing so, they have made themselves look good from this development framework as well as through a postmodern framework.

Teenagers therefore have an ability to make themselves into what works for them at the time. Whether a teenager represents him or herself as an individual, to distinguish oneself, or as a member of a group, to lessen the blow of a negative action or behavior, when they represent themselves as different from how they used to be, they are choosing to do so. They are choosing what works for them. The issues and problems which motivate the changes are therefore being used to accomplish the teenager's objective. It is as if they are using the experiences that they have, and the problems that befall them as a means for boosting their own self image. They do not have to deal with the problem at hand in order to make themselves feel or look good. They can just separate themselves from it, making it someone else's problem, or show how they have moved beyond it, how they have met the challenges of adolescence and successfully transcended them. They are focused on themselves much as was shown in the aforementioned representation. It is not about the problem but their response to that problem. Things are good when they have overcome the problem or dissociated from it, but the problem still exists.

Both of these representations of teenagers—that they are self absorbed in solving their problems, and that their identities are convenient—show teenagers as able to progress forward. They can make their lives better either by solving the problems that affect them or by disconnecting themselves from those very problems. They have control over how others see them, and they can use the experiences they have in order to show that they have grown or matured. They are not stuck or stagnant, and while they cannot fix everything that is wrong in their lives, they are able to make many improvements for themselves. This betterment is, with just a few exceptions, something they accomplish on their own without the help or intervention of adults.

CHAPTER 5

ADULT-GENERATED NEWS FOR TEENS

Channel One and CNN Student News included 82 stories during the two-month period from October-November 2007. The issues that are addressed in these stories and the manner in which these issues are presented contribute to our knowledge about teenagers. The stories tell us what teenagers are like, how we handle them, and what it means to be a teenager. A teen subject is thereby created in these news texts.

As was the case for teen-produced webzines, examination of these adult-generated news media texts included analysis of the teen-related issues in Channel One and CNN Student News, as well as the linguistically-based themes that emerge in these webzines. The chapter concludes with an examination of how these two “meanings” in the texts construct two teen representations; that teenagers have limited ability to solve their problems, and that teenagers need adult guidance to make their lives better.

Manifest Meanings in the Text: What Issues Were Covered?

After the story sample was selected by the process outlined in Chapter 2, each story was read and analyzed with regard to the issue it addressed. When applicable, stories were then further analyzed as to their sub-issues. As was the case for teen webzines in Chapter 4, when more than one issue was discussed in an individual story, the issue addressed more prominently was the issue that was determined for that story.

There were 82 CNN Student News and Channel One stories and they addressed 10 issues. These issues will be discussed in terms of their prevalence within the news texts, starting

with the most prevalent issue and moving toward those issues addressed in just one story. The issues were education, troubled teenagers, health, community service, sports, career preparation, Internet use, substance abuse, relationships, and teen behavior.

Education: (19)

Education-related stories included those about teenagers' learning processes, the school curriculum, school events, school policies, and post-high school issues. Education was the most prevalent teen-related topic in these two news sources, with a total of 19 stories.

School policy stories dealt with both requirements and restrictions placed on students in their schools. CNN Student News ran a story about an Alabama teen who was given detention for hugging her friend in the hallway, which was a violation of the school's ban on public displays of affection and Channel One had a story about bans on things like hugging, holding hands, and kissing in junior and senior high schools in Texas and Illinois. Channel One had a story about a New Hampshire high school that is banning teenagers from wearing t-shirts that the school says promotes drinking, and about an Indiana high school that forced teenagers to undergo breathalyzer tests before being admitted to homecoming events.

School events were one-time happenings and included the CNN story, "Clique-Free Lunch", which was about a middle school that assigned students to tables in the lunchroom to get them talking to students they do not normally interact with; "Queen for a Day", about a Missouri school that elected a male homecoming queen; a Channel One story about an anti-war protest at an Indiana high school that led to several teenagers being suspended; and a Channel One story in which the reporter attended a death penalty debate being held in a NYC classroom and spoke with students about their feelings regarding the death penalty.

Stories about the learning process involved student education both inside and outside of the classroom. Channel One had a story about a new policy in Arkansas to teach geography as part of social studies courses. Channel One ran a story about a survey that found a decline in reading among teenagers, and that a large number of teenagers have deficient writing skills. There were also stories about the benefits of public versus private schooling related to a study that found little difference in test scores between teens who attended public school and those enrolled in private schools. There were also stories about a proposal in Utah to give money to students who go to private schools and a story about a veteran's club in which students visit local veterans to learn about their experiences. Channel One also ran a story about high schools paying students hundreds of dollars for high scores on advanced placement (AP) tests.

Post-high school issues included a Channel One story about students' feelings about some colleges making the SAT optional, as well as several stories about high school graduation rates in different regions of the country. There were also "Your Turn" stories in which students were asked to respond to the question: "What do you think about the decision of some colleges to ignore SAT scores?"

Troubled Teenagers: (12)

These stories involved teenagers as victims or perpetrators of violence, as well as teenagers as victims of natural disasters or accidents. There were 12 troubled teenager stories in Channel One and CNN Student News during October and November 2007. Several of these stories involved school violence. The story "Tragedy in Wisconsin", which ran on CNN Student News, was about an off-duty deputy who killed several teenagers during a shooting rampage at a party. CNN Student News also ran two stories about a shooting at a Cleveland, Ohio alternative school in which a 14-year old student shot at classmates before killing himself. Channel One ran

a story in which the reporter spoke with high school students about the impact of school violence and what their schools are doing to keep them safe. In addition, there were a number of “Your Turn” stories in which teenagers were asked to email responses to the question “What is your school doing to keep you safe?” Troubled teenager stories on Channel One and CNN Student News also dealt with teen violence outside of school. Channel One ran several stories about the JENA 6, and about deaths of teenagers at Florida boot camps for troubled teenagers.

In addition to teenagers being victims of violence, they were also victims of accidents and disasters. CNN Student News ran the story “Bear Attacks Teen”, about a camper who was dragged out of his tent by a black bear in a Pennsylvania state park. The teenager suffered only minor injuries in the attack because he knew how best to respond. In the CNN Student News story “Back to School, Back to Life”, a reporter accompanied a family with three children as they returned to their home, which had suffered extreme damage, and as the children prepared to return to school.

Health: (10)

Health stories dealt largely with the physical health of teenagers, but also included mental health issues involving teens and adolescents. There were 10 health stories. Several of the physical health stories were about MRSA superbug infections that were sickening teenagers. CNN Student News ran two MRSA stories. “Deadly Superbug” was about the death of a Virginia teenager after contracting the superbug infection. “Superbug Threat” dealt with how the disease spreads and what can be done to protect oneself from the disease in the wake of an outbreak at a North Carolina high school. Channel One ran three MRSA-related stories that dealt with the ways in which the disease spreads and how teenagers can protect themselves after students in Virginia and New York died from the infections. One of the stories included

information about what parents and schools are doing to raise awareness among children and teenagers about the dangers of MRSA infections.

Other physical health stories included the CNN Student News story “Dangerous Waters”, about a rare amoeba in warm lakes that has killed six people, including at least two teenage boys; President Bush’s veto of the S-Chip, which would have provided additional funding for low income children and teenagers; and a Channel One story about teenagers not getting enough sleep. Mental health stories included a story about an MTV survey that investigated what makes teenagers happy, and a story about the challenges faced by a high school senior who suffers from an eating disorder.

Community Service: (9)

Community service stories involved teenagers’ efforts to help out in their own communities or to help others through individual efforts and organized programs. The CNN Student News story, “To the Rescue” was about a teen with ADHD who helped to save the life of a man stuck in a piece of farm equipment. Channel One ran the following community service stories: a story about an Arizona teenager who is documenting the lives of boys who escaped the civil war in Sudan in the 1980’s, a story about a 13-year old in New Orleans who is helping to mow lawns at parks that were damaged during Hurricane Katrina, a Connecticut teenager who spends time with a girl with Down Syndrome through a program called Best Buddies, a Texas teenager who started a sock drive to help homeless people in area shelters, a story about teenage girls trying to improve the care given to mastectomy patients, a story about Cuban-Americans who wear special bracelets to raise awareness for the struggle for freedom of young people in Cuba, a story about California high school students who helped to care for animals displaced by the wildfires, and a story about a teen driving summit in Washington DC in which teenagers and

adults discuss ways to decrease the number of car accidents involving teens and young people. Channel One also posted a story about a teenager involved in EcoFest, an event that highlights electric and solar powered cars that are good for the environment. There were nine community service stories in adult-generated media sources for teenagers.

Sports: (8)

Sports stories were about teens' participation in athletics in school as well as out in their communities, and included stories about sports-related injuries. Both CNN Student News and Channel One ran a story about a Florida soccer player benched during a game because she refused to remove a headscarf that was part of her Muslim religion. CNN Student News also ran a story about a high school student on the way to a professional bowling career despite a disability that limits the movement of his arms and wrists. Channel One also ran two stories about students who were named Gatorade Players of the Year for their achievements in high school sports. Channel One also ran a story about a Medical College of Georgia study that found exercise could improve teenagers' math skills. The stories that dealt with sports injuries included: The CNN Student News story, "Unnecessary Roughness" about a cheerleader who was trampled by football players when she tried to fix a team banner, a story about sports-related injuries among male and female teen athletes, and a Channel One story about a ban on aluminum bats in high school games in New York City because of the risk of head injuries. There were eight sports stories included in Channel One and CNN Student News.

Career preparation: (7)

There were seven career preparation stories. They dealt with teenagers learning about potential jobs as well as their experiences doing internships or working in different fields. Some of these stories involved school and community programs that introduced students to various

careers. They included a Channel One story about an ice cream shop in New York City that helps teenagers develop job skills and creativity, a Channel One story about a legal outreach program for minority students to help them learn about the legal profession, a Channel One story about a Texas magazine in which teen girls are the reporters, and a Channel One story about a special program in New York City schools to teach teenagers about the field of homeland security. Channel One also ran a story about food sciences programs recruiting teenagers into careers in food science and a story about “hot jobs”, including those in health care and computer science. Channel One also ran a story about a teenager who is already working toward a career. She developed her own line of hair care products and now sells them to salons. There were seven career preparation stories.

Substance Abuse: (5)

There were five substance abuse stories and they concerned both teenagers’ use of alcohol and cigarettes and their risks for engaging in such behaviors. Substance abuse stories included a Channel One story about a study that found that teenagers who are relaxed after their first cigarette are more likely to become addicted, a Channel One story about the link between teen smoking and teen alcohol use, a Channel One story about the decrease in the sale of cigarettes to minors via the Internet, and a Channel One story about CDC statistics that found fewer teenagers are smoking today than a decade ago. CNN Student News ran the story “Coming Clean” about Marion Jones’ steroid use and the lesson it could teach high school athletes about drug use and athletic goals.

Internet Use: (5)

There were five Internet use stories and they focused on teenagers’ use of online features such as Facebook, MySpace, and Instant Messenger, as well as stories about online harassment.

Channel One ran a story about the high number of ninth graders who had been harassed online. Channel One and CNN Student News also ran stories about the “MySpace Hoax” in which a teenager killed herself after being rejected online by a boy. It was later discovered that the boy did not exist, and that a neighbor had “created” him. These “MySpace Hoax” stories discussed the hoax itself, interviews with the parents of the teen who committed suicide, and efforts to criminalize cyber-bulling.

Relationships: (2)

Relationship stories included those about teenagers’ interactions with their parents. There were just two relationship stories in teen webzines and they both ran on Channel One. The first was about increased parental involvement in teenagers’ lives compared to a generation ago, and the second about a survey that found a majority of teenagers have good relationships with their parents. There were two relationship stories in adult-generated media for teenagers.

Teen Behavior: (1)

Teen behavior stories were about the manner in which teenagers conducted themselves outside of school, not related to any illegal or dangerous activity. There was just one teen behavior story and it was about Arizona malls setting a curfew for teenagers to prevent them from being in the malls without their parents.

Miscellaneous

As was the case in teen webzines, there were a number of stories that stood apart from the issues mentioned above. CNN Student News ran a story about a teenager taking part in a challenge in New Mexico to find the strangest, most absurd laws on the books in the state and a story in which the reporter spoke with teenagers about where potential presidential hopefuls stood on domestic and international issues going into the primary season. There was also a “Your

Turn” story in which teenagers were asked to email responses to the question: “Do you support the death penalty?” There was one entertainment story and it ran on CNN Student News. It was about people scalping tickets for Miley Cyrus’ Best of Both Worlds Concert, leading to often unaffordable tickets to her performances and preventing young girls from attending the show.

Latent Meanings: Patterns and Themes Concerning Teens

Latent meanings in the text were analyzed by the same process detailed in Chapter 4. There were six patterns in adult-generated news for teenagers. These patterns formed three broader themes regarding teenagers: adolescence/teen years as a time of growth and learning, adults as intervening in teenagers’ lives, and teenagers as under investigation by adults. These themes, and the ways in which they are developed through patterns in the texts of adult-generated news for teenagers, will be discussed below.

Adolescence as a Time of Growth and Learning

The adult-generated news sources Channel One News and CNN Student News construct a theme of adolescence as a time of learning and growth. This growth process is two-fold. It is a time to learn something that will help you right now, and it is a time to acquire life lessons that will help you throughout your life. This theme is manifested in two language patterns teenagers use in telling their stories. They are the construction of teen-related stories into “opportunities to learn”, and the framing of stories about individual teenagers as lessons.

Opportunities to Learn: As was the case in teen webzines, adult-generated news stories for teenagers are constructed as opportunities to learn. The writer describes an individual teenager’s experience, and at the end of the story, there is information about where one can “find out more”, “learn more” or “see what they know” about a topic, or where they can find “steps”, or “tips” for dealing with a problem or issue. The story then becomes a conduit through which a

lesson can be learned. This is extra information that is not part of the story itself but is provided for those who want to enhance their knowledge on a topic related to that which is addressed in the body of the story. This information is often provided via a link to an online source, either another page on the CNNStudentnews.com or Channelone.com website or another Internet site altogether. The information involves protection and self improvement.

These opportunities to learn provide information to protect teenagers from injury or sickness. At the end of a Channel One story about girls working to improve the lives of mastectomy patients, the journalist writes: “When it comes to cancer, do you know the facts?” Teens are directed to a site on channelone.com where they can “take the fight for life quiz” that will help them to find out if they may be at risk for cancer. The opportunity to learn at the end of a story about a teen driving summit, at which teenagers share stories about their driving practices, is: “Are you safe on the streets? Click on traffic school at channelone.com...”

In a story about a teen with diabetes, teen readers are sent to another area on Channel One’s website called “are you at risk?” The site will “help teenagers learn about diabetes”. For those who suffer from the illness, there are “tips” to live more healthily. A number of stories involved superbug staph infections that closed down schools and sickened or killed students. The stories end with advice to students about “some easy steps you can take to prevent staph infections”, or “here’s what you can do to keep from getting it.” The following example comes at the end of a story about students given breathalyzer tests before attending homecoming activities:

Find out some tips on staying safe and having a great time, go to school dance safety at ChannelOne.com.

In all of these examples, there is some type of risk or problem, and learning is the key to staying safe and staying protected. The problem may be cancer, diabetes, or bad driving, and teenagers need to “know the facts”, know if they are “safe on the street”, and find out if they are in potential danger. Internet sites can provide teenagers with the information they need to answer these questions about their risks, which can help them to protect themselves. If you have a problem already, these Internet-based lessons can help protect you. For teenagers with diabetes, there are “tips” to make you healthier, just as there are “tips” to be safe at school. There are also “easy steps” that can keep you free of a potentially deadly staph infection. Teenagers can assess their risks and can find the information they need to lessen that risk.

In other cases this protection involves one’s freedom against being taken advantage of. A story about a teenager benched for wearing a religious headscarf ends with an Internet tease that says “Know your First Amendment rights. Look for One Voice at ChannelOne.com.” A story about one Illinois high school student’s fight to get rid of a moment of silence in her homeroom class ends by asking teenagers “Do you think your First Amendment Rights are protected at school...click on channelone.com.”

Both stories are about problems suffered by individual students, but the Internet tease—the opportunity to learn—is framed as a means of showing teenagers how to keep their freedom of expression safe. That such opportunities to learn are provided, suggest that teenagers’ freedom of expression is at risk—that teenagers need to be vigilant about such rights because they can be compromised in their schools and communities.

In other cases, the end-of-story lesson did not concern protection, but instead it involved self improvement. Teenagers could learn something that would help them academically, or help them to find a job. In a story about an ice cream shop in New York City for minority students,

teens are told to “head to the cool jobs page at Channel One.com to find out about other sweet gigs.” At the end of a Channel One story about a teen’s summer job, teenagers are directed online to find “tips on landing that perfect job”. A New York City program that introduces teenagers to Homeland Security provides a link to a site where teenagers can find out if they “have what it takes for an elite government agency.” A Channel One story about Arkansas schools incorporating geography into social studies curriculum invites students to “brush up on your geography. Play the Geomaster game at Channelone.com.” There is also a site on the Channel One website where students can “click on our new game and brush up on your vocabulary” to prepare for the SAT’s.

Teenagers could also learn something to improve themselves through volunteer work. The following are examples from Channel One stories, the first about a program that matches teenagers with students with special needs, and the second about a teenager in Arizona who is documenting the stories of lost boys who escaped from Sudan.

If you’d like to get involved with best buddies or maybe even make a new friend, log on to the volunteer page.

To learn more about ways that you can help, check out the ‘suffering of Sudan’ page at channelone.com.

In each of these stories, teenagers are learning something that they did not know before, and this knowledge can help them to grow or improve their lives in some manner. The information can make their lives easier by helping to keep them from getting sick, or helping them to deal with an illness, such as diabetes, once they suffer from it. It may allow them to acquire knowledge about their rights, which could in turn protect them from being taken advantage of. These opportunities to learn could be a means for growth in that teenagers can find job-related information that could enhance their learning and influence their eventual career

paths. They can also find information about volunteer programs in their community, and such opportunities can allow them to grow or can help them to work toward solving a larger societal problem in their communities and outside of them. An individual teenager's experiences with a buddy program, an internship or a school program can therefore be a conduit through which teenagers who read or listen to these stories are able to obtain information that will help them to grow through community involvement.

Life Lessons: The theme of adolescence as a time of learning and growth is also an outgrowth of a language pattern of framing teen-related stories as life lessons. The lessons come about in the following way. The stories are written in the third person, about a situation or experience faced by an individual. This situation or experience is discussed as "teaching" teenagers something or as a "lesson" for teenagers that can improve them in some way. This framing of teen-related stories as lessons is less prevalent than are opportunities to learn, however the pattern is important to mention in that it has implications for the manner in which teenagers come to be represented in these news sources.

One life lesson involves the value of working for what you want. In a CNN Student News story about ticket scalping for Miley Cyrus' "Best of Both Worlds" concert, a mother says that the situation is not "teaching my children a good lesson either, that, oh, you can get what you want if you pay the right price." A Channel One story about schools paying teenagers large sums of money for high scores on advanced placement (AP) tests is also discussed as influencing students' approach to studying. School officials discuss whether it "sends the wrong signal" or whether "we're sending kids the message that instead of trying hard so you can go to college, you should be looking toward the next paycheck." Both of these stories emphasize the importance of teens understanding that money is not a means to an end and that money should

not be a motivation to make something happen. The lesson in the Miley Cyrus concert story is that you cannot always buy what you want. The lesson in the Channel One story is that hard work, not money, is important to success.

The same is true of a CNN Student News story about Marion Jones losing her Olympic medals. This particular story, however, involves illegal drug use, not money. The story is about the manner in which Olympic athlete Marion Jones' loss of her medals due to steroid use can impact teen athletes. The writer says of Jones that the "situation might have an effect on young athletes," suggesting that the Olympic runner's downfall might in some way influence high school athletes, or teach them to be drug free, a statement echoed by one of the experts interviewed in the story:

If she gets all her Olympic medals taken away from her, and she ends up in jail and broke, then they see the arch of the story.

The notion of an "arch of the story" suggests that Jones' actions have a point, a moral from which others can learn. As it is written in the story, Jones' actions could "have an effect on young athletes". Jones' drug use and her fall from grace are seen for their potential to provide a lesson for teenagers. And that lesson is that cheating does not pay, that not playing fair cannot lead to success. In other words, success is a result of working for what you want.

Another life lesson involves teenagers coming to understand that their actions impact others. In the story "Queen for a Day", the election of a male homecoming queen, something that did not sit well with members of the community, is said to be a lesson to all voters.

A lot of these seniors are going to be voting in next year's general election, and so the lesson that they are learning is that whatever you do at the voting polls could have a lasting impact.

The election of a male homecoming queen, something that the winner said he did “just to have fun with it”, thus becomes a pre-election learning experience, a situation likened to the election of political officials, and something for teenagers to keep in mind as they prepare to cast a ballot. This incident is a lesson for students that their vote counts, and that what they do with it can influence their communities and the people around them.

Teenagers also learn to acquire skills and information that can impact how they deal with other people. In the CNN Student News story, “Un-cliquing the Cafeteria”, the assistant principal says that the activity “teaches good communication skills.” In the Channel One story about the Best Buddies program, a participant says that through her involvement “I’ve learned to be patient. I’ve learned to work with a different group of people. I’ve gotten a genuine friend.” In the Channel One story about a teenager’s sock drive for homeless people“, the teenager, named Matt, says the experience “has taught him some important life lessons”, namely that homeless people have not chosen to be this way, but have faced adversity they can not control.

Adults’ Influence in Teenagers’ Lives

Another theme in adult-generated media for teenagers is that adults exercise influence in teenagers’ lives. They give opportunities to teenagers that teenagers would otherwise not have. Adults influence teenagers’ opinions and actions, making it so that teenagers’ thoughts and feelings are a product of adults’ intervention. Adults also control teenagers’ actions, allowing for them to be able to do some things and not others. Adults are therefore “leading the way” for teenagers, constructing for them bounds within which teenagers live their own lives. This theme manifests itself through two language patterns; the use of “call and response” language in teen-related stories on Channel One and CNN Student News, and the use of what will be called “language of influence” relating to adults’ roles in teens’ lives.

“Call and response” storytelling: The language that is used in a number of adult-generated news stories contributes to a pattern akin to that of some religious songs. In such religious songs, a leader makes a statement and the congregation responds to that statement. In the case of CNN Student News and Channel One stories, this “leader” is the anchor or reporter whose words comprise the story. The respondents are teenagers whose statements, ideas, and thoughts are presented in the form of sound-bites that go along with the reporter’s track. The language of these sound-bites echoes or mirrors the statements made by the reporter. They are a response to a call initiated by the reporter. Teenagers, through the language of their sound-bites, are, in effect, “answering” the leader, who is the reporter. This pattern makes it so that adults are literally leading the way for teenagers, reinforcing the idea that adults originate thoughts and behaviors for teenagers.

This call and response format happens in several ways; the first when teen sound-bites include the same ideas or the same words and phrases that is in the reporter track that precedes them. This happens in stories that deal with students’ experiences in their school environments. The following example comes from a Channel One story about America’s Safe Schools Week, in which students and school officials consider issues such as violence, bullying, and health in schools in the wake of a shooting at a Cleveland alternative school. The reporter says that “we sat with Natalia and some of her classmates to get their take on violence in schools” and then includes statements from students that “violence is growing”, that “school is supposed to be safe place so you shouldn’t have to worry”, and that “school safety doesn’t even cross my mind unless something big happens.” The reporter has set the topic to be discussed—violence—and then the students are just responding to the question which the reporter has raised. This same

pattern of teenagers responding to the words of the reporter is seen later in the same story, when the reporter mentions a previous security alert in which a bullet was found in the school:

No one got hurt but the incident reminded the students how close to home violence can be. And it also made them appreciate having an emergency plan.

Teenagers also echo the ideas of adult reporters in a Channel One story about the benefits and drawbacks of public versus private high school. The reporter says that in private schools “smaller class sizes and more resources make for a better learning environment than a public school.” The teenagers then respond that in private school “you feel closer to your teachers, your friends...” and that “I’m definitely a better student because I go to private school.” In both cases, teenagers are expressing their opinions related to these two ideas established by the reporter—small classes and richer learning environments. The teenagers address the closeness inherent in private school as well as the enhanced learning environment that would let someone be a “better student” at a private school. The reporter then says that “better paid teachers and more independence makes for a richer academic experience” at public schools, and the teenagers say the following:

Teenager: I think public school lets you be who you want to be.

Teenager: In a private school you might have to fit a certain profile.

Both statements speak to the individuality fostered in public schools. Unlike private school, there is no mold or profile into which one must fit oneself. Public school students can therefore be their own person, who they want to be. This call and response is further seen in the following segment from the story:

Reporter: Most said it’s the individual student, not the school.

Teenager: I think it’s personal. Because I don’t think the kind of school you go to really dictates the kind of student or the kind of success.

Teenager: It all depends on the student.

In this final exchange, the reporter establishes the thought—that it is the person and not the school they attend—that determines whether or not they are a successful student. The teenagers’ responses speak to this same idea. They say that it is “personal”, that it is the “individual”. Their response to the debate—that students determine their own success—is framed not as an idea that originated from the students, but instead as a response to what the reporter has already suggested is the case.

Teenagers are also speaking in response to adults when it comes to expressing their opinions. In a Channel One story about the 2008 presidential election the reporter’s track establishes three topics dealing with the election—the war in Iraq, the economy, and education--and the teenagers’ sound-bytes address these same three issues:

Reporter: The next person in the White House will have the power to influence things like the war in Iraq...

Teenager: My dad has been in the military ever since I was three. And when you hear about a family member or anybody going to Iraq, you always have that fear.

Reporter: The Economy...

Teenager: Level of unemployment...personally, I think that it’s far too high.

Reporter: And your education....

Teenager: Most people are going to colleges.

The teenagers are discussing campaign issues that are important to them however the way in which their sound-bytes are incorporated into the story, it makes their answers a response to the points the reporter has already enumerated. The teenagers’ comments on the importance of the war, education, and the economy to the election echo the reporter’s own comments related to these topics. The reporter has thus defined the parameters of the discussion, and the teenagers are just “answering” the reporter’s own comments, following what it is that the reporter has already said, rather than introducing new ideas to move the story forward. The teenagers who are

weighing in do so in accordance with the topics that have already been initiated by the reporter through his or her track—namely that of Iraq, the economy, and education.

Call and response language is also present in stories that deal with teenagers taking initiative. Channel One story ran a story about students being suspended after organizing and participating in an anti-war protest at their school to gain attention for their cause. The teenagers who “speak” in the story do so in response to what the reporter has already said. The reporter says that the protesters “say they have no regrets for standing up for what they believe.” The teenagers then talk about their lack of regret, saying that “I don’t think I would take it back”, that “this is the only way we can express our feelings”. The reporter says that students “feel they’re being punished for exercising the rights given to them in the First Amendment”, and the teenagers’ sound-bytes then discuss their First Amendment rights. They say “the First Amendment states speech...and assembly, petition”, that students “should have equal rights”.

Their self expression, their fight to stand up for what they believe in, is a result of adults leading them in the expressing of their ideas. The adults are providing the conduit through which the story is told, providing the opportunity for teenagers to speak out against the war.

The same is true in a Channel One story about a teenager who developed her own line of hair care products. The reporter says of the teenager, named Jasmine, that when she tried to sell her products to people door-to-door, she “found out some buyers were skeptical”. Jasmine then has a sound-byte in which she says that “some people didn’t want to try my product because I was 13 years old.” Her statement expresses the same idea as that of the reporter—namely that people are skeptical of her products. Later in the story, the reporter discusses Jasmine’s participation in the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship saying that Jasmine “made a business plan and learned other tips, like how to dress.” Jasmine then discusses her appearance, saying that

“when I dress in my business suit, some people think, ‘why is she dressing up?’” Her discussion of her “dressing up” is constructed as a response to what it is that the reporter has said. The reporter is thus controlling the story, controlling the manner in which Jasmine talks about her experiences and her resulting career. The story is about Jasmine taking initiative to turn a bad situation into something positive, about Jasmine taking control over her life. Jasmine’s story, however, is being lead by the adult reporter. The descriptions she gives of her ideas and her initiatives to start this business are framed in response to the adults who are leading the story.

The teenagers’ sound-bytes are “backing up” the ideas that the reporter generates, just as they do in the other stories. In the story about public versus private schools, teenagers are responding to the notions of private school as being smaller and providing more resources and public school as “a richer academic experience” (“I think public school lets you be who you want to be”). These ideas were introduced by the reporter in his or her track leading into the teen sound-bytes. In the story about Natalia, the reporter introduces the topic of school violence and teenagers discuss their own experiences within the parameters of this school violence. Jasmine’s discussion of her progress developing hair products is a response to the ideas that the reporter presents regarding Jasmine’s experiences. The students involved in the anti-war protest describe their experiences by relating them to the ideas that the reporter has already established.

Teenagers follow the lead of the reporter and provide a response to the ideas that the reporter has already addressed. The reporter has therefore constructed the bounds within which the story will be told, and teenagers are giving their reactions within these established parameters. Teenagers talk about themselves and their experiences as responses to what the reporter has already said. The reporter leads the direction of the story, forming the stories’

skeletons. By providing this skeleton, adults are making themselves the conduit through which teenagers express opinions, take initiative, or talk about their experiences.

Teenager-related stories are also framed as call and response when the journalist organizes the story around the inclusion of the interview question that is posed to the teenager. The following examples are from two Channel One stories, the first a story in which the reporter accompanied a California family as they returned to their home following the wildfires; the second a story in which the reporter attended a death penalty debate at a New York City high school:

Reporter: So you were at your cousin's house?

Teenager: Yea, we were at my cousin's house watching the news....and I kept thinking, that can't be our house, that can't be our house...

Reporter: Do your friends know your situation?

Teenager: Yea, a couple of my friends know because I left my phone in here and all my friends' numbers were in there...

Reporter: Is there anything that you've found that you've been able to save?

Teenager: Umm, well we found parts of our tile in our—my sister and me's bathroom....But my mom found a couple of silverware...

Reporter: Afterwards I had some questions of my own to pose to these students. Did any of you defend views you didn't believe in?

Teen: I'm actually for the death penalty but had to say I'm against it.

Reporter: Who thinks lethal injection is cruel and unusual punishment?

Teen: I think that any type of death penalty is cruel and unusual.

Reporter: Who do you think shaped that opinion?

Teen: I think a lot of it is the media trials that we see on television.

Teen: Also religion, some religions believe in the death penalty and some don't.

Reporter: Did you guys in your research notice any racial disparities with the death penalty?

Teen: Most people in America that get the death penalty are white males...

Teen: 57 % of them were white and 34% were African Americans."

Reporter: Just tell me in general what this experience was like?

Teen: When it pops up in people's mind they already have a side for the death penalty.

Teen: It made us look into government system and see the failures that usually we don't see as citizens.

When the stories are organized in this way, the teenagers cannot avoid the role of the responder, because their sound-bytes literally follow the questions that are asked. The New York City teenagers discuss the role of media and of religion in shaping their feelings about capital punishment however these thoughts are answering a question that the reporter framed. The same is true for the teenagers' ideas about racial differences in death penalty application. The reporter is putting out a call—about racial disparities, about what influences feelings about the death penalty—and the teenagers are answering it. What the teenagers talk about with regard to their experience in the debate is based upon the topics that the reporter has determined. In the wildfire story, when the teenager talks about her friends finding out about her evacuation, and about what was found in her home, it is in direct response to a question framed by the reporter.

Another way in which this call and response organization happens is when teenagers' sound-bytes are sentence fragments or phrases that would not stand on their own. The following example is from the CNN Student News story, "Unnecessary Roughness". It is about a high school teenager who was knocked over by football players when she tried to fix their banner during a homecoming show:

Reporter: You've seen the hit. Now meet the 18-year old cheerleader who got trampled. It probably hurt.

Cali: It hurt really bad.

Reporter: At halftime Cali says she saw something wrong with her team's banner.

Cali: Well, they put the sign up and it was kind of like at an angle. It wasn't really ready for the boys to run out yet.

Reporter: But when she tried making one last adjustment...

Cali: Barely got there.

Reporter: 50 football players were sprinting right for her.

Cali: And smack I got ran into by Zach.

Cali's statements are not complete thoughts and without the reporter's words, what Cali says does not make sense. Her words, in a sense, finish the sentences for the reporter, and

complete the idea the reporter is trying to get across to the audience. She is answering the reporter by filling in the details that the reporter has already framed for the story. The story ends in a similar manner when Cali talks about her injuries:

Reporter: And even though she got a few bruises here and there...

Cali: yeah, there was like a little small one right here after it happened.

Reporter: Cali insists that she's okay.

Cali: I'm good. I'm fine.

Again, Cali speaks in fragments that are "set up" by the reporter's comments. She is completing the idea that the reporter already addressed. Her words are not moving the story forward in any way but rather are dependent upon the "skeleton" that has been set up by the reporter in organizing the story.

In the CNN Student News story, "To the Rescue", about a boy who calls attention to a man caught in a corn combine allowing others to save the man's life, there is a similar pattern of call and response. The teenager speaks in short phrases that do not make sense without the reporter's track to frame them:

Reporter: It was a sound unlike any other that caught Jonathan Pounder's attention, a painful cry for help coming from a nearby field.

Pounders: Like someone's getting hurt.

Reporter: A farm worker had both arms caught in a corn combine and the machine was still running. The worker had reached in to knock down a pile of corn when the rollers grabbed hold and pulled him in.

Pounders: It was gross.

The manner in which the teen speaks makes it so that he is responding to what the reporter says. The reporter frames the ideas—the painful cry for help; the description of the farm worker—and the teen completes his idea. Without the reporter to "frame" the teenager's language, what the teenager says does not make sense.

The “Your Turn” feature in Channel One News, which is designed to give teenagers the opportunity to “tell us what you think”, also serves to place teenagers within this call-and-response framework/format. These “Your Turn” segments run as a tag to a regular story on a similar topic, as an introduction to a story on a similar topic, or as a stand-alone story within the newscast. The “Your Turn” stories include phrases such as “we asked you”, “here are some more of your responses”, and “tell us what you think”, followed by individual teens’ statements on the issues. The “Your Turn” stories deal largely with school-related issues, among them school safety, as in the following examples:

This week is safe schools week and we’ve been asking you what your school is doing to keep you safe. We’ve received dozens of responses and here are a few of them.

It’s Your Turn again. It’s safe schools week and we want to know what your school is doing to keep you safe. We have gotten tons of responses and here is what a few of you say.

It’s Your Turn again and we have been asking, ‘Do you feel safe in your school.’ Here are more of your responses.

Click on your turn at channelone.com and tell us how your school is keeping you safe.

Other school-related stories in which teenagers express themselves only in response to adult questioning are debates about the pros and cons of public versus private schooling, college admissions, and proper student behavior in school. At the end of a story about a study that found public and private high school students perform at equal levels on standardized tests, the journalist writes, “It’s your turn again. Here are some more responses to the public versus private school debate.” A story about SAT prep ends with the journalist writing, “Do you think it’s fair that some schools won’t consider your SAT score along with the rest of your college application? All week we have been asking you to log on to channelone.com and click on your

turn to tell us what you think. Here is what a few of you said.” And a story about schools considering the SAT’s as optional ends with, “We want you to have your turn. We asked you ‘what do you think about the decision of some colleges to ignore SAT scores.’ Here is what some of you are telling us.” A Channel One story about public displays of affection in schools ends with the reporter writing the following:

Public officials say public displays of affection are getting in the way of students trying to get to class. Well, now it’s your turn. You tell us how you feel about this situation. We heard from two students from the same town in Louisiana.

Teenagers’ thoughts about the death penalty are also framed as responses to questioning by adults. An October Channel One story about a high school class that staged a death penalty debate ends with the reporter writing that “we want to know what you think about this controversial topic.”

Are you for the death penalty or against it? Go to [channel One.com](http://channelone.com) and click on your turn to vote.

Teenagers’ community service involvement also comes in response to questioning from adults. A story about the Best Buddies program ends with the reporter writing:

Now it’s your turn. We asked you guys what are some of the things you’re doing to make a difference in other people’s lives and here is what you said.

At the end of a story about a high school football team that adopted a child with cancer, the reporter writes:

We want to know what you and your classmates are doing to make a difference in your community. A few of you have already gone to channelone.com to clue us in.

The “Your Turn” segments, in a sense, become stories unto themselves, and while they contain several teenagers’ opinions, these opinions come in response to a question put forth by the adult reporter/writers. The adults have selected to which topics teenagers will be able to offer

an opinion, and it is the reporter's asking of the question in the text of the story that elicits this teen response. In several cases the texts even refer to teenagers' opinions as "responses", a suggestion that they follow from a question posed previously. Teenagers are therefore following the lead of the adults, answering their questions and reacting to situations within the parameters that the adults have set up for discussion of issues and events. The story takes on the following form: We (adult reporters and anchors) asked you (teenagers) what you thought, and here is what you said. Teenagers' contributions to the newscasts that are geared for them are therefore largely motivated by the questions that adults have asked of them. Adults metaphorically "set the tone" in terms of the topics and issues that teenagers are given opportunities to speak out about. Adults provide for teenagers both the forum for self expression and the parameters for that self expression.

What is interesting, with regard to these stories with a call-and-response organization, is the subject of the stories in which they occur. In many cases, they happen in stories that are about teenagers taking control of situations or teenagers illustrating enterprising tendencies. In the Channel One story about the anti-war debate, teenagers are expressing their freedom of speech, and getting their voices heard in a very public setting. Although the effort lands them in trouble, the fact remains that they have organized this protest, and that they are challenging a facet of the adult world. In the case of Jasmine, she has taken control of a bad situation in her life, and has turned it into a growing business. The boy in the CNN Student News story is called a hero, and is credited with helping to save the farmer's life. Cali, the cheerleader, is also attempting to take control of a situation—fixing a banner that would have ruined the football team's pep rally appearance. While it is not a life or death situation, her actions show her as trying to influence a situation for the better.

Some of the “Your Turn” stories that are framed as call and response concern teenagers’ community service activities—actions that would make teenagers leaders in their community, or show them to be taking charge of problems in their neighborhoods and schools. While on the surface such stories are about teenagers exercising power in their world/communities, the language employed in those stories shows teenagers as being lead by adults. Adults are, in effect, framing the teenage story, establishing the ideas that teenagers address, and setting the parameters against which teenagers form their ideas, their opinions, and their reactions. Even in the context of stories that portend to be about teens as taking charge of their lives, of being leaders in some way, the stories’ language contradicts this sense of control or influence to which the story draws attention.

In a small number of cases teenagers are taking control of their own stories. Such a situation occurs in a Channel One story about a teen summit on preventing car accidents. After telling his story about an accident that killed one of his best friends, the teenager participating in the summit says that “It takes a teen to teach a teen.” The reporter track that comes next says, “That’s the sort of motto here at this national teen driver safety summit.” The teenager’s sound-byte about teens teaching other teens drives the next part of the story, in which the reporter will talk about the ways in which teenagers are teaching one another during this summit. Another example of teenagers leading the story occurs later in the same story:

Teen: Go back to my school and be a positive influence. Help other teens know what can happen if you talk on a cell phone.

Reporter: Talking on your cell phone at the wheel is one of the reasons State Farm says almost 7-thousand teens died in crashes last year. Distracted driving also includes texting.

The story then includes a sound-byte from a State Farm Insurance representative, so it is as if the teens’ sound-byte above, about distracted driving, is leading into the inclusion of this

adult sound-byte. In other words, the teenager is controlling the direction of the story, and moving it forward. Distracted driving is discussed because a teenager brought it up. The language of the teen sound-bytes and reporter track puts the teenager in control of his story. The teenager's sound-bytes are driving the story, instead of the sound-bytes reinforcing what the reporter says. The sound-bytes lead into the text, instead of the text leading into the sound-bytes.

Another example of this occurs in a story about a teen bowler who suffers from a muscular condition that limits the movement of his arms and wrists. Through his sound-bytes, the teenager drives the story forward. He talks about his condition and says:

Teen: When I was first born, they said I would never have use of my arms. And to go out and bowl and be one of the top averages in the county for high school means something to me.

Reporter:--The average is 219, which means something to me too. It is 34 points higher than my highest score.

The language of the story makes it so that the teen sound-byte is the call and the reporter track is the response. The teenager's comment about his bowling record provides the path along which the story moves. His sound-byte drives the story forward. He is therefore in control of the story, influencing the direction in which it moves. There is nothing about the issues dealt with in this story as well as the teen driving summit story, that serves to distinguish either of the stories from the majority of other stories however their linguistic deviation—the fact that they do not follow the larger pattern of call and response seen in a number of other stories—is interesting to note.

Language of Influence: Another linguistic pattern that shows the influence of adults in teens' lives is the use of language of influence. Adults "give" and "offer" teenagers opportunities. They also "reach out" to them and "expose" them to programs that will impact

teenagers' lives. In doing so, they become conduits through which change can happen for teenagers. This is what will be referred to as language of influence.

In some cases, this language of influence concerns teenagers' futures. A New York City ice cream shop, profiled in a Channel One story, is said to "give teen employees job skills" so they'll have the "tools they need to succeed." A special program in New York City high schools is "giving students a way to understand tough issues" and "gives students the skills required for careers in Homeland Security". Adults are also "reaching out to students and giving them a real taste of the law", through a legal outreach program. The program is credited with "exposing these students to a real future".

In all of these stories, adult intervention is described as producing a favorable outcome. Teenagers who might otherwise be at risk will have tools for success because their work at a New York City ice cream shop "gave" them such tools. They will understand difficult security issues because a special school program "gave" them this understanding. Minority students will have a "real future" because participation in a special legal program "exposed" them to it. The reporter in the legal outreach program includes statistics about program participants—that they have an 85% college graduation rate among minority students compared to an overall 54% college graduation rate among minority students as a whole, and that 99% of participants go to college—and these facts are suggestive of the fact that the program is providing teen participants with a better future. Adults are a conduit for change in that through adult intervention in teen programs, teens' futures can be impacted for the better.

Adults' intervention is also a conduit for change in the here and now. In a Channel One story about teens not sleeping enough the reporter writes that high schools are "offering flexible schedules." High schools are "offering rewards of cold hard cash" for students who score well on

advanced placement tests, and colleges with food science programs “dangle tasty incentives in front of prospective students.” The interventions by adults can improve teenagers’ lives right now. Flexible schedules allow teenagers to sleep a little later and combat the fatigue that impacts their learning. They can “choose to come in second or third period and then stay longer during the day”, according to the school principal. Money for high AP test scores does motivate studying. One teen says that: “Oh yea, I’m trying for the 5.” As such this “offer” from adults is influencing the study habits of teenagers and influencing their lives now. The “tasty incentives” can also motivate students to pursue a career in an industry they may have previously been unfamiliar with. In all of these cases the “offers” from adults, in the form of money or time, can change teenagers’ lives within the school environment. Kaplan and Princeton Review “offer” classes to prepare for the SAT and therefore influence the way in which teenagers prepare for these exams. One student has a sound-byte about how the prep classes help her. Without these classes, student preparation would be markedly different.

Adult intervention also influences students’ behaviors, namely the ways in which teenagers conduct themselves in school. Schools “crack down” on public displays of affection, and “are banning” students from publicly displaying affection toward one another in the hallways. In a CNN Student News story about an Alabama school district’s policy on public displays of affection, the reporter writes of a student who hugged her friend that the “school gave her detention.” Adults are restricting this behavior, and punishing harshly those who engage in it. A school in New Hampshire “is discouraging students” from wearing a t-shirt the school thinks may be promoting drinking and a California high school “tried to un-clique its cafeteria” by assigning students to tables in the lunchroom. Students in Carmel Indiana were “given breathalyzer tests” on their way into a homecoming game. Students in Arkansas public schools

are said to have trouble in Social Studies because “the state took away geography”. The actions of the state in constructing the curriculum are therefore leading to students performing poorly, or struggling with their work. What the state did affected how teenagers behaved as students. In all of these cases, there is action by adults—“giving” teenagers something, taking something away or “discouraging” something. These adult actions have the effect of making teenagers act in a certain manner in the classroom, and in the hallways.

While most of the adult influences on teen behavior were related to schools and academia, there was one story that emphasized adult intervention as influencing teen behavior out in the community. A CNN Student News story was about malls “setting up curfews”. Teenagers were not allowed to be in the malls in Arizona alone after 6 or 8pm so as to curtail the possibility that they would be in close proximity to bars and restaurants that serve alcohol. The actions of the mall in imposing curfews on teenagers, therefore restricts their ability to go to the mall at night. Their behavior is therefore influenced in the sense that they now face punishment for doing something that before would have been completely acceptable for them to do. They do not have an opportunity to shop at their own leisure.

It is important to note that these adult interventions, both in terms of teen behavior and in terms of the potential for changes in their lives, are not credited to adults, but rather to “schools”, “programs” and “the state”. While these entities are not human, there are humans—adults—behind them. That schools crack down on public displays of affection and give detentions is a result of adults affiliated with the school—teachers and administrators—doing these things. The “state” of Arkansas may have taken away geography, but this “state” is really the board of education officials who have made that call. Although the language in these stories does not attribute actions directly to adults, the organizations and bodies that intervene in students’ lives

are themselves a product of adult actions and involvement and as such, adults are described as influencing opportunities available to teenagers.

Teenagers Under Investigation By Adults

Another theme that manifests itself in Channel One and CNN Student News stories is that teenagers are under investigation by adults. Adults try to find out about teenagers' habits, their health, and their concerns for the future. This learning is happening on two levels. Adults work to learn about teenagers as a group, and adults work to learn about teenagers as individuals. This theme comes about through two language patterns; the framing of stories as research or experimental findings, and exploratory language that focuses on adults "uncovering" or "discovering" things about individual teenagers or small groups of teens.

Research and experimental findings: Teenagers' issues on Channel One and CNN Student News are often presented in the context of a "new study" or a "new poll" that addresses an issue about teenagers as a group. Sometimes this poll or study is attributed to a specific organization, such as a university, and at other times, the source of the study is not mentioned. Mental health, school performance, athletic performance, physical activity, substance abuse, and Internet use are all addressed in such a manner.

Adult-generated news texts addressed teen health in three stories, all on Channel One. One story was about teen sleeplessness, based on a study that found that "teens are getting 30 minutes less sleep than your parents' generation." There were two mental health stories, the first about a high school senior battling anorexia. The discussion of this teenagers' struggle is presented with the statistic that "78% of 18-year old girls are unhappy with their bodies." In a Channel One story about the results of an MTV study on what makes teenagers happy we learn:

Nearly 75% surveyed said they have a good relationship with mom and dad. And happy parents make for happier kids. 64% with parents still together say they wake up happy, compared to 47% of those with divorced parents. Overall, the glass is more than half full for your generation, as 65% of those surveyed say they're satisfied with the way things are going.

Another issue discussed in the context of surveys and studies is teen academic performance. A Channel One story about a Johns Hopkins University study on graduation rates found in 10% of U.S. high schools "only 60% of students who begin as freshman make it through senior year". Another Channel One study reports the results of a study by a public school advocacy group that "found that when income and family characteristics like parental involvement were taken into account, low income students at private schools scored the same on 12th grade academic tests as those in traditional public high schools." The following examples also involve the study of teen academic performance:

A study found that the number of 17-year olds who read is 19%, up from 9% in 1984.

A U.S. government study found that parents are more involved with teens' lives than a generation ago, and that fewer teenagers have to repeat grades.

Several teen stories in adult-generated media for teenagers involve studies concerning teen smoking and substance abuse:

Steroid use at the high school level has doubled since the 90's.

Fewer teenagers are buying cigarettes online than in 2000.

A new study says teens who feel relaxed after their first drag on a cigarette are more likely to become addicted. Researchers say it's a sign some people's brains are more prone to nicotine.

As you know, there are serious health risks associated with smoking, including cancer, heart disease and emphysema. According to the Centers for Disease Control, 23% of high school students have smoked in the last 30 days, down from 37% in 1997.

According to researchers at Columbia University, teens who smoke are five times more likely to drink. The study also found teen smokers have more anxiety, depression, and panic attacks than non-smokers.

Other teen-related stories involve studies about athletic performance, physical activity, and Internet use. The first example is from a Channel One story about sports injuries, the second about a study on the impact of exercise, and the third about online harassment among teenagers:

Girl soccer players have 68% more concussions than boy soccer players.

Researchers at the Medical College of Georgia monitored the decision-making and math skills of students who exercise and students who don't. They found that the exercisers had slightly higher skill levels than non-exercisers.

9% of 10-17 year olds say they've experienced harassment online, up 50% since 2000.

Although in some cases there is no specific study or survey to which the information is connected, that such statistics or percentages are available concerning an issue such as Internet use and graduation rates, indicates that this issue was studied by someone at some point. In order for a story to include information about teenagers' self esteem (78% of 18 year olds are unhappy with their bodies) teenagers' self esteem had to have been the subject of a study. In order for reporters to have information about Internet use and substance abuse, such factors would have to have been explored, through a survey, a study, or a poll conducted at some point prior to the story being told. The very presence of such statistics concerning these areas of teen life indicates that someone has looked into the issue to find out something about teenagers. Studies, polls, and surveys are undertaken in order to find out something about a particular group. If such information is available regarding teenagers and these issues, some group, organization, or individual had to have decided to try to learn something about teenagers and as a result conducted the study. That such studies are conducted on teenagers in the first place indicate that

they are a population about whom “we” want to learn something. The fact that stories about such studies are included in adult-generated news texts suggests that teenagers are a group of interest to other people. It would make sense that this group would be a topic of investigation in such media sources, given that CNN Student News and Channel One are intended for a teen audience.

In addition to telling people something about teenagers, these studies, polls, and surveys also serve to compare teenagers, sometimes to one another, sometimes to those who used to be teenagers in the 80’s, 90’s or the early 2000’s. Adults are not just learning about teenagers’ academic performance, substance abuse, or health, but how teenagers measure up to those in their 20’s, 30’s, and 40’s; whether teenagers are healthier, doing better in school, or showing a decline in risky behaviors such as smoking and using drugs.

Language of Discovery: A second pattern that contributes to the theme of teenagers as a group under study is exploratory language or language of discovery. Such language includes phrases that emphasize the reporters’ first-hand learning about teenagers and teen issues. Adults “witness” things and “find out” things about teenagers. In the CNN Student News story “Unnecessary Roughness”, about a cheerleader trampled by football players as she tried to fix a team banner, what we find out is that the cheerleader had a big run of bad luck. We’re told that “Cali’s story doesn’t end there. During our interview we found out that she didn’t just have a bad night.” Cali was also involved in a car accident the day before and this information is “found out” as a result of the reporter conducting an interview. By interacting with Cali, the reporter uncovers something about this individual teenager, and the audience learns it too. Reporters also uncover things about teenagers through participating in an event or witnessing something. The following statement comes from the beginning of a Channel One story about a high school debate over the death penalty, which the reporter attended:

Last week I visited Saint Barnabas High School....and witnessed seniors from government class debating this hot topic.

The reporter constructs the story through his involvement in it. He visits the school and it is in the context of this visit—his interaction in the classroom—that we come to know about the students’ participation in the debate in the first place, and about their feelings on this hot-button issue. After the students express their points in the debate, the reporter goes on to say that “I had some questions of my own to pose...”

The reporter sandwiches the teenagers’ opinions and ideas in a discussion of his own place in the debate. The debate would have been going on even if he were not there, but the way in which the story is written makes it so that the reporter is a necessary part in making the story news. The reporter is, in a sense, uncovering these responses, bringing them to light. It is through his eyes and ears that we are learning about the teenagers and how they feel about the death penalty. The teenagers’ opportunity to make their feelings and thoughts known is a result of the adult who is in the room making teenagers’ voices heard.

In a CNN Student News story about the California wildfires the language places the reporter in the story itself, as a necessary conduit through which the story is able to be told:

Kara Finnstrom joined one family as they made the trip back home. Lynn’s family invited us along as, for the first time, the children returned to their neighborhood.

The reporter’s language makes her part of the story. She is not just reporting on the family’s return, she is part of the process. She “joins” the family and is “invited” as they go back home. It is through her participation in this homecoming that viewers are able to learn what these adolescents go through, the feelings and concerns that they have. The reporter’s involvement in their homecoming lets the audience learn about these teenagers, and provides for these teenagers the opportunity to express themselves to others.

In a few stories, the audience learns something about individual teenagers through the reporter meeting them and thereby introducing us to them. These introductions are in the context of two issues--community service and troubled teens (the California wildfires.) In a Channel One story about a teenager documenting the lives of boys who escaped from civil war in Sudan in the mid 1980's, the reporter writes that "we met one teen here at the Lost Boys Center who's looking for the story behind the story...." In the CNN Student News story "To the Rescue", the reporter says that "we want you to meet this teen who is being called a hero." The following examples are from Channel One stories about teenagers who lost their homes in the 2007 California wildfires:

For one teen I met, there just wasn't that much to return to.

I met several teens who are doing remarkably well—considering they have no idea the status of their homes or belongings.

By saying that they "met" someone the reporter is bringing this teenager to our attention. The teens' stories come to exist through the eyes of the adults who meet them and are involved in their experiences. It is through this involvement with the reporter that the audience is able to find out something about that particular teenager. It is because the reporter places him or herself in the story that the teenagers' actions come to be known.

The aforementioned examples, taken together, can be seen as individual reporters' investigation into teen issues. They are like small-scale studies in which the reporter is delving into the world of teenagers. They are there "witnessing" teenagers doing something or "meeting" teenagers, and presenting their experiences--what they have found out about a particular teen or a group of teens--in the same manner that a researcher might report back on findings from a group he or she had been engaged with. The learning that can be done with regard to teenagers is on an individual scale. The stories about the California wildfires allow for the audience to learn how

teenagers deal with tragedy. The death penalty debate story is a means for learning how teenagers feel about this controversial topic. The “Lost Boys” story and the “Hero” story provide information about how teenagers help out in their communities, how they help others. These stories therefore become a means for finding out something about teenagers.

The study of teenagers is therefore happening on both a small scale and a large scale, with adults focusing on individuals as well as teens as a whole group. These individualized studies focus on one-time events; fires, school events, heroic acts. On the other hand, studies and polls deal with problems afflicting teenagers, highlighting negative aspects of adolescence such as drug use and poor self esteem. Because most “investigating” deals with large scale problems and issues, most of what is uncovered about teenagers is their problems.

Teen Representations

Both the manifest and latent meanings in the texts contribute to their overall meaning. It is the meaning of texts about teenagers that contribute to our knowledge about them by creating a discourse that comes to define them as a subject. Teen representations—what it means to be a teen—therefore requires examination of both the manifest and latent meanings of the texts. The analysis was done in two steps. First the issues were examined for larger ideas about teenagers. The themes were then examined collectively along with these larger ideas to see how the themes in stories could inform these ideas and contribute to the construction of the teen subject. There were three teen representations created through Channel One and CNN Student News stories: that teenagers have problems, that they have some ability to fix the things that are wrong in their lives, and that they can improve their lives if adults help them.

Teenagers Have Problems

In adult-generated media geared toward teenagers, there is an overwhelming representation of the teen subject as troubled. And these troubles pervade several areas of their lives. They are at risk for becoming sick from “superbug” infections or organisms in the lakes in which they swim as well as from diabetes, eating disorders, or lack of sleep. They smoke and drink and may abuse drugs, which can pose other health problems. There are several stories about polls and surveys on teen smoking and drinking. The fact that these stories are included suggests that these are problems that are plaguing teenagers.

Teenagers are also victims of violence in their communities and particularly when they are in school. In addition to stories about a shooting at an Ohio alternative school, the inclusion of a number of “Your Turn” stories on the issue of school safety suggests that school safety is a widespread problem, affecting schools in many cities and states, rather than a problem localized to a specific area. Teenagers are also vulnerable to injury. They can be hurt playing sports or driving their cars, and can be harmed in the virtual world of the Internet by cyber-bullies and those who might harass them online.

Teenagers also face academic problems as indicated by several stories about polls and surveys comparing graduation rates in different states. They have difficulties graduating from high school and may not have all of the support that they need in the school environment. Channel One ran a story about the pros and cons of public versus private schools, and a number of “Your Turn” stories asked for students’ opinions about the benefits and drawbacks of one or the other. That the two types of schooling are compared, suggests that one or the other might offer better opportunities to students. If one is better than the other, than those students who do

not attend the “better” type of school are receiving an inferior education. In either case, some students are being underserved by their educational environment.

Their behavior is restricted both in school and in their communities. They must act in certain manners or face some negative consequences. Teens also experience hardships either in their own lives or through people whom they know. They lose homes and possessions in ravaging wildfires that swept through their communities. They also experience devastating car accidents, as is the case for the teenager who is the subject of the Channel One story about the teen driving summit in Washington DC. What should have been a pleasant experience, a camping trip with friends, becomes a fight to survive for one teenager, as discussed in a Channel One story about a teenager attacked by a black bear. Teenagers also face physical limitations, as occurs for an aspiring professional bowler who has a physical condition that limits the movement in his hands and wrists. They also experience a world that is troubled hardships second-hand, through the people with whom they interact. They see people suffering from disease and homelessness and those who are victims of natural disasters.

Although they face problems, teenagers do make efforts to help those who are less fortunate or who are struggling. They are involved in community service efforts both in their own communities and overseas. They step in to help others even when there is no formal program for doing so. And they are also focused on doing things that can help them in the future. They take part in programs that can prepare them for careers or help them to find a job.

The inclusion of stories about career preparation also represents a possible problem for teenagers; that their futures are uncertain and perhaps in jeopardy. This is manifested in the stories that involve career preparation and recruitment. Special programs such as the legal outreach program or Alphabet Scoop ice cream shop, both discussed on Channel One, help

students who are at risk to learn a skill that they can use later on, or encourage teenagers to pursue higher education. That these programs are discussed in these news sources indicates that there is a need to get certain groups of teenagers on the right track. The implication is that without these programs, these students would be lost and fall through the cracks. Other programs introduce teenagers to career fields such as journalism and culinary arts. This intervention in teenagers' lives, this process of introducing teenagers to opportunities beyond high school suggests that there is a need for teens to be encouraged to pursue goals, that teenagers might otherwise lack direction and motivation to become successful. In other words, they do not know what they want to do, where they want their life to go, until they are guided.

The problems that teenagers face are only partially self-motivated. Much of their troubles come from factors over which they do not have control. They have not caused themselves to lack the resources or support they need in school, nor are they responsible for the restrictive environments in which they find themselves in school and in their communities. These are problems that are motivated by adults' actions and behaviors that influence teenagers. Teenagers also face infections and illnesses that are not of their own doing. The hardships that they encounter—from disabilities to wildfires, to bear attacks, to being a minority student, or being poor-- are also things over which they have little control.

When it come to the problem of school safety, teenagers are perhaps partially responsible. While most teenagers are just victims of school violence and potential violence and have no part in making such problems happen, the fact that there are school shootings in the first place is because students are choosing to engage in such behavior. At the root of the problem are teenagers' actions that make it so that these problems exist in the first place. School shootings

are a self-motivated problem at least in the case of the few students who are responsible for carrying them out in their individual high schools.

Teenagers are also responsible for the risky behaviors that they engage in that threaten their safety. They make the choice to drink or smoke, so whatever negative effects these behaviors bring may be considered to be self-motivated. They also choose to drive in unsafe manners, including texting behind the wheel and driving too fast. The Internet may also be considered a risky behavior in that it exposes teenagers to cyber-bullying and harassment. Their use of the Internet is therefore self-motivated and the problems associated with it may be thought of as problems that teenagers bring on themselves.

Teenagers Can Solve Some of Their Own Problems

Teenagers experience problems in several areas of their lives, but when it comes to personal health and safety, teenagers can help fix things. That adult-generated media stories are constructed as opportunities to learn suggest that teenagers can protect themselves from sickness, injury, and abuse of their rights. And teenagers are in fact given the responsibility for doing so. Stories do not provide advice on staying safe or staying well. Teenagers must seek it out by going online to other sources to “find out” or know more” about avoiding illness, or staying safe in the world around them. They are responsible for getting information that will keep them safe, and they bear an active role in protecting themselves from harm. It is important to keep in mind, however, that while teenagers are responsible for protecting themselves in this manner, the information from which they are to stay safe or the steps they are to take to do so have been packaged by adult reporters who have posted these links and connected such information with a particular story. Adults are therefore the source of protection for teenagers. Teenagers are represented as dependent upon adults for their protection. Without adults to package this

information and direct teenagers to the Internet, these stories are just stories about teenagers and are not a way for teenagers to learn to protect themselves from sickness, injury, and infringement of their rights. Adults aren't providing an explicit lesson, but they may as well be, since they have framed teenagers' knowledge through the ways in which they have constructed these particular stories. Teenagers may bear some responsibility for their own protection and to avert potential problems, however adults are the ones who ultimately provide these "steps" and "tips", and who give teenagers the means to find out how to stay safe or to prevent injury or disease.

This help given to teenagers to fix their problems is proactive. Teenagers are given a clue about issues that could be problematic even before they notice a problem. Teenagers are therefore not doomed to suffer problems because these problems are not inevitable. Something can be done by teenagers, with the help of adults, to keep them from having a problem in the first place.

While teenagers may be able to overcome threats to their safety and wellness, it is important to note that these "solutions" involve the individual teenager's ability to help him or herself. They are not able to solve the broader problem that might lead them to be unsafe or sick. The lessons that teenagers learn and the advice that they are given is for them to work on the problem themselves. They cannot ensure that teenagers do not lose their rights at school, just that their rights are protected. They cannot make the school environment safer or the roads safer for everyone, they can just see to it that they are safe on the roads or that they are healthier. This ability to solve problems does not extend to larger societal problems impacting teenagers—substance abuse, Internet harassment, poor academic performance, and family relationships which we know afflict them. The surveys, polls, and studies that are incorporated into the adult-generated media text indicate that such problems are ever present.

The use of statistics represents teenagers in comparison with another group—one that is not mentioned in the story but that must be considered in order for the mentioned group to mean something. Teen smoking may be decreasing—with fewer teenagers engaging in the habit today than a decade ago, however the fact remains that there is a percentage of teenagers who are still smoking. That only 23% have had a cigarette in the last 30 days compared to 37% in 1997, does not ignore the fact that although the problem is lessened, it is still there. The fact that teens with married parents are happier than teenagers with divorced parents does not ignore the fact that not all teenagers are happy. While it may be seen as good news that 75% of teenagers have good relationships with their parents, this overlooks the fact that in order for this 75% to exist, there must be 25% who do not have good relationships with their parents. The incorporation of statistics into the discussion of teen issues sets teenagers up as parts of a whole, so even when there is good news about smoking, or teen contentment—even when the statistics show a favorable trend—there still exists that invisible other part that embodies these negative characteristics of the teen experience.

Teenagers do not receive tips or information about how to fix these problems. They cannot fix them. And it is not just teenagers who cannot fix things. Adults cannot either. It is as if the problems are presented in a vacuum with no way out of them. They are chronic problems that will just remain because nothing is done to make them go away. It is as if they just have to accept that these problems are there and there is nothing that can really be done about them.

Teenagers have a limit to what can be done to fix their problems. It is limited to potential problems that teenagers may face but that are not affecting them now, things such as safety, risks, or threats to their freedom of speech. They can keep those negative things from happening,

but they need adults to point the way. Problems that already exist, such as violence and dangerous behaviors, on the other hand, are not solvable.

The representation of teenagers with regard to their problems is that they have a partial ability to fix the things that are wrong. This partial ability involves the fact that much of the help that teenagers get to solve their problems comes at the hands of adults who have packaged this information for them. Teenagers can seek out information that helps them because adults have given them somewhere to look for this help and advice. Their ability to help is also limited to helping themselves. The big problems that afflict teenagers in general are not solvable. Instead there is a focus on what each teenager can do for him or herself to ease the problems that they face.

Teenagers Are Able to Better Themselves With Adult Help

Despite having problems, teenagers are able to better themselves by increasing their academic performance and job readiness. They can also enrich the community around them by volunteering to help others, by adding to the public discussion of important issues, and expressing opinions and ideas about projects and programs and how well they work. They also speak out in the media about the issues that touch their lives. This can help to bring issues to the public's attention and can also provide other voices to consider with regard to problem solutions. Teenagers are also able to help themselves improve their academic performance and their job readiness for later on through the activities and programs in which they participate.

Teenagers are therefore contributing positively to society, both by raising their own potential and by giving something back. This ability for teenagers to help themselves and others is something that would not be possible without the interaction between adults and teenagers. Teenagers need adults to guide them, and to instruct them, and to be a part of teenagers'

activities. In the absence of such adult intervention, teenagers would either not have opportunities to improve their lives and others' lives, or would not have the forum in which to have their ideas and actions recognized.

Teenagers' community service involvement and their ability to express their opinions are very much dependent upon the adults with whom they have contact. Adults are often the means through which teenagers' efforts and ideas come to "exist" in these media texts. Adults "meet" teenagers who are involved with helping others, and thus the adults are able to introduce the teenager and his or her good works to others. They "witness" teenagers debating certain issues such as the death penalty or public versus private schooling. Adults also solicit from teenagers, information about their community service involvement, using the "Your Turn" segment to ask teenagers what they do to help others. Adults are in essence asking teenagers what they are doing to help, and the teens are responding, answering the question. It is as if adults are guiding or prompting the good works of these teenagers in the same way that a teacher or parent might prompt students to become involved with efforts to help others.

The adults are the means through which teenagers' efforts come to "exist" in these media texts. Without the adults to ask teenagers about their community service involvement, these stories of teenagers helping others would not exist in the public's knowledge about teenagers. Without the reporter to meet teenagers involved in community service, and introduce the audience to these teenagers, and without the reporter to uncover teenagers expressing themselves or as being enabled to voice opinions, these teen actions would not exist. Adults, through their interaction with teenagers, thus provide for such knowledge of teenagers, and their influence in teenagers' lives guides teens' ability to speak out, and to serve the community.

Adults become a necessary conduit for teenagers to be seen as serving their community or helping others. Absent the adults' involvement in these stories, the teen subject could not be seen as one that gives back and helps others. Without adults to "witness" teenagers debating issues such as the death penalty or public versus private schooling, we would not have knowledge of teenagers as expressing themselves or as being enabled to voice opinions. Adults, through their interaction with teenagers, thus provide for such knowledge of teenagers, and their influence in teenagers' lives guides teens' ability to speak out, and to serve the community.

When teenagers talk about the things they've done to help others, or when they express their opinions on topics from school safety to the election to the war in Iraq, it is adults who are guiding them in these pursuits. Through a call and response organization, the story is constructed around the reporter's words. Adults are creating the framework in which teenagers will talk about these topics. They have decided what will be discussed, and how it will be addressed, and the teenagers just answer the questions or fill in the blanks. In the absence of the adults asking the question or framing the conversation, teenagers would not be responding. The good work that they do—from freeing a man from farm equipment, to giving socks to the homeless—, and the strong opinions that they express—on the death penalty, their safety, and public versus private schooling—exist because the adults have decided that these subjects would be addressed, and in the manner that the reporter has prescribed. The reporter has therefore guided the teenagers.

Without the reporter to provide the skeleton, the story would not be able to move forward. Teenagers' ability to improve their academic performance and prepare themselves for future careers is a result of things that adults have "given them" or "provided" for them. Adults are the ones who make opportunities possible, and it is because of such opportunities that teenagers can be better students now, or can get ready to be more effective on the job force later

in life. Adults are making available opportunities for teenagers to improve who they are both in the present time, and down the road. In addition to providing them with opportunities for self improvement, adults are also imparting life lessons on teenagers—teaching them things or giving them lessons that will help them as they mature and leave school.

Teenagers therefore need adults to help them make their own lives better and help improve others' lives. While such intervention is necessary, the fact remains that self betterment is in fact possible for teenagers. They can improve who they are, and make themselves more productive, both while in high school and down the line when it comes time to find a job. That they are taught “life lessons” indicates that adults expect that teenagers can grow and mature, albeit with guidance and advice. Adults may be providing the opportunities for self improvement or the advice, but the fact that they are there shows that teenagers do not have to accept the status quo for themselves, and that adults expect more from them.

Teenagers are also not self-centered, but are instead engaged in giving back and helping where they are needed. Even if adults are the ones who are guiding this community service or who are prompting it, teenagers are still the ones who are doing the giving back, and whose efforts are making a difference in people's lives. Teenagers are therefore able to see beyond themselves, and have the ability to reach out to other people, even if doing so requires some adult intervention.

These representations—that teenagers have a limited ability to solve their problems and that adults can help teenagers to improve their lives— do two things. First, they indicate a forward trajectory for teenagers. Teenagers are making their lives better, either by preventing themselves from suffering problems in school and in the community, or by enriching the world around them before there are even problems. Even by virtue of their problems, they show

improvement. There is still teen smoking, but fewer teenagers are doing it. Graduation rates are poor, but academic performance is better, thanks to increased involvement by parents. Teenagers have problems and there is no indication that they have any way to solve them, but they are moving in the right direction. The improvement is small—just two out of many problems they face—but it is progress nonetheless, thanks to adults. Teenagers may always have problems, like smoking, dangers on the Internet, and violence because nothing is being done to fix them or give them any ways to fix them. Instead there is a focus on potential problems that do not exist—to keep them from happening, which is good. Teenagers are taking steps to stop new problems but letting some problems that have been around for a while mangle.

It is like teenagers are in a holding pattern with regard to much of the negative factors in their lives. They suffer from problems but there is no indication that these problems are any greater than they used to be when it come to risks for being a victim of violence, poor graduation rates, and restrictions on behavior. There are just a few areas in which teenagers' problems are shown as getting worse and these are smaller problems—steroid use, an increase in online harassment, and less sleep for teenagers-- issues that are seen in just one story each. While it cannot be ignored that teenagers do have problems, because of adults, teenagers today are not a whole lot more troubled than yester-year teenagers.

The representation of teenagers may therefore be considered to be optimistic, despite showing that teenagers have oftentimes unsolvable problems. In many cases the problems that they have are not getting worse, but are instead no more troublesome than they used to be. And teenagers have much agency in terms of what they can do to try to fix things in their lives, and to make their lives and those of others around them better. While teenagers do have a good amount of control in terms of affecting change in their lives, it is important to recognize that there is still

a reliance on adults. Adults are still needed to guide teenagers, whether it is on how to stay safe and protected, or how to improve one's chances of landing a good job in the years to come. Teenagers can do a lot for themselves, but are still very much reliant upon the adults to help them to see the way.

CHAPTER 6

NETWORK NEWS

ABC, CBS, and NBC included 51 teen-related stories during the two-month period from October-November 2007. The issues that are addressed in these stories and the manner in which these issues are presented contribute to our knowledge about teenagers, telling us what they are like and how we deal with them. The stories create a teen subject that exists in the context of these news stories.

Examination of these texts required study of both their manifest and latent meanings. As discussed in Chapter 2, the manifest meanings of news texts are the issues that the stories address. The latent meanings are the patterns journalists use to tell their stories, and the ways in which these patterns construct several themes regarding teenagers. Representations of teenagers have roots both in the manifest meanings and latent meanings in news texts.

Using an analysis similar to that in Chapters 4 and 5, this chapter will examine teen-related issues in ABC, CBS, and NBC, as well as linguistically-based themes that emerge in the stories from these sources. The chapter will conclude with the ways in which the texts' manifest and latent meanings construct a representation of teenagers that their problems cannot be completely fixed.

Manifest Meanings in the Text: What Issues Were Covered?

After the story sample was selected by the process outlined in Chapter 2, each story was read and analyzed by a process similar to that in Chapters 4 and 5. There were a total of 51-teenager-related stories in network news and they addressed seven issues: health, troubled

teenagers, Internet use, sex, substance abuse, career preparation, and education. The seven issues will be discussed in terms of their prevalence within the network news texts, starting with the most prevalent issue and moving toward those issues addressed in just a few stories.

Health: (13)

Health stories dealt with physical and mental health of teenagers and involved stress, low self esteem, obesity, and lack of sleep. The stories also focused on what could be done to fix such health problems. There were a total of 13 health-related stories in network news. ABC and NBC each ran a story about the causes of teen stress and advice from psychologists about how to alleviate such pressures. NBC ran a story about a Dove program to boost teen girls' self esteem by showing them what goes on "behind the scenes" to touch up models and actors in magazines. Teen obesity was also written about as a self esteem issue. An ABC story about siblings having obesity surgery and the NBC story "Relationship Expert Angie Allen Speaks about Overweight Teens" discuss the impact of obesity on teenagers' feelings about themselves and how parents can key into such feeling to help teenagers lose weight. NBC also broadcast an interview with a child psychologist about signs parents should look for to see if their child might be depressed. There was also a story about teen happiness related to an MTV study that found teenagers enjoy spending time with their parents and having their parents involved in their lives.

Physical health stories focused on sleep and obesity, and in some cases, the two were connected. The stories "Po Bronson Talks about Teen Sleep" and "Teens Lacking Sleep?" addressed the link between teenagers' lack of sleep, their inability to perform well in school, and their increased risk of obesity and obesity-related diseases. The NBC story, "Today's Family: Teenagers Generally Not Getting Enough Sleep" deals with the negative consequences of teenagers not getting enough sleep, as well as the things in their lives—from busy schedules and

long school days, to the presence of electronics in their bedroom—that keep teenagers from getting enough rest at night. Obesity stories also dealt with teenagers having gastric bypass surgery, and the potential risks and benefits to both their physical and mental well-being, as well as with school programs to encourage students to be more physically active.

There was one health story that did not deal with either obesity or sleep. CBS ran a story about a man who designed special headgear for girl soccer players to prevent them from getting concussions. His invention was motivated by his own daughter suffering a bad concussion during a soccer game.

Troubled Teenagers: (12)

These stories involved teenagers as victims or perpetrators of violence, teenagers suffering hardships that are out of their control, and teens as engaging in behaviors that could harm themselves or others. Teens and violence accounted for more than half of the 12 troubled teen stories. Six stories dealt with teen boot camps, designed to correct problem behaviors. The camps were believed to be dangerous and to have resulted in a number of deaths and injuries. NBC ran two stories about several of these camps not being licensed or adequately regulated. Both ABC and NBC ran stories about investigations into the conditions at such camps following teen deaths. NBC ran a story about a Pennsylvania teenager who was in jail after his mother bought him weapons that police believe he may have planned to use in a school shooting. His mother told police she had given him the weapons because he had been upset about being picked on by his classmates. There was also an ABC story about a shooting rampage in Wisconsin that left three teenagers dead.

In addition to violence, teenagers were also victims of homelessness. Both NBC and ABC each ran stories about this issue. “Saturday Spotlight; Diane Nilan and Her Quest to Help

Homeless Children to Get a College Education” was about a woman who traveled around the United States documenting homeless teenagers’ stories in hopes of raising awareness for the need to provide these young people with the resources to succeed. “From Homeless Teen to MBA; Carissa’s Story Helping Others”, which ran on ABC, was about a documentary project by a now business and law school graduate to raise awareness for teen homelessness.

Teenagers were also involved in behaviors that could harm them or others. NBC ran a story about the rise in the number of teenagers who steal, and what parents can do to recognize this problem behavior and stop their own child from doing it. NBC also ran a story about the warning signs kids may exhibit that indicate they may have a problem or may be abusing drugs and alcohol. There were also two stories about the dangers of teenagers sending text messages while driving, and state-wide efforts to curb such behavior. Both of the text-messaging stories involved fatal accidents caused by texting.

Internet Use: (9)

There were nine Internet use stories and they dealt with online harassment as well as potential dangers that teenagers face on the Internet and on social networking sites. The online harassment stories all involved the MySpace Hoax in which a teenager named Megan Meiers committed suicide after being harassed online by a boy. It turned out that the boy had been “created” by the mother of another teenager. These five stories discussed the hoax itself, and four of them used the incident as a means to provide information for parents to protect their own children. This advice came from interviews with both Internet safety experts and Megan’s parents. Stories that dealt with Internet dangers included a CBS story about one parent’s decision to keep her teen daughter off the Internet after finding that she had posted provocative photographs of herself and had made contact with people who were into drugs and alcohol, a

story about parents who spied on their daughter to make sure she was not doing anything online that could put her in danger, a story about an experiment in a Maryland high school in which teenagers used information another student posted about herself online in order to follow her around the neighborhood and show how vulnerable teenagers make themselves on the Internet, and a story about an American and a Finnish teen accused of plotting a school attack online.

Sex: (7)

Sex stories dealt with teen sexual activity and efforts to curb teen pregnancy. These stories were centered largely on a school district in Portland Maine that made birth control pills and other contraception available to middle school students at school. Of the seven sex stories broadcast on network new during the time period of this study, five involved this issue, and they were broadcast on all three networks. NBC also ran a story about the prevalence of sexual activity taking place at school. There was one story about a Texas program that encourages teen abstinence by giving teens incentives not to engage in sexual activities. The story also included an on-set interview with three adults who abstained from sex as teenagers, and now discuss their experiences with present-day teenagers to try to discourage today's teenagers from having pre-marital sex.

Substance Abuse: (3)

Substance abuse stories concerned teenagers' use of alcohol, as well as over-the-counter, prescription, and illegal drug. Substance abuse stories included an NBC story about teenagers drinking, abusing over-the-counter drugs such as cold medications, and playing an asphyxiation game. ABC ran a story about a decrease in teen methamphetamine use following implementation of advertisements geared at teenagers to show the damage the drug can cause to your health and

to your relationships. There was also one story about teenagers using prescription drugs, including those that will allow them to stay up late to do their schoolwork.

Career Preparation: (3)

Career preparation stories dealt with teenagers gaining experiences in potential careers or in fields that will help them in the future. There were three of these stories. The NBC story “Kids Training Hard to Become Professional Athletes” is about the vigorous sports training parents arrange for their teenagers so that teens can receive sports scholarships or gain acceptance into a prestigious college. “Papparazzi Getting Younger and Younger”, also on NBC, is about two teen boys who have started up their own websites in which they post pictures of famous actors and celebrities. They are part of a growing trend of young people who are trying to capture photos of big-time stars. It is a trend that has parents and other adults concerned about the safety of young people among the mobs of photographers vying for that million-dollar picture. ABC ran the story “School of Rock for Kids”, about a program for students interested in musical careers in which teens have the opportunity to play and perform classic rock in concert settings.

Education: (1)

There was just one education story, and it had to do with teenagers’ learning process. The ABC story was about the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) which is run through charter schools and puts a focus on critical thinking, strong work ethics, and involvement in activities outside of the school setting. The program is credited with encouraging students who might not otherwise strive for higher education to make it to college.

Miscellaneous:

As was the case for teen webzine stories and stories on Channel One and CNN Student News, there were some network news stories that did not fit into one of the aforementioned

categories. NBC ran the story, “Dr. Gail Saltz Discusses the Development of Teenagers’ Brains”, about the ways in which impulsive or risky teen behaviors, such as fast driving, sexual activity, and substance abuse may be related to teenagers’ brains not being fully developed. CBS ran a story about the potential impact of Gossip Girl books on teen readers because the books deal with issues such as drinking and sex. The story includes an interview with an adolescent psychologist who offers parents advice on how they can be sure their daughters are not motivated to engage in the behaviors that they read about in the books.

Latent Meanings: Patterns and Themes Concerning Teens

Latent meanings in the text were analyzed by the same process detailed in Chapter 4. There were a total of five patterns in network news stories about teenagers. The patterns developed into three broader themes regarding teenagers: that the teen years are a time in which their parents can learn things, that teenagers are under investigation by adults, and that teens’ lives are interconnected with those of adults. These themes, and the ways in which they are developed through patterns in the network news texts, will be discussed below.

Parental Learning and Education

Teen-related network news stories construct the adolescent years as a time of learning for teenagers’ parents, with respect to the issues and problems teens face. The learning process is two-fold. Parents are first educated about the problem itself. Following their education on the problem itself, parents then learn how they can fix the problem. They are given either explicit advice from someone who is an expert, or they are pointed in the direction to go to find out what they need to know about this problem and possible solutions. This theme develops from two patterns network news journalists use in telling stories about teenagers and adolescents. The stories use language and storytelling techniques that frame stories both as lessons from experts

and as “opportunities to learn” for parents. These patterns open parents’ eyes to the struggles teens face and they provide guidance for parents for fixing or easing such struggles.

Lessons from experts: Teenager-related stories are organized in a way that parents find out what is going on with teenagers and then how they can fix things for teens. Parents find out “what is going on” in one of two ways. The first way involves just an on-set interview between an anchor and an expert in which the two discuss a problem or issue involving teenagers and the reason such a problem exists. This provides context for the problem, such as why it occurs or how frequently it happens. The second way in which stories are framed as adults learning from experts involves a live interview in which the expert offers advice, but he or she does so in combination with a reporter package. These reporter packages deal with specific teenagers or particular events and serve as background on the issue, highlighting some sort of trend or problem, and allowing the exploration of that issue. The expert interview is conducted following the airing of this story, as a sort of tag to the story. In both types of stories, after the issues are explored, parents learn what it is that they can do to help fix the problem. The expert offers “advice” or “tips” or information on what adults “should do”, “can do”, “need to do”, what they “should be looking for” or the “lessons” that can be learned with regard to teenagers’ wellbeing and safety.

The problems vary but the way that they are handled in all these stories is the same. Parents learn about the problem and then are told how they can alleviate them. Even when no intended audience is mentioned it can be assumed that the lessons in these stories are directed toward adults because network news is geared toward an adult, rather than a teenaged, audience. The expert lessons deal with teen health and troublesome teen behavior.

Teen health problems that parents can learn to fix are both mental and physical, dealing with issues from stress management and self esteem, to weight gain and lack of sleep. The ABC story, “Do Teens Get a Bad Rap” begins with the anchor introducing a child psychologist who “has advice on how to make adolescence easier on both children and parents.” Following this introduction, there is background on the idea of teen stress, that “we’ve had this belief that teens are destined to be in a period of storm and stress, that they’re doomed for problem behavior”, that when it comes to teenagers “There is this image that we have...you know, raging hormones and that’s the stereotype we’ve become accustomed to.” The NBC story, “Michele Borba Talks About Teens and Stress” begins with statistics from a poll that found “Eighty-five percent of teens say that they’re more stressed...” and that an “ivillage poll chimed in 90% of the parents said today’s kids are clearly more stressed....” Reasons are given for this stress, including the death of a parent and over-scheduling. After the causes of teens stress are elucidated, the stories provide advice for parents that can “make things easier” or “warning flags that say our kids may be stressed out”. Parents are told to “key into your kid and figure out what his [stress] signs look like”, to “eliminate stressors”, to “give your child a smorgasbord of possibilities”, to “teach them a specific skill”, to “empower your kid to make decisions”, and to “let your young person not only participate in, but take a leadership role in valued activities in the home, in the family and in the school.”

So in other words, if you’re a parent, don’t give up, don’t throw in the towel. They might be a bit moody but that doesn’t mean you should give them their space. It’s actually a time when you should be encouraging them and spend even more quality time.

If you just give your kid five minutes a day despite the quality of that five minutes it’s not enough. Eat dinners together. Spend evenings together, not sitting side by side, watching TV, but talking about things of importance to the family.

Do Teens Get a Bad Rap?, ABC, 2007

Another mental health issue that parents are taught how to fix is negative self esteem. The NBC story “Relationship Expert Angie Allen Talks about Overweight Teens” discusses self esteem both as a physical and a mental health concern. In her interview with the anchor, Allen discusses teen weight gain as a “deeper issue”, a result of teenagers’ concerns about what other people think about them. Due to teasing and parents’ lack of attention to teens’ social problems:

We miss the mark because we’re not sitting down with our children and asking them what’s going on in school. And we’re really concerned about their grades, but we’re not so concerned about what’s going on in their social relationships.
Relationship Expert Angie Allen Talks about Overweight Teens, NBC,
2007

The NBC story, “Dove Campaign for Self Esteem” also provides a lesson for parents to deal with teenagers’ self esteem issues. Teenagers talk about how media images make them feel bad about themselves and cause them to struggle, before advice to fix the problem is given:

Kotb: Ann, what are some—just give me some tips for young girls because not everyone gets to go to a workshop. They all can’t have this benefit.
Kearney-Cooke: Right. Well, again, self esteem is about feeling confident in the world. And I think what parents, mothers need to do is really when your daughter comes to you about feeling fat or about a fight with a girlfriend, you need to really listen to her. Be curious about what she’s saying, ask questions, help her walk through the process so she learns to problem solve herself.
Dove Campaign for Self Esteem, NBC, 2007

This is an interesting example, because the advice is originally framed as “some tips for young girls”, which would indicate a learning opportunity for teenagers. However the expert’s response serves to direct this advice toward parents or adults. They are instructed as to how to help their daughter or other young girls in their lives and therefore are positioned as the ones who are to learn from the story.

A strictly physical problem that parents are taught how to fix is lack of sleep. The CBS story “Po Bronson Talks About Kids and Sleep” and The NBC Story, “Teenagers Generally Not

Getting Enough Sleep”, both begin by including information about the trend of teen sleeplessness. In the first story, Bronson references a study that found teenagers get less than the recommended amount of sleep, and in the NBC story, “Teens Not Getting Enough Sleep” this background is provided by a reporter package that focuses on two tired teenagers. Anjay Dadavati “stumbles out of bed before 6, having managed only five and a half to six hours of sleep.” Britney Badish “says it feels like we’re running on empty sometimes” but that sleep deprivation “is just part of being a grown up kid.” Both stories then discuss a number of reasons for this sleeplessness. Teenagers’ biological clocks “make it hard for them to go to sleep” when parents are trying to get them to bed. The environment that they create for themselves with “little glowing red power lights everywhere in the bedroom” is also a reason for teen sleeplessness. So too is the environment that is created for them by parents “pushing too hard” and school times that are “unbelievably early”. These elements provide a background on the problem, which is then followed by information on “what parents should do”:

Smith: Wow. Okay, very, very quickly, what parents should do in the next 20 seconds or so to make sure that their kids get enough sleep and get on the right track here.

Mr. Bronson: Consistency of bedtimes, even staying up later on weekends for young kids is causing them to lose seven points of—on an IQ test. So consistency of bedtimes is what’s most important to set the circadian rhythm system.

Po Bronson Talks About Kids and Sleep, CBS, 2007

Ms. Mindell: But we do know 20 percent of kids are falling asleep in school.

Vieira: So what should parents do?

Ms. Mindell: First of all, talk about it. Talk to their teen about the importance of sleep. Be a good role model. Parents need to go to bed themselves. Set a routine. Slow down. Don’t just turn off the email and try to fall asleep. You can’t do it.”

Viera: Ok

Ms Mindell: Pull back a little and make sure they’re not doing things at 9:00 at night so they can go to bed on time.”

Today’s Family: Teenagers Generally Not Getting Enough Sleep, NBC, 2007

Network news stories are also framed into expert lessons for parents about how they can “help” prevent troublesome behaviors or “tips” to take to keep kids from engaging in potentially dangerous behaviors. In an ABC story about stealing among teenagers, psychologist Dr. Ruth Peters is interviewed “to help parents prevent kids from committing this type of crime”, and to provide “tips” for parents to prevent their children from stealing. In the NBC story “Warning Signs for Troubled Teens”, following a reporter package about a shooting at an Ohio alternative high school, a child psychologist discusses the “signs of a troubled child” and what “should you do” as a parent when you see these signs in your own teenager. The NBC story “On the Couch with Dr. Gail Saltz; Dr. Gail Saltz Discusses the Development of Teenagers’ Brains”, the problem is teen impulsivity leading to risky behaviors like fast driving and substance use. Parents are told that they “need to step in and sort of be like an auxiliary frontal lobe for your kid”, that parents “need to be” talking with their teenagers about behaviors that seem risky. This is said to be a “message” for parents to take away with them, that they can “help” their teenage children develop mature thinking that will curb such behaviors. In the NBC story “Educational Psychologist Michele Borba Speaks About Dangerous Games Children and Teens Play” parents are also told about the “signs” that their children may be involved in a dangerous suffocation game, and what to “look for” to find out if their teenager is abusing over-the-counter drugs or drinking.

Parents also learn how to handle the problem of teen sexual activity. An NBC story provides background on teen promiscuity with statements that “22% of those kids say they’ve witnessed a sexual act”, “less than 15% of the students we talked to said that if they witnessed a sexual act at school they would tell their parents”, that “the schools aren’t doing a lot”, and that

parents “really have our head in the sand” when it comes to teens’ sexual activities. Parents are then given “tips” to try to fix this:

Roker: We’ve got some tips here. You say when talking to teens about sex, you should have a continuous conversation.

Varady: Absolutely

Roker: And listen to your kids.

Varady: We need to move so far beyond one lecture. It needs to be continuous and ongoing.

Educational Psychologist Michele Borba Speaks About Dangerous Games
Children and Teens Play

Another problematic teen behavior involves the Internet and online harassment. Internet safety experts “give parents advice” about dealing with cyber-bullying of their children, and provide “the information you need” to keep your children and family protected online. There is also discussion of “what parents can do” to be sure their children are not at risk when they are using the Internet, which is followed by advice for parents to ensure their children’s safety online. The ABC story, “MySpace Hoax; the Neighbor in the Middle”, which is about the MySpace hoax, and the Meiers’ inability to find out if their daughter’s Internet boyfriend really existed, ends with advice from a different type of expert—Mr. Meiers:

Kate Snow: Ron, is there a quick lesson, though, for other parents?

Ron Meiers: I just like to say, don’t take anything for granted and be as watchful as you can be and proactive in the involvement with your children on the Internet.

While Mr. Meiers is not an “expert” in the traditional sense, he might be considered so in the context of this story. The story is about teen Internet safety. The fact that his daughter died as a result of an Internet hoax positions Mr. Meiers as potentially having advice for other parents in that he has gone through the process with his own daughter.

Despite a difference in the organization of stories or the topics covered, they can all be considered lessons. All of the stories are organized in such a fashion that viewers are to learn

from them. The problem or issue is laid out and then someone who would be considered qualified to speak about the issue offers “help” or “tips” for parents. In framing such expert information as “advice” or “tips”, it indicates that the adults who are watching are to take something away from the story, to learn from it. The advice and tips that are given assume that a problem has already occurred, and is focused on alleviating that problem. While the problems are wide-spread—teen sleeplessness, stress, self esteem, Internet dangers-- the advice that is given is focused on what parents can do to help their child individually. They include language that focuses on individual teenagers, instructing parents in what they should do to make sure “their child” gets enough sleep; what they should do if “your daughter comes to you” with a self esteem issue; and how one can key into “your kid” and his or her stressors. The lessons are therefore aimed not at fixing the problem overall, but just lessening the problem for one’s own child or children.

Opportunities to Learn: As was the case in teen webzines and adult-generated news stories for teenagers, network news stories are constructed as opportunities to learn. Opportunities to learn in network news are less prevalent than they are in the other two media sources. They are also less prevalent than are the lessons for experts, present in just five of the 51 teenager-related stories. When they are present, they follow a similar pattern as is seen in webzines as well as in Channel One and CNN Student News. The writer describes a teen problem or issue, sometimes in general terms, and other times through the telling of an individual teenager’s story. At the end of the story there is information about where one can find “more advice”, or “important tips” or “more information”. The information is provided via a link to the station’s website or to a website for a specific program, such as the CBS Evening News or

the Today Show. Whenever they are in a story, the opportunities to learn always involve parents protecting teenagers from some type of danger or threat.

This danger is in some cases something teenagers bring on themselves, such as stress or involvement in problematic behaviors such as drug and alcohol use. Parents can log on to todayshow.com and “visit the ivillage community for more information” about how to tell if their child is using drugs or suffering from depression, or to find “more advice” about helping their child deal with stress. There is also “more information” on the NBC website for parents about how to tell if their child is abusing over-the-counter medications or taking part in an asphyxiation game that could kill him or her. These opportunities to learn all come at the end of stories that address teen stress and teen behavior in general terms rather than following the reporting of one specific teenager’s story.

Internet dangers are also something that teenagers bring on themselves by their actions on the Internet. The following examples come from Internet stories involving individual teenagers; the first about the MySpace Hoax, and the second, following a story about parents who spied on their daughter online to keep track of her “virtual” actions:

And we have much more information about ways to prevent and deal with cyber bullying including a parents’ guide to Internet safety. It’s on our website...

And for important tips on keeping your kids safe online, you can go to cbsnews.com and just click on CBS evening news.

In the case of teenagers’ Internet use, it is not that the Internet is a dangerous behavior on its own—as is smoking or using drugs. It is that being in the virtual world opens teenagers up to a problem. Parents are given a means to shield teenagers from encountering such danger. The same is true of other hardships that teenagers face in the context of network news stories. Parents are told that “To learn more about diabetes, you can click on the health section at

ABCNEWS.com, where you can find answers from diabetes experts to more than a hundred questions about the disease.” They can also “learn more about how to help” ease the problem of homelessness among teenagers, following a story about the struggles of homeless children and teenagers. Internet vulnerability, as well as illness and misfortune are issues that can touch teenagers’ lives without the teenagers having initiated them in any manner. Parents are not given this information outright. They need to seek it out but if they do, parents are provided with a recipe both to recognize a problem that may be impacting their child, and then a means by which to go about fixing or solving that problem to help their child.

The opportunities to learn are broad while the expert lessons are on an individual basis. The opportunities to learn offer “more information” and “important tips” to tackle problems like alcohol abuse, stress, and Internet safety. There is no emphasis on just helping one’s own child, but instead on what can be done in general to alleviate the problem. These opportunities to learn are as prevalent as are parental lessons, occurring in a narrower range of issues. In addition, these opportunities to learn usually appear in those stories that also include expert advice for parents. Only the diabetes story and the teen homeless story do not include lessons and tips for parents within the body of the story. Parents are therefore getting individualized advice to help their child more often than they are receiving general advice that can help them to solve a teen problem on a wide scale.

Despite their emphasis on either the individual or on teenagers as a group, these stories indicate that adults do not necessarily know how to tackle many of the issues that impact teenagers. These problems do have solutions, largely on an individual scale. Parents can help their children and thus can take a small step toward fixing a big problem.

Teenagers as a Group We Want to Learn More About

Another theme that manifests itself in network stories is that teenagers are under investigation by adults. Adults try to find out about teenagers' health and wellbeing, as well as their actions and behaviors. Adults study teenagers to find out what they are like and to learn about problems in their lives. This theme emerges from the prevalence of teen stories that involve "a recent poll", a "survey", or that include phrases such as "we asked" or "we found." These studies or findings are sometimes attributed to a specific organization, and at other times, statistics are included without referencing a source. The areas in which teenagers are studied involve their health, their use of the Internet, and their engagement in risky or harmful behaviors.

Research and Experimental Findings: Teenagers' risky or harmful behaviors were the most "studied" teen topic, and included their sexual activity, their substance abuse, even their driving. Several stories included statistical information about the prevalence of teen sexual activity or referenced studies about teens and sex. One such study was discussed in a story about teen sexual activity going on during the school day in high schools. A member of momlogic.com says that "22% of teenagers witnessed a sexual act in school" and that "15% of students we talked to said that they would tell their parents if they witnessed a sexual act in school." Several stories dealt with a decision to make contraception available to students in Maine public schools, and they referenced "one study that showed more than 17,000 pregnancies for girls 14 and younger. There were also pregnancy statistics included in these stories-- that "13% of Maine middle school students said they had had intercourse", and that "18-20 % of adolescents have had intercourse by age 14". Although this information is not connected to a particular study, the fact that the reporter could include statistics on teen sex indicates that the issue had to have been studied at some point.

Other risky or harmful behaviors that are studied are the abuse of prescription drugs, dangerous driving, and stealing. Network news viewers are told that “one in five teenagers has admitted to abusing prescription drugs,” and that “1 in 14 kids” use over-the-counter cold and cough medications to get high because “they think it’s safe.” Abuse of prescription drugs in the home, as well as teenagers’ engagement in drinking and asphyxiation games is leading to “60% of kids dying when the parent is home”. We are also told that “61% of teens admitted to risky behavior behind the wheel, like sending and receiving text messages”, and that “30 percent of shoplifters” plan their thefts.

Several stories on network news involve teenagers’ mental health, particularly their self esteem and their contentment with their lives. In the NBC story “Dove Campaign for Self Esteem”, we learn that “40% of girls see only flaws when they look in the mirror”, that “71% would trade bodies with a celebrity”, and that “70% of girls avoid routine activities when feeling bad about their looks”. In the NBC story “Relationship Expert Argie Allen Speaks About Overweight Teenagers”, about the self esteem issues associated with obesity, we’re told that a study in the American Journal of Preventative Medicine found “overweight teenagers turn to extreme measures for weight control.” NBC included a story about an ivillage.com poll that found that “85% of teens say they are more stressed”. CBS included findings of an MTV study on teen happiness and included information that “nine out of 10 kids agree that taking control of their own destiny is key to happiness”, that “61% want to be rich”, and that “80% said having a lot of friends is important” to overall happiness.

Physical health centered on obesity and sleep. We learn that “17% of adolescents are obese”, that “71% of children and adolescents in this country are overweight”, and that when it comes to getting enough rest “20% of kids are falling asleep in school.” In addition, the National

Sleep Foundation found that “20% of teenagers are getting the sleep they need”. Another survey found that 51% of teens drove when they were tired.

Teenagers’ Internet use was another heavily studied issue, given the number of statistics that addressed teens’ online behaviors. We’re told that “93% of American teens between the ages of 12 and 17 use the Internet regularly”. A “major survey” found that “55% of online teens have posted profiles, 79% of those include a photo and 32% of online teens have been contacted by a stranger”. A “recent survey” showed that “61% of teens reveal where they live on their profiles, 29% give their email address and 29% even post their last names”, and “a new poll” found that “40% of teens say they use instant messaging to say things they wouldn’t say to someone face to face.” An NBC story about Internet dangers included a momlogic.com survey that found “only 5% of the kids we polled will tell their parents if anything goes wrong online because they are afraid their parents are gonna take the Internet away.”

In some of the above examples there are just statistics, with no mention of a specific study or survey from which the information was collected. If such statistics are available, these issues must have been studied at some point. There would be no way to know that 18-20% of teens had sex by age 14 or that one in 14 kids resort to cold medications to get high, unless someone did a poll, survey, or a study to find out this information.

The fact that studies were conducted on teenagers, on a variety of topics—from sexuality, to substance abuse, to mental health and Internet use—indicates that teenagers are a population about which we want to learn more. The studies, surveys, and polls from which this information was acquired about teenagers, would not have been done in the first place if adults did not want to learn more about teenagers and their issues, if teenagers were not a population that was worth studying. The specific information that was sought out—the subjects of these studies—indicates

that these are the topics that adults feel to be most important with regard to the teen population. These issues are therefore more important to understanding or learning about teenagers than are those topics that were not studied or were not included in stories on network news. The studies are not comparative. It is impossible to tell how these problems and issues of today compare to that of past generations of teenagers. The problem is presented with little context for whether or not teen problems are becoming worse than past generations would suggest.

Teens' Lives are Inter-connected with Adults' Lives

A third and smaller theme in network news stories about teenagers is that teenagers' lives are interconnected with the lives of adults around them. The issues that they face, and the problems with which teenagers must deal, are issues and problems that adults have already dealt with. Adults use reminiscent language and storytelling strategies in teen-related stories, and they also use first-person when talking about teen problems, so as to show the issues or problems as something that "we" face. This reminiscing by adults on their teen years as well as the use of first-person to connect adults to teen issues shows current teenagers' experiences against the backdrop of the experiences of adults. Teenagers are an extension of the adults who are in their lives. This theme is evident in only five stories, but it plays a role in the development of teen representations, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Reminiscing: Language and Storytelling: Reminiscent storytelling happens in two different ways. The first involves the use of language that compares the experiences of teenagers today with adults' teen experiences of a generation ago. The second involves organizing the story around lengthy sound-bites from adults who speak about their own adolescence in relation to a specific issue impacting teenagers today.

Comparative language links teenagers of today with yester-year teenagers—those who were teenagers in past decades or generations. Reporters use phrases such as “back when” or “used to”, words that indicate two different time periods, such as “today” or “now”. The teen experience is therefore discussed as it relates to the experiences or recollections of adults, and this comparison is always showing some type of decline for teenagers, or worsening of their situations.

One of these worsening situations is teenagers’ safety in their own environments. Teenagers’ safe space is smaller than it once was. In a story about teen Internet use, the reporter says that parents “used to worry when their kids went out, but now they worry when their kids go on the computer in the house.” The danger can find teenagers without them even needing to walk out the door. The house, which ordinarily would be a safe place, now holds potential danger. In an NBC story the reporter says that parents are not able to keep tabs on their teenagers as much as they used to because the privacy teens now have “is a far cry” from the situation they had as teens. Teenagers also have a decrease in the quality of their mental and physical health. Teenagers are talked about as being “more stressed”. During an on-set interview with a child psychologist in the story “iVillage Contributor Michele Borba Speaks about Helping Kids Deal with Stress” the following is said:

Roker: There’s a lot more. I mean, when we were growing up it was basically, you know, you did your homework you had time to go out and play.

Borba: Yeah, yeah.

Roker: Maybe there was a piano lesson or something. Today, it’s a whole different story.

Borba: It’s clearly mounting...iVillage poll chimed in 90% of parents said today’s kids are clearly more stressed. The big red flag is it’s filtering down to the younger kids...

Roker: Hmm

Borba: Eighty-five percent of teens say that they’re more stressed.

This example shows a comparison between teenagers today and the experiences of teenagers of past generations. In order for teenagers today to be “more stressed”, there has to be a group who was “less” stressed. There also has to be a group for whom being a kid was “easier” if kids today have it “harder”. Adolescence is a time of higher anxiety and more difficulties than it used to be. In addition to having poor mental health, teenagers today are also less physically healthy:

Back in the 1960’s, when PE was part of everyday and fast food wasn’t, 4% of adolescents were obese. Today, 17 % are.

In each of these cases, teenagers’ troubles are put against the backdrop of past teen problems. It is not that teenagers are obese as much as it is that obesity is happening more frequently. It is not just that they are unsafe in and of itself, but that they are less safe than they used to be, or that places that once were safe, like one’s home, are no longer guaranteed to be so. The problems—stress, safety, and obesity—are not new, they are just worse than they were a generation ago. Teenagers today have it harder than they once did.

Reminiscent storytelling also involves the incorporation of adult interviews into the story in which adults speak about how they dealt with a particular issue when they were a teen. The ABC story “From Homeless Teen to MBA; Carissa’s Story Helping Others”, is about a formerly homeless teenager who is now a business school and law school graduate, who has created a documentary about being a homeless teen. Throughout the story Carissa recalls her own homeless experiences:

It was abusive and we were too many kids in one house. I had 10 brothers and sisters in one house and my stepdad was beating up my brothers and trying to exploit my sister. I just thought I’m gonna get out of here before it does it to me.

I was a target to be sexually exploited. They very much understand your psychology and that you’re vulnerable and they exploit you. Very slowly, tell you

things like ‘I love you and I’ll be your boyfriend’, and they’re 24 years old and you’re 1,2, or 40, and you’re 12.

The issue of teen homelessness and the plight of the hundreds of teenagers who face this hardship are centered around Carissa’s experience. Her experiences speak for them. She even says that she is “giving people a visual and a face on those kids that are experiencing this.” This problem that teenagers face is linked to an adult who made it and is successful. In reflecting back on her time on the streets, Carissa in a sense, gives “voice” to a homeless teenager—her teenage self. This teenage voice, however, is being filtered through the Carissa of today, the adult Carissa. The homeless teenager of her past—the type of person she is hoping her documentary calls attention to—is therefore linked with the adult Carissa, who can tell her story from the position of the adult who has succeeded, against all odds.

The same thing occurs in an NBC story about teens and abstinence. Three people in their twenties recount their own decisions to practice abstinence before marriage. These are in fact teenagers’ experiences, but they are borne of the adults’ teenage experiences. They have already succeeded at their pledge for abstinence, and can relate it to their lives now. The issue of teen abstinence becomes associated with adults who have “made it”. There was one other example of such reminiscing in a story about teen obesity however it happened to a much lesser extent than that seen in the homelessness story and the abstinence story. A bariatric surgeon that performed gastric bypass surgery on a 14-year old girl recalls his own experiences with the surgery.

In each of these stories, teen experiences become linked with the experiences of an adult. The teen experience is not unique, but instead a repetition of what has happened for adults in the past. The past is sometimes better than the present, with some problems of today discussed as bigger or more prevalent. There are more overweight teenagers and more stress for teenagers in

their everyday lives, and their homes are no longer entirely safe because of the presence of the Internet and the potential for danger that exists in the virtual world.

First-person Construction--Teen problems are adult problems: Another pattern in teenager-related stories in network news involves using language that suggests teenagers and adults are experiencing the same problems simultaneously. This pattern is a small one, manifesting itself in just two stories, both of them dealing with teenagers' mental health. The NBC story, "TVillage Contributor Michelle Borba Speaks about Helping Kids Deal with Stress", connects adult and teen stress right from the first sentence of the story:

Mom and dad, you guys aren't the only ones dealing with pressure from popularity contests, to making the team, to getting good grades. Our kids are getting stressed out, too.

By saying that "kids get stressed out too", the stress of teenagers comes to be viewed in relation to the stress of parents and adults. Their stress is, in a sense, ancillary to that of their parents. After a discussion of the steps parents can take to alleviate teen stress, the story ends with a focus on adults:

If we only get in that perspective and take care of us because stressed-out parents make stressed-out kids.

In phrasing it this way, the stress that teens feel is not just connected to the stress of their parents, it is caused by it. Teenagers' mental health cannot be extricated from that of their parents because it is their parents' mental health that is influencing teenagers' own level of stress.

Teenagers' self esteem is also linked to that of the adults in their lives. In the following example, from a story about helping teenagers cope with obesity and low self esteem, journalists

and the people they interview begin by speaking about teenagers as a separate group with a third-person construction:

You've got to be asking open-ended questions so that they can start talking about what they're feeling on the inside as opposed to what's just going on on the outside...because teasing is what they're facing, especially if they're facing a lot of overweight.

Then there is a shift to second person in talking about self esteem:

Because we all face external stimuli from the outside. And sometimes what happens is that we internalize it, and the internalized process becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Then we don't think we're good enough. We don't think we measure up... So just sitting down and having your teen talk with you about how they're internalizing that because we all experience that, whether we're old or young.

The “we” in this case is not just the expert and the journalist she is speaking with but the larger “we” that is the intended adult audience to whom the show is directed. What started out as teenager concerns—peer pressure, self esteem—are now associated with adults as well.

Everyone experiences these feelings. It is not something that is specific to teenagers.

The same thing happens in another NBC story about teenage impulsivity and brain development. At the end of the story, there is a shift from talking just about teenagers to talking about all people:

Reporter: What about for the parents or the adults who make mistakes, too? I mean, any kind of research out there that says ‘Oh, your brain's not quite working?

Dr. SALTZ: You know what? Human beings are--you know, have very different brains from each other, potentially, and some people are more impulsive than others.

The problem of teen impulsivity now shares the focus with adult impulsivity, even when the interviewee makes another comment coming back to teens’ brains. Teenagers do not have a unique problem but instead are experiencing something that we all experience. The issues that

teenagers face, the struggles that they go through, are not new, but instead issues and struggles that their parents and other adults once endured. In recounting their own experiences, in relation to the experiences of their teenagers, adults often show their own adolescence to be easier, less dangerous. Present teenagers' experiences, while linked to those of teenagers in the past, may therefore indicate a worsening of teenagers' experiences with their troubles getting more prominent and more serious.

Teen Representations

Both the manifest and latent meanings in the texts contribute to their overall meaning. It is the meaning of texts about teenagers that contribute to our knowledge about teens by creating a discourse that comes to define them as a subject. Teen representations—what it means to be a teen—therefore requires examination of both the manifest and latent meanings of the texts. The analysis was done in two steps. First the issues were examined for larger ideas about teenagers. The themes were then examined collectively along with these larger ideas to see how the themes in stories could inform these ideas and contribute to the construction of the teen subject. The manifest and latent meanings contributed to the representation that teenagers have problems that cannot be completely fixed.

Teens' Problems Cannot be Completely Fixed

As was true in the other two media sources, there is an overwhelming representation of teenagers as having problems. Teenagers are unhealthy, both physically and emotionally. They do not get enough sleep. They are obese or overweight, and they suffer from diabetes. Teenagers also face homelessness and violence in the world around them. They can be killed while at a party, or can become victim to a school shooting by a classmate.

In addition, teenagers are at risk for injury and illness because of dangers in their environment. The only sports-related story to run on network news involved injuries to female soccer players. Teenagers' sports involvement becomes associated with injury. They are exposed to drugs and alcohol, putting them at risk for injury or illness. Engagement in sexual activity as early as middle school opens up the possibility of disease and teen pregnancy, and with it drastic changes in their future plans. Even using the Internet, which is not inherently dangerous, becomes so for teenagers. They can be deceived online, and bullied by people they do not even know. They can come into contact with dangerous people, become vulnerable to exploitation, and share personal information that can harm them in the "real world". Preparing for the future is also risky. If they participate in vigorous athlete training in order to help them gain admission to a prestigious college, they lose out on just being kids. If teenagers begin to prepare for a career, as the two teens do in the story "Paparazzi Getting Younger and Younger", they are putting themselves at risk for being hurt or trampled while in the pack of photographers waiting for a good picture.

Most of these "problems" involve things that teenagers are doing to themselves rather than problems that are completely out of their control. Their physical and mental health problems are largely resulting from their own actions. They choose to stay up too late, leaving them unable to fully concentrate in school or to drive properly. They can eliminate the problem by going to bed earlier. Teenagers also bring on problems associated with drug and alcohol use by choosing to use them in the first place. Lifestyle and diet choices that teenagers make, while not completely responsible for teen obesity, definitely plays a hand in the problem. Their mental health problems are also things that originate from them. Feelings of stress and low self esteem are problems that teenagers can be seen as causing for themselves.

Teenagers also choose to become involved in the risky behaviors that threaten their health and safety, such as choosing to use drugs or choosing to use the Internet. Teenagers make the decision to use illegal substances, and thus bring on any of the negative consequences that go along with these actions. They choose to use the Internet for social networking purposes, and they choose to post personal information. Without their decision to use this medium, and to use it for dissemination of personal information, the Internet dangers affecting teenagers would not be there.

Of course there are some problems that are discussed that are not a result of teens' actions. Teenagers are not causing themselves to have diabetes, nor are their actions responsible for making them homeless or the victim of a shooting or of abuse at a boot camp. These stories however are less prevalent than are those stories that deal with drug and alcohol use, sexuality, and Internet use. In the network news text, most of the problems that teenagers face are those that they play a role in bringing on. Teen problems are largely a result of the things that they do, and the decisions that they make in their lives rather than things that are happening to them because of others' actions. In other words, teenagers are causing much of the problems that they face.

While teenagers are facing problems many of the issues that are discussed as problematic—drug use, violence, and sleeplessness are not compared to either adults or to past generations of teenagers. It is therefore difficult to know if teenagers are any more violent than adults, or any more at risk for problems on the Internet than are older people. It is difficult to judge whether teenagers are more violent than they used to be or more at risk regarding their physical health than teenagers were 10, 15 or even 30 years ago. The problems are there but we can not really know whether teenagers are doing worse or better than other groups.

There is only a small indication that they are perhaps more troubled than they used to be. When adults reminisce about their own experiences and problems, it provides a window into how these issues have changed. There is some context to the problem. There are just a few instances in which adults look back upon their own experiences and in these cases it is to show that teenagers have it worse than they did. But these issues are narrow—focused just on mental health (teen stress) and obesity. These are important issues however they are just a small portion of the problems with which teenagers must deal.

Teen problems, whether or not they are growing worse, nonetheless exist, and there is little that can be done to fix them on a wide scale. Teen problems are presented in broad strokes—the results of surveys and studies that show hundreds or thousands of teenagers suffer from the same problem. Some issues, like teen sexuality, Internet use, and drug use, have been studied a number of times indicating that such behaviors are believed to be problematic. There would be no reason to do a study, or to include information about a survey or study, if it were not believed that there was something important to be told.

While the problems are shown to be wide-spread, the means to solve these problems are rather narrow. The pointers, advice, and tips for solving such problems, from teen sexuality to Internet use to drug use, is always geared toward parents alone. The advice is not geared toward teenagers and not toward the general public. Parents are told what they should do or look for and what information they need. What this means is that teenagers' problems are the sole domain of parents who must step in to fix something that is already wrong or to curb a risky or dangerous behavior that is already happening. Despite teenagers' problems being studied and well understood by researchers, health-care workers, and others who bring these problems to the public's knowledge, only those with a direct connection to the problem are responsible for taking

steps to fix it. Experts provide parents with both the knowledge that a problem exists, and the pointers to help their child, but in the end, no one but the parents are charged with solving the problem.

And this advice is almost always reactionary. The advice parents receive is to help them handle a problem once they see it in their own child. It is not advice that will help them to keep the problematic behavior from forming in the first place. Teenagers get into trouble and their parents come to their aid to bail them out, rather than their parents guiding them in how to avoid the trouble in the first place.

In addition to solving the problem once it comes up the solution for teen problems is not attacking the problem as a whole but instead treating one's individual child. There is no means by which teen problems can be alleviated on a large scale. Solving some of these big problems requires taking small steps to slowly chip away at the problem teen by teen.

Teenagers are therefore left vulnerable to the problem situations that impact them. It is solely their parents who are given the responsibility to try to fix the problems in their lives. The public as a whole is not responsible for helping to alleviate teenagers' problems. This help from parents is designed to come after the fact, once teenagers have already exhibited problematic behaviors or once they are suffering from troublesome conditions. In addition, there is little evidence of the trajectory of teen problems—whether things are worse or better for them compared to years past. Without this comparative information, it is uncertain whether or not the help that is given by parents is actually working. If we do not know whether or not teenagers are becoming more troubled, how can we know if the advice we are providing to lessen those troubles is the right kind of advice?

The fact that teen problems cannot be handled on a large scale also leaves teenagers vulnerable. It obscures the need for wide-spread programs or initiatives that can begin to alleviate the problem. If problems like teen sleeplessness, teen pregnancy, or drug use are to be handled by parents working with their own child, then it would not make sense for there to be broad-based programs in place. Society gets a pass in a sense, because adults do not need to look any further than their own child or children when it comes to fixing the things that are wrong in teenagers' lives.

CHAPTER 7

COMPARISONS OF MEDIA SOURCES

The differences in representations found in network news, adult-generated media for teenagers, and teen-produced Internet webzines underscore the importance of studying teen media representations in a comparative manner. Foucault (1977) suggests that at certain times certain people have the power to create the discourse. We are at a stage in which the news environment is changing and the news discourse therefore has a more diverse sampling of “creators”. It is not just traditional, adult journalists reporting for mainstream media, but instead teenagers who are using Internet sites, webzines, blogs, and other new media sources to write stories and post them for the world to see. And that has implications for the manner in which teenagers are represented in an ever-expanding news space. This chapter will examine those differences in representation as they are developed from the issues, patterns, and themes that emerge in each of the three media sources.

There is a big difference in just how important teenagers are when it comes to news in each media context. Teenagers are a very important subject in the news sources that they create but things are much different in adult-generated news media. The breakdown of teenager-related stories in each of the three media sources is listed in Table 7.1. All of the 80 teen webzine stories published during October and November 2007 were teenager-related. Of the more than 1,000 network news stories covered during that same time, just 51 were teenager-related. That is just slightly more than 3%, and this percentage may be even smaller, given that this story count includes just those stories that would have run on evening news programs on each of the network

stations. There would also be dozens of stories that would run on morning news and magazine-style programs on each of the networks.

It is not surprising that teenagers would not be that important in network news, given that they are not the intended audience. The target audience for network news is adults 25-49 years of age however the actual audience for network news stations is older than this. In 2004 56% of those who regularly watched nightly network news were age 65 and older (Pew, 2004). It is therefore not economically profitable for stations to focus on teenagers because these are not the people whom are expected to be tuning in. Teenagers are also not experts, and journalists often look to experts in order to appear objective (Bird & Dardenne, 1988). Teenagers also lack the habitual access to journalists (Moloch & Lester, 1974) that would help their stories to get told.

When it comes to adult-generated media for teenagers, 82 of the approximately 200 stories (about 33%) on adult-generated media for teenagers were teenager-related. While it may seem surprising at first that just one in three stories on adult-generated media for teens were about teenagers, on second glance this might seem to be about average. When an adult watches the news, it is not likely that all of the stories will be about them. The stories should be important for an adult audience, but given the diversity of people nationwide and different people's access to journalists it is quite probable that a number of stories will be about some other group than that of the individual audience member. The stories in adult-generated media for teenagers that were not specifically about teenagers dealt with issues that were thought to be of interest to them, namely world events and election coverage. Of course, it could be argued that it is not necessarily what teenagers are interested in, but instead what adults think that they are interested in that makes it into these news sources.

Table 7.1 How Important Are Teenagers?

| Media Source | # of Teen-related Stories | # of Total Stories | Percentage of “Teen-related” News |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Network News | 51 | >1,000 | 3.2% |
| Adult-generated News for Teens | 82 | 200 | 33% |
| Teen-produced Internet Webzines | 80 | 80 | 100% |

It is also not surprising that teen-produced webzine stories were all about teenagers, given that teenagers are creating the stories for a teen audience. In addition to having the largest percentage of teen stories, the webzines also cast the widest net in terms of what counted as news about teenagers. They covered the largest number of teen-related issues. There were 13 issues included in the teen webzine stories in this sample as well as five stories that were categorized as miscellaneous because they did not fit into a specific category for comparison. Adult-generated media for teenagers covered 10 issues and had four miscellaneous stories. Network news offered the least amount of variety in terms of teenager-related issues covered. There were just eight issues included in network news. Network news also had the fewest number of miscellaneous stories—just two. These two trends involving teen-related stories illustrate the fact that teenagers become increasingly more important as news subjects as the news sources become more teen-involved. Adult-generated media for teenagers is more teen-involved than is network news, because the former is created for teenagers, rather than for adults. Teen webzines are more teen

involved than are adult-generated media for teenagers because the webzines are created by teenagers, rather than by adults. With this increase in “involvement” teenagers are covered more frequently and more broadly. A list of these teen-related issues and their prevalence in each of the three media sources is included in Table 7.2. A list of miscellaneous stories by media source is included in Table 7.3 on the following page.

Table 7.2 Teen-related Stories Compared by Media Source

| Issue | Network News | % | Adult-generated Media for teens | % | Teen webzines | % | Total Stories | Total % of All Stories |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|-------------|--|-------------|----------------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Acceptance | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 1.8 | 4 | 1.8% |
| Career Preparation | 3 | 1.4 | 7 | 3.3 | 4 | 1.8 | 14 | 6.5% |
| Community Service | 0 | 0 | 9 | 4.2 | 4 | 1.8 | 13 | 6.1% |
| Education | 1 | .47 | 19 | 8.9 | 7 | 3.3 | 27 | 12.7% |
| Fashion | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1.4 | 3 | 1.4% |
| Foster Care | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | .94 | 2 | .94% |
| Health | 13 | 6.1 | 10 | 4.7 | 2 | .94 | 25 | 11.7% |
| Hobbies | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 5.2 | 11 | 5.1% |
| Individual Spotlight | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 14 | 6.6 | 14 | 6.5% |
| Internet Use | 9 | 4.2 | 6 | 2.8 | 0 | 0 | 15 | 7% |
| Media | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 2.8 | 6 | 2.8% |
| Relationships | 0 | 0 | 2 | .94 | 8 | 3.7 | 10 | 4.7% |
| Sex | 7 | 3.3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 3.3% |
| Substance Abuse | 3 | 1.4 | 5 | 2.3 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 3.7% |
| Sports | 1 | .47 | 8 | 3.7 | 2 | .94 | 11 | 5.2% |
| Teen Achievement | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 3.3 | 7 | 3.3% |
| Teen Behavior | 0 | 0 | 1 | .47 | 0 | 0 | 1 | .47% |
| Troubled Teenagers | 12 | 5.6 | 12 | 5.6 | 0 | 0 | 24 | 11.2% |
| Miscellaneous | 2 | .94 | 4 | 1.8 | 8 | 3.7 | 14 | 6.5% |
| TOTAL | 51 | 23.9 | 82 | 38.7 | 80 | 38.2 | 213 | 100% |

Table 7.3: Miscellaneous Issues by Media Type

| Source | Total Miscellaneous Stories | Stories Topics |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| Network News | 2 | Teen brain development The influence of <i>Gossip Girl</i> books |
| Adult-generated Media for teens | 4 | Absurd New Mexico laws Presidential hopefuls Your Turn: Do you support the death penalty? Miley Cyrus tickets scalped |
| Teen-produced Internet Webzines | 5 | Disliking dogs Homemade gifts LA Youth essay contest Men whistling and teen's self esteem Question of the week |

Education was the most prevalent teen-related topic covered in the media sources in this study. Of the 213 teenager-related stories, 27 (13%) involved education however the distribution of education stories in the three media sources differed greatly. Most of the education stories were in adult-generated media for teenagers, with just one network news story devoted to this issue. Health and troubled teenagers were also prevalent topics accounting for 11.7% and 11.2% of the total number of teen-related stories. Coverage of these issues came almost entirely from network news and adult-generated media for teenagers. Health stories in teen webzines accounted for just 1% of the total number of health stories. Coverage of troubled teenagers was evenly distributed between network news and adult-generated media for teenagers, with no troubled teenager stories in teen webzines. Teen behavior and foster care were the two least

prevalent topics accounting for .47% and .94% of the total number of teenager-related stories in the sample.

The most prominent differences in terms of teen “news” occurred between the teen-produced Internet webzines and the adult-generated media sources. Acceptance, fashion, media, foster care, and hobbies were issues covered in teen webzines but not in adult-generated media for teenagers or network news. Adult-generated media for teenagers and network news also did not include any mini biographical stories like the individual spotlight and teen achievement stories that were included in the teen webzines. These biographical stories were about an individual’s accomplishments, community involvement, family background, or their likes and dislikes. Conversely, teen webzines did not include stories about Internet use, substance abuse, and troubled teenagers, all of which were covered in network news, and in Channel One, and CNN Student News. Sex was included as a story issue only in network news, and teen behavior was only covered in adult-generated media for teenagers.

When issues were handled in two or more media sources, as was the case with regard to education, health, substance abuse, troubled teenagers, relationships, Internet use, community service, and career preparation, they were often handled in different ways. For example, adult-generated media for teenagers covered a broader range of education issues than did either teen webzines or network news. Network news only covered one teen education issue—student learning process--because there was just one network news education story that involved teens. Adult-generated media sources for teenagers and teen webzines both included stories about the learning process as well as stories dealing with school policies and post-high school issues. Adult-generated media for teenagers also included four stories about school events. These were one-time happenings including an anti-war protest that led to student suspensions, and a story

about a death penalty debate at a New York City high school. School events stories were not included in teen webzines.

Both adult-generated media for teenagers and teen webzines covered post high school education issues, but they did so in different manners. Teen webzine had just one such story, and it involved one teenager's uncertainty about her future and what was ahead for her after high school. Adult-generated media sources for teenagers stories about post-high school issues were about the SAT's, college acceptance, and high school graduation rates. These stories are less about uncertainty and concerns regarding college and the future, and more about preparing for it. In addition, when it came to student learning and curriculum, teen webzine education stories focused largely on individual teenagers' learning processes whereas stories in adult-generated media sources for teenagers centered on state-wide policies and studies associated with teenagers' education.

Career preparation stories were also handled differently among the three media sources. This was a "bigger" issue in adult-generated media sources for teenagers than it was in either of the other sources, with about double the number of stories on this topic in adult-generated media sources for teenagers compared to the teen webzines and network news. The career preparation stories in teen webzines focused on individual teenagers' experiences rather than large, organized programs, as was the case in most of the stories on adult-generated media sources for teenagers and network news. The career preparation stories included in adult-generated media sources for teenagers and teen webzines highlighted the positive aspects of teenagers' job preparation. There were programs that could teach them about law and Homeland Security, and internships that could expose them to journalistic and medical careers. Of the three career preparation stories covered on network news two were negative. In the NBC story "Kids

Training Hard to be Professional Athletes” teenagers were described as being “robbed” of their childhood by difficult training. The story “Paparazzi Getting Younger and Younger” on ABC highlighted the risk of teenagers being trampled in the course of taking celebrity photographs.

Health and sports were other issues where there were marked differences among network news, adult-generated news for teenagers, and teen-produced webzines. Physical health is largely the focus in teen health stories on adult-generated media sources for teenagers, while network news and teen webzines address both physical and mental health about equally. And the physical health issues are different. Adult-generated media sources for teenagers include stories about MRSA “superbug” infections and deadly bacteria in warm lake water, while network news covers stories about obesity and lack of sleep, and one story about diabetes. Teen health is a much more prevalent issue in adult-generated media sources for teenagers and network news than it is in teen webzines. In network news, 13 out of the 51 stories are about health. Adult-generated media sources for teenagers include 10 health stories, while just two teen health stories are covered in teen webzines; a story about a girl battling Lupus and the NYC story “Someone to Talk To”, about teenagers’ involvement in a rally to raise awareness for the need for better mental health services in public schools.

Sports stories also differed in terms of both prevalence and focus among the three media sources. There were eight sports stories included in adult-generated media sources for teenagers, compared to one network news story and two teen webzine stories. One of the biggest differences in the stories was whether teenagers were written about as spectators or participants in sports activities. The sports stories on teen webzines did not include teenagers actually playing sports. There were two stories, one about a teenager’s love of televised wrestling, and the other about the differences between professional basketball and street basketball. Adult-generated

media sources for teenagers, and network news included stories about teenagers playing sports. The one sports story in network news was about alleviating the dangers of sports—new headgear to prevent concussions in girl soccer players—while adult-generated media sources for teenagers included stories about injuries and achievements, as well as a story about the link between sports and academic performance, and two stories about a female soccer player benched for refusing to remove a Muslim headscarf.

Among the remaining issues covered in both adult-generated news for teens and network news--troubled teens, substance abuse, and Internet use—troubled teenagers showed the most variation. Both media sources included the same number of stories (12 stories), but these stories represented different problems. In adult-generated media sources for teenagers, troubled teenager stories involved stories about crime and violence, and about teenagers as victims of accidents and disasters. Network news troubled teen stories included those stories about crime and violence, as well as stories about teen homelessness and about dangerous behaviors such as stealing and distracted driving. While both news sources included stories about crime and violence, their focuses were different. Adult-generated media sources for teenagers included stories about school-related crime: one story about a shooting at an Ohio alternative school, and several “Your Turn” stories in which teenagers were asked to email responses to the question, “What is your school doing to keep you safe?” There were no school-related crime stories on network news. Both sources included stories about a shooting rampage in Wisconsin that killed three teenagers, as well as stories about investigations into teen boot camps designed to correct problematic teen behaviors.

Teen Internet use and substance abuse were covered more broadly on network news than on adult-generated media sources for teenagers. Internet use stories on adult-generated media

sources for teenagers were almost entirely about the MySpace Hoax involving a Missouri teen who killed herself after being rejected online by a boy who did not exist. There was just one story that had to do with general Internet danger, and it was a short story about a poll on cyber-harassment among ninth-graders. Network news ran a larger number of Internet-related stories, and they extended beyond just the MySpace Hoax to include stories about cyber-bullying, the dangers in posting personal information online, and an Internet-based plot for a school shooting.

Although adult-generated media sources for teenagers actually included more substance abuse stories than did network news, these stories focused almost entirely on teen smoking. There was one story about substance abuse, related to efforts to keep teen athletes from using drugs in light of Marion Jones losing her Olympic medals.

When issues overlap between network news and one or both of the other media sources, they are often covered in a more negative manner in network news than in either of the other media sources, underscoring the idea that the level of teen involvement in a news source influences what is considered news about teenagers. When it comes to health, network news stories include the mental health issues of stress, low self esteem, and depression. These problems may underpin physical health problems, such as obesity. The only problematic mental health issue covered in adult-generated media sources for teenagers is about a high school senior suffering from an eating disorder. This is a problem that is limited to just one person, as opposed to the problems discussed on network news that are wide-spread and impact possibly thousands of teenagers. The one mental health teen webzine story is about teenagers rallying for better mental health services. This is not a problem as much as it is an effort to improve care in the event of a problem. Teen mental health issues are therefore more widespread and prominent in network news than in teen webzines and adult-generated news for teenagers.

The physical health problems written about in network news are also more negative than those in either adult-generated media sources for teenagers or teen webzines. Teenagers' physical health problems in adult-generated media sources for teenagers are largely MRSA infections and disease. Of the ten health stories in adult-generated media sources for teenagers, five deal with these superbug infections and one with a potentially deadly amoeba in warm lake water. Teen sleeplessness is addressed, but in the context of just one story. While potentially dangerous, the risks from "super-bug" infections and lake-borne bacteria are described as being easily contained and managed. The physical health issues written about in teen webzines are also contained to one teenager and her personal battle with Lupus. The health problems impacting teens on network news are those that are more systemic—obesity and teen lack of sleep—and that stem from other factors in teenagers' lives that may be more difficult to manage and to fix. MRSA infections can be prevented and treated with simple steps, while obesity and sleeplessness may be an outgrowth of other issues that do not have such easy fixes. Sleeplessness is caused by teenagers not going to bed early enough but this may also be an outgrowth of their high school schedules or their amount of homework, or a result of their bodies changing with adolescence. Teen obesity may be linked to self esteem issues, which are more difficult to correct and handle.

Both network news and adult-generated media sources for teenagers included stories about troubled teenagers, but in network news, teenagers had more "troubles". Both sources included stories about violence and crime, but network news teen problems extended to the things that teenagers do to themselves—like stealing, playing dangerous games involving drugs and alcohol, or text-messaging while driving. Network news stories also included those about teen homelessness. Adult-generated media sources for teenagers included two stories about teen

problems not related to crime—a bear attack, and a teen who lost her home in the California wildfires. These troubles were limited to one event, whereas teen homelessness is a chronic problem impacting thousands of young men and women. These troubles were also things that were out of teenagers’ control, while stealing and distracted driving are behaviors that teenagers can control. Network news depicts teenagers as more troubled or profoundly problem-ridden than do adult-generated media sources for teenagers.

In addition to differences in teen troubles between the two sources, the issue of troublesome teenagers was also more prominent in network news. There were the same number of troubled teen stories in both media types, but network news had fewer teen-related stories overall. This means that troublesome teenager stories accounted for a larger percentage of the stories covered on network news than on adult-generated media for teenagers, making it a “bigger” issue in those media texts. The media picture of teenagers is more troubled in network news than in adult-generated media sources for teenagers.

Network news stories about teen Internet use are also more negative than those in adult-generated media sources for teenagers. All but one Internet use story in adult-generated media sources for teenagers were about the MySpace Hoax. The dangers of online communication were limited to a specific incident involving one teenager rather than a risk to teenagers in general. Network news stories included MySpace Hoax stories as well as stories about general Internet dangers. The risks of Internet use for teenagers were therefore a wide-spread danger to teenagers. There was one Channel One story about cyber-bullying but it was a 15 second reader. Network news Internet danger stories were full-length packages often included along with on-set interviews. There were also more negative Internet use stories in network news than on adult-generated media sources for teenagers.

When story issues overlap between teen webzines and one or both of the other media sources, teen webzine stories are focused on the personal and individual. One of the most pronounced ways that this happens is through the use of first person. Teen webzine stories are always in the first person, always about one person's experiences. In fact, about one-quarter of the teen webzine stories are like mini-biographies, highlighting one person's achievements, background, goals, ambitions, etc. Relationship stories in teen webzines focus on individual teenagers' relationships, while relationship stories in adult-generated media for teenagers focus on teenagers' relationships in general. Internship and career preparation webzine stories are also focused on individuals' experiences rather than on larger, organized programs for teenagers as a group. Webzine education stories also deal with one teenager's learning experiences or social experiences in school, whereas adult-generated media sources for teens included stories that focused on teenagers as a group in school and community programs. The individual is the focus of teen webzine stories, versus teenagers as a group, which is the case in adult-generated media geared toward teenagers.

Storytelling Patterns

In addition to covering the largest number of issues, teen webzines also employed the greatest variety in terms of how they actually told their stories. Teenagers utilized more variety in the processes that they used to write their stories. There were nine patterns in teen webzines compared to six in adult-generated media for teenagers and five patterns in network news. The teen webzine patterns were restrictive and pathological language, repetition and sameness, personal lessons, opportunities to learn, expert interviews, use of past and present tenses, use of first, second and third person construction, indirect giving or anthropomorphism, and direct giving. The adult-generated news for teenagers patterns were opportunities to learn, life lessons,

call and response storytelling, language of influence, research and experimental findings, and language of discovery. The five patterns in network news were lessons from experts, opportunities to learn, research and experimental findings, reminiscent language and storytelling, and first person construction. The storytelling patterns in each media source are listed in Table 7.4. Patterns present in more than one media source are in italics.

Table 7.4 Storytelling Patterns by Media Source

| Teen-produced Webzines | Adult-generated News for Teenagers | Network News |
|--|---|---|
| <i>Restrictive & pathological language</i> | <i>Research & experimental findings</i> | <i>Research & experimental findings</i> |
| <i>Personal lessons</i> | <i>Life lessons</i> | 1 st person construction |
| <i>Opportunities to learn</i> | <i>Opportunities to learn</i> | <i>Opportunities to learn</i> |
| <i>Expert lessons</i> | Language of influence | <i>Expert lessons</i> |
| Past & present tense shifts | Call & response storytelling | Reminiscent language/storytelling |
| 1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd person | Language of Discovery | |
| Indirect giving | | |
| Direct giving | | |
| Repetition & sameness | | |
| 9 patterns | 6 patterns | 5 patterns |

The only overlap in patterns between and among media sources involved learning-related patterns, and the pattern of research and experimental findings. Journalists from all three media sources used storytelling patterns that involved some type of learning or lesson, but they differed in terms of who was supposed to learn, and what it was that they were to take away from these lessons. Adult-generated media sources for teenagers and teen webzines focused on teenagers learning, while in network news, lessons were geared toward parents to help their children.

All three media sources utilized opportunities to learn, but their foci were different. Network news opportunities to learn focused solely on protecting teenagers from dangers that they already face, while opportunities to learn in adult-generated media sources for teenagers involved teenagers protecting themselves from potential dangers to their health and safety. By learning about a risk or problem, teenagers could prevent the problem from happening in the first place. Network news opportunities to learn assumed that the problem already existed, and adults were learning to respond to it. The problems or dangers that involved teenagers also differed among the three media sources. The dangers about which parents could learn in network news included alcohol and drug abuse, use of the Internet, and teen stress. In adult-generated media sources for teenagers, teen problems involved protection from sickness, injury, and abuse of one's rights. These were all problems that influenced the individual directly, while in teen webzines, the problems which teenagers had an "opportunity to learn" about were community problems, such as helping stray animals or stopping harassment. While the problems in adult-generated media focused on those impacting the individual, in teen webzines they were problems that extended beyond the individual him or herself to what one could do to fix a larger problem.

Opportunities to learn in media for teenagers—adult-generated media sources for teenagers and teen webzines—were not limited to just teens and their problems. The

opportunities to learn in both of these sources also focused on teen self improvement through such activities as volunteering, learning about a career, or taking part in an internship program. These media sources framed stories not just as the means to learn about a problem, but as a way to learn something that could help make one a better person.

Another learning-related pattern that differed among the media sources involved “lessons”. Both adult-generated media sources for teenagers and teen Internet webzines included stories that were framed as lessons in which an experience could teach teenagers something that could help them to grow or change in some way. There were no such “lessons” in network news, no sense of teenagers growing or learning through their experiences. The “lessons” in teen webzine stories were personal lessons while in adult-generated media sources for teenagers, lessons were life lessons. Personal lessons were things that teenagers figured out or realized about themselves that allowed them to grow or progress in some way, including finding out that they could have an influence over someone else’s life in order to help them. Personal lessons therefore involved intrapersonal growth. Life lessons are things that can help teenagers to become better people, such as learning the importance of one’s vote in an election. Both types of lessons imply a sense of growth or learning, although they differ in how this learning manifests itself, and whether it entails intrapersonal growth or the acquisition of skills and understanding that can benefit someone later on in his or her life.

The final learning-related pattern involved “expert interviews”. These interviews involved the dissemination of information from someone involved with or close to an issue or idea that could help address that issue. They were seen in both webzines and network news. The expert interviews in network news were largely doctors and psychologists as well as other parents who could help parents to deal with problems facing teenagers. The experts in teen

webzines included peer educators, a chef, a teacher, and a professional wrestler, and they were not just focused on problem solving. Some of these “experts” spoke about their own careers, and about how teenagers could become involved in helping others. Many of the “experts” interviewed in teen webzines were experts on themselves—their likes, dislikes, goals, and educational background. Such interviews teach teenagers about other people. There was only a very slight emphasis on teen problems in the expert interviews that were a part of teen webzine stories, while problem solving was a main focus of experts interviewed in network news.

There were also differences among the three media sources in terms of the relative importance of each of these learning-related patterns. In both teen webzines and network news, opportunities to learn were less prevalent than were other learning-related patterns. Expert interviews addressing teenagers’ problems accounted for most of the learning in network news. In teen webzines, much of the learning came from personal lessons as well as from interviews that focused on individuals such as students or teachers. It was only in adult-generated media sources for teenagers that there was a roughly equal amount of opportunities to learn and life lessons. The learning in these adult-generated media sources for teenagers was therefore coming equally through both of these patterns, while opportunities to learn were much less of a focus in network news and teen webzines.

The only other pattern that was seen in more than one media source was research and experimental findings. Teen webzines did not reference polls, studies, or surveys related to teen issues. Adult-generated media for teenagers and network news included such a storytelling pattern with both similarities and differences in the issues that were addressed in this manner. Both media sources included research and experimental findings dealing with health, substance abuse, and Internet use. Adult-generated media sources for teenagers also included stories about

education and sports while network news included research and experimental findings related to sex and troublesome behaviors. Teenagers' troublesome behaviors were the most studied teen topic in network news, while this issue was not addressed as heavily in adult-generated media sources for teenagers. Even those issues that were addressed in both media sources—health, Internet, and substance abuse—were handled differently. Substance abuse polls and surveys in adult-generated media for teenagers were almost entirely about smoking. There was just one instance in which a poll was cited involving teenagers' use of steroids while in network news, research and experimental findings related to substance abuse were always about drugs, both prescription and over-the-counter drugs.

Teen webzines showed the greatest variety of patterns followed by adult-generated news for teenagers. This is another way in which teenagers are casting a wider net when it comes to news about themselves. They are less limited in how they are able to tell their stories. They used the largest number of storytelling patterns to tell their stories while network news stories employed the fewest number of storytelling patterns. There was overlap among the three media sources, and it dealt largely with patterns related to education. All three media sources included stories framed as opportunities to learn. In network news, these opportunities to learn were limited to teenagers and their problems, while in adult-generated news for teenagers and teen webzines the opportunities to learn also involved self improvement. Adult-generated media for teenagers and teen webzines both included stories about lessons, but the lessons in teen webzine stories were personal lessons while those in adult-generated media for teenagers were life lessons. Both network news and teen webzines included expert interviews, however in network news these experts were focused on problem solving while in teen webzines the experts focused on issues including career training, community service and spotlighting individual achievements.

Teen-related Themes

Because they utilized more variety in the ways in which they told their stories, teen Internet webzine stories also had more diversity in the themes that emerged in their stories. There were four themes in teen webzine stories compared to three themes in adult-generated media for teenagers and three themes in network news. The themes in each media source are listed in table 7. 5. Themes that were present in more than one media source appear in italics.

Table 7.5: Themes by Media Source

| Teen Webzines | Adult-generated Media for Teens | Network News |
|---|---|--|
| <i>Adolescence as a time of learning & growth</i> | <i>Adolescence as a time of learning & growth</i> | <i>Parental learning and parental growth</i> |
| Teenagers' identity is "in flux" | <i>Teens investigated by adults</i> | <i>Teens investigated by adults</i> |
| Teens "get things" from adults | Adults influence teens' lives | Teens' and adults' lives are interconnected |
| Teenagers are trapped | | |
| 4 Themes | 3 Themes | 3 Themes |

Of the ten themes that were developed in the three media sources, there were only two themes that emerged in more than one media type; the theme of adolescence as a time of learning, which was in all three media sources, and the theme of teenagers as under investigation by adults, which was seen in adult-generated media for teenagers and network news. Other themes included teenagers as trapped (webzines), teen identities "in flux" (webzines), teenagers

“get things” from adults (webzines), adults as intervening in teenagers’ lives (adult-generated media for teenagers), and teens’ lives as interconnected with those of adults (network news).

The theme of adolescence as a time of growth and learning is the only theme that was seen in all three media sources, but it developed differently as a “theme” among network news, adult-generated news for teenagers, and teen-produced Internet webzines. One of the main differences is who is doing the learning. In network news, it is parents who are learning and this learning involves strictly identifying and addressing teen problems. In adult-generated news for teenagers and teen-produced Internet webzines, it is teenagers who are doing the learning, and this learning is not limited to just problem solving.

In adult-generated media for teenagers, the theme of adolescence as a time of learning and growth involves a two-fold growth process. Adolescents learn things that can help them right now, such as protecting ones rights and staying safe, as well as life lessons that can help them throughout their lives, such as the importance of working for what you want. Adolescence is therefore a time in which teenagers can acquire the skills, information, and know-how they need to better themselves. In teen webzines, adolescence is a time of self realization in which one learns about their self, acquires new understanding and skills, and learns about others. Learning is therefore multi-faceted, involving intrapersonal or internal learning, as well as external learning about others, and about careers and jobs.

In teen webzines, there is however a focus on individual learning and growth—on what one person takes away from a given experience. There is also a focus on learning about an individual rather than about a wide-spread issue. The opportunities to learn, which involve acquisition of information about issues such as harassment and AIDS are much fewer in number than are the personal lesson stories. The individual spotlight stories and interviews, in which

learning is centered on finding out about one particular person, far outnumber the expert interviews in which learning is focused on a larger, broader problem. The learning of adolescence is therefore individualized or personal, centered not on teenagers learning about wide-spread issues or broad-based skills and ideas, but on learning about oneself. In adult-generated media for teenagers, there is not a focus on me and what I am getting out of an experience, but instead what one person's experience can teach other teenagers to help them.

Another theme, of teenagers as under investigation by adults, is seen in both adult-generated media for teenagers and network news. This theme differs with regard to the extent and scope of adult investigation. In adult-generated media for teenagers, adults are learning about teenagers on two levels; as a group as well as individuals. The investigation involves teen problems as well as the non-problematic actions and behaviors of individuals or small groups of teenagers. In network news, there is no individual investigation. Investigation by adults focuses entirely on teenagers as a big group and on teenagers' problems.

Teen Representations

News sources geared toward teenagers also had more variety in teen representations. There were three teen representations in teen-produced webzines and in adult-generated news for teenagers, and one representation of teenagers in network news. The representations of teenagers in teen webzines are that teenagers face problems, that teenagers are self absorbed when it comes to fixing problems, and that teenagers see their identities as a matter of convenience. The representations of teenagers in adult-generated media for teenagers are that teenagers have problems, that teenagers have some ability to fix the things that are wrong in their lives, and that teenagers can improve their lives if adults help them. The representation of teenagers in network

news is that teenagers have problems that cannot be completely fixed. These representations are outlined in Table 7.6. Representations present in more than one media source appear in italics.

Table 7.6: Representations by Media Source

| Teen Webzines | Adult-generated News for Teens | Network News |
|--|---|--|
| <i>Teenagers face problems in their lives</i> | <i>Teenagers face problems in their lives</i> | <i>Teens' problems can't be completely fixed</i> |
| <i>Teenagers are self absorbed in solving problems</i> | <i>Teenagers have limited ability to fix their problems</i> | |
| Teen Identity is a matter of convenience | Teens can improve their lives with adult help | |

One of the overwhelming representations that are seen in all three media sources is that teenagers do have problems. The differences in this problematic representation of teenagers in each of the media sources will be addressed first, and then other differences in representation will be discussed along with what they mean for an over-arching representation of the teen subject.

Teenagers Have Problems

The issues that are addressed in teen-related stories in all three media types show that teenagers have problems but there are differences in these problems. In adult-generated media sources for teenagers and network news, teenagers' problems involve crime and violence, substance abuse, injury, and illness. Network news stories also indicate that teenagers are unhealthy both physically and psychologically and that they engage in risky behaviors such as

sexual activity and distracted driving. Adult-generated media sources for teenagers indicate that teenagers face academic problems involving their school performance, that they have uncertain futures, and that they have various restrictions on their behaviors both in school and in their communities.

In adult-generated media sources for teenagers, teenagers' problems are largely external, stemming not from teenagers' own feelings and responses, but from their actions and interactions in the world around them. Although the problems are slightly different between adult-generated media for teenagers and network news, all of these teen problems are external problems that teenagers face from their interactions with other people.

In teen webzines, there is no discussion of crime and violence, substance abuse, or risky teen behaviors. Teen problems involve relationships, and pressure to act or dress in certain manners. They also have problems related to getting the support and guidance they need from teachers, and they experience a problematic world around them, be it the lack of a stable family unit, disability in their family, or exposure to those who suffer from disease and illness. The problems that teenagers face in the context of teen webzines are largely intrapersonal problems, stemming from teenagers' own feelings. It is because teenagers lack feelings of self worth or of self control that they have troubled relationships and suffer from peer pressure they say. It is because of a lack of self confidence or control that their exposure to problems in the world around them—HIV, disabilities, and injuries in their families to name a few—become personal problems for teenagers who witness them. The source of teen problems is therefore different between both teen-generated media and adult-generated media.

There are also differences among the three media sources in terms of teenagers' responsibilities for their own problems. In teen webzines teen problems are largely intrapersonal,

and thus are a result of teenagers' own doing. Teenagers are the ones who are responsible for their own feelings of lack of self control, self confidence, and self worth. No one is making them feel this way—they are doing it on their own. Teenagers are also responsible for the problems they have related to peer pressure and pressures to conform to certain standards since they are the ones who are both determining the standards and determining the “punishments” for non-adherence. When it comes to the adversity and hardships that they see in the world around them—HIV, disabilities, sickness—it is not really these big problems that are of issue to the teenagers as much as it is their responses to these problems and their feelings of inadequacy over not being able to help out. While they are not responsible for the adversity and hardships, teenagers are responsible for their own responses and reactions to such hardships. The problems over which they have little control are written about less frequently than are those problems that involve their personal feelings and concerns. Because teenagers have control over their intrapersonal problems, and because these stories are more often covered, there is an overall representation of teenagers as troubled by things that they create for themselves.

Network news representations of teenagers show teenagers as largely responsible for the problems that affect them. Much of the problems that teenagers face in the context of network news involve risky behaviors including substance abuse, sexual activity, and violence. The physical health problems that they face, namely obesity and lack of sleep, are not necessarily teenagers' doing. The stories, however, frame these problems as stemming from teenagers' lifestyle choices such as their lack of exercise and their decisions to stay up late using electronics. In this way, these health problems become teen-initiated problems. Their mental health problems are also self motivated in that they involve feelings of stress and self esteem, which are emotions over which teenagers have some control. There are problems that teenagers

face that are out of their control but these problems are much fewer in number than are those problems that are teen initiated.

It is only in adult-generated media for teenagers that there is not an overwhelming representation of teenagers as the makers of their own problems. In adult-generated media sources for teenagers, the problems that affect teenagers are about equally distributed between those that are out of teenagers' control and those that they bring on themselves. They are not to blame for "superbug" infections or for wildfires or bear attacks. They are not responsible for the restrictions that are placed on their behaviors and actions both in school and in the community, or for taking away their rights to express themselves. They are also not responsible for being "at-risk" because of belonging to a minority or being poor, nor are they responsible for the fact that they do not get the resources that they may need in their own schools.

Teenagers do have a number of problems that are of their own doing. They are responsible for their use of cigarettes, and therefore for the problems that are associated with such use. They are also responsible for school violence in the sense that teenagers are the ones who are planning the violent attacks that cause their classmates to become victims. Teenagers also make the decision to use the Internet for social networking, so problems that they face through their online activities can be thought of as stemming from teenagers' own actions. Teenagers are therefore not entirely absolved of bringing on their own problems. Rather teen problems in these adult-generated media sources for teenagers are seen as an equal combination of those things that teenagers cause to happen and those conditions that are out of their immediate control.

Teen Problems Can Not Be Entirely Fixed

It is the presence of problems in teenagers' lives that contribute to the other teen representations in each of the three media. One of these representations is that teen problems can not be entirely fixed. Network news stories represent teenagers' problems as not being fixable at the individual level or on a large scale. Parents are the ones who are entirely responsible for dealing with teenagers' problems, and then only reactively. That means that problems are never really solved or fixed as much as they are treated or dealt with as they happen. There is no means of getting at the root of the problem.

Adult-generated news sources for teenagers represent certain problems as being fixable by teenagers through their own actions, but they need adults to guide them. The help is proactive in that it provides advice for preventing a problem from happening in the first place. Other larger societal problems, such as smoking or Internet dangers are discussed without any solutions, indicating that these problems may not be solvable. Overall, the representation of teen problems in adult-generated media for teenagers is that some problems are solvable, others are not, and adult intervention is necessary, though to a lesser extent than is the case in the representations in network news stories.

Teenagers Are Self Absorbed in Solving Their Problems

In teen webzines, teenagers do not need adult intervention to fix their problems however they can only fix a portion of the problems that impact them. They are self absorbed in their problem solving, focusing just on how they can help themselves. Much of the problems about which they write are intrapersonal—lack of self confidence, lack of self control, low self esteem. Their life experiences become the conduit through which they are able to learn how to feel better about themselves. They can fix the problems in their own psyche, and can do so without adults

stepping in to help. They do not focus on fixing the larger, societal problems that are at the root of their intrapersonal problems. They fix these problems for themselves because they are no longer upset about them. The problems are still there. Teenagers have not fixed them as much as they have put them on the back burner because they no longer negatively impact them as individuals. The larger issues that touch teen lives—disease, adversity, intolerance—are addressed largely through how they have impacted the teenager who has written about them. It is the manner in which one deals with a particular problem that becomes the central issue and the means through which it is determined that the problem is fixed. There is little focus on utilizing one's own experiences as a means to champion a bigger problem—to make one's personal experience larger than oneself.

Teen Identity is a Matter of Convenience

Teenagers have an ability to make themselves into what works for them at the time. They change from representing themselves as individuals to representing themselves as members of a group. They change their identity in order to achieve the goal of looking better to others or feeling better about themselves. Teenagers change who they are and how they see themselves in a manner that allows them to both separate themselves from problematic teen behaviors and to minimize their own problems by associating themselves with others who have that same problem. In this latter case, individual teenagers make the things that they do not like about themselves and their behaviors not negative personal qualities, but behaviors and actions that are attributed to all teenagers or to a larger group. The problem is not solved as much as it is fixed for that particular teenager. He or she can dissociate himself or herself from it, making it someone else's problem. Teenagers can also minimize the extent of the problem for them by showing how everyone has this same problem.

Whether a teenager represents himself or herself as an individual, to distinguish oneself, or as a member of a group, to lessen the blow of a negative action or behavior, the choice of which one to be is being consciously made by the teenager. Identity for them becomes a matter of what works well for them now. They are changing who they are as they see fit to accomplish what they wish to accomplish. Their sense of self therefore becomes a matter of convenience.

Teenagers Can Better Themselves With Adult Help

Adult-generated media for teenagers create the only representation of teenagers that does not have to do with their problems. Adult-generated media for teenagers represent teenagers as able to better themselves. They can improve their academic performance and job readiness, and can enrich the community around them by volunteering and expressing their ideas and their opinions. Teenagers need adults in order to better themselves but the representation of teenagers is that such betterment is possible. In the context of adult-generated media for teenagers, teenagers' lives are shown to be in a forward trajectory in that they can make things better for themselves both now and in the future. The other two media sources—teen webzines and network news—do not create this representation of teenagers. Instead, the representations involve dealing with and attempting to handle or overcome the problems that affect teenagers in the many areas of their lives.

Common Representation: Teen Problems Are Too Big to be Wholly Solved

While teen problems are handled differently in each of the media sources, it is this sense of teens as having problems that pervades all the media sources. And there is one common representation related to those problems that is produced in network news, adult-generated media sources for teenagers, and teen webzines; teen problems are too big to be wholly solved.

Big problems must be solved in small steps, with individual teenagers focusing on what they can do to help themselves, and parents focusing on their own children. The problems must be chipped away bit by bit, one teenager at a time rather than by attacking the whole issue at once. Teen problems like smoking, drinking, and stress, do not have wide-spread solutions. The only way to deal with them is on an individual basis, with parents looking out for their own children, or teenagers looking out for themselves. There is no real overall solution to the teen problems that are written about in teen-related stories in the three media, just a chipping away at the problems in small steps both by parents and teenagers themselves. This is also the case in teen webzines, in which teenagers focus on solving their own feelings and dealing with their own reactions to problems, rather than tackling the bigger problem itself. The problem is still there, it just is not affecting “me”, and thus it has been fixed.

CHAPTER 8

DISCUSSION

This overarching representation of teenagers as having problems is not surprising. Foucault suggests that you see the same discourse and ways of thinking about a subject across several texts, what he calls the episteme (Hall, 2003). This commonality underscores the importance of taking a closer look at this representation of teens as having problems, particularly as it relates to the dominant news discourse about teenagers that has been established in the literature.

This dominant news discourse is consonant with other research that has identified three media discourses regarding teenagers. They are the imperiled youth discourse (Gilliam, 2001; Dorfman & Woodruff, 1998), youth in crisis (Mazzarella & Pecora, 1999; Males, 1999), and youth-as- alien discourse (Aubrum & Grady, 2000). The imperiled youth discourse says that the world is a dangerous place and that adolescents are in danger from themselves and from others. Adults therefore need to have better ways to protect young people. The crisis discourse suggests that young people are dangerous, violent, troubled, and worse than they used to be and adults must step in to keep adolescents from being in this state of crisis. The third discourse sees youth as alien. It suggests that because so much of what is covered about teenagers is overly negative or (much less often) extraordinarily positive, normal teen behavior becomes alien or abnormal. Thus the typical teenager is seen as being strange or not normal. The imperiled youth and crisis discourses are a result of the content of news coverage while the youth as alien discourse is a

result of the process of news reception, by which what is not there (images of regular teens that are not good or not bad) leads to a representation that teenagers only exist at the extremes.

These three discourses all suggest that it is normal for teenagers to have problems. This is what counts as knowledge of teenagers. The way to handle teenagers therefore is to try to fix these problems with large initiatives and programs aimed at correcting what is wrong. As Foucault (1977) suggests happens with the formation of a discourse, this knowledge then determines how teenagers are treated and how they see themselves. Teenagers may act on this and believe that they are troubled. When this happens, a teen subject is created that has meaning only in the discourse (Foucault, 1977). The teen subject in the mainstream media has big problems and is in need of rescue by adults.

Challenging the Discourse

These discourses are predicated on three assumptions: that teenagers are naturally troubled by crime, violence, and potential danger; that these problems can be fixed; and that adults are the ones to fix them. The representations of teen problems in this study reinforce elements of the dominant discourse while challenging some of those assumptions.

Teen Webzines

The biggest challenge to this dominant discourse comes from teen webzines. First, they challenge the idea of what constitutes a teen problem in the first place. They write about problems that are not like those usually addressed in the media. In their webzines there is no mention of crime, violence, or dangers to teenagers in either the real world or the virtual world. Rather than problems coming from others or from their own risky or violent actions, teen problems are something that exists largely within teenagers' minds. Problems involve their feelings and emotions, their sense of who they are and their ability to make a difference. They

are personal problems that exist differently for each teenager and that cannot be generalized to the teen population as can problems such as substance abuse, Internet dangers, and teen sexuality. Teenagers are therefore challenging the very essence of what it means to be troubled or affected by problems.

They are not troubled in the sense that adult-generated media suggests they are troubled. The troubles that they experience do not exist in the context of teen-related stories in adult-generated media both in the literature (Gilliam, 2001; Dorfman & Woodruff, 1998) as well as in the media texts in this study. The representation created in teen webzines is that the teen subject is internally troubled. This means something only in the discourse in teen webzines. The representation is very different outside of teen-produced webzines.

It is not just problems that are different but how to handle the teen subject with those problems. Fixing the problem is not a result of someone stepping in to show you the way, but is instead something that comes from within each individual teenager. It is by living through their problems that teenagers realize what they need to do to fix them.

There is no place for adults in this solution. There is little mention of adults as problem solvers. Teenagers are not being taught how to help themselves, as is the case in adult-generated media. Instead, they are the ones who are doing the teaching, for themselves. And they take us through the process of problem solving, as they work through what is bothering them within a larger societal issue, such as racial intolerance or peer pressure. They never address these larger problems, focusing solely on their own responses to them, as if to say, it does not matter whether or not the problem exists, so long as I am okay with it. Fixing my individual discomfort or uncertainty is all that matters. Even if the problem persists, it is solved because I am no longer upset or bothered by it, because I am no longer associated with this problematic behavior.

It is a challenge to the very notion of what it means to “fix” or “solve” teenagers’ problems. The problems do not have to be solved, so long as the teenager fixes his or her own response to that problem. This notion of fixing a problem puts teenagers in complete control of changing their lives. The teen subject is proactive, enabled, while the teen subject in adult-generated media for teens and network news is dependent upon adults or on help coming from someone.

The representations of teenagers in teen webzines are challenging what it is that we know about teenagers. They are not violent, dangerous, or at risk. Instead they are unsure, lack self confidence, and need to make a difference. They do not need adults to fix anything, because much of what is wrong is in their own psyches, making them the only ones who can ever do anything to solve or handle their problems. The teen subject in adult-generated media is very different from that which is created by teenagers themselves.

In their webzines stories, teenagers are also challenging the dominant discourse because they are challenging the very idea that teenagers can ever be known or identified. Their identity is one of convenience—it changes to suit their needs, so they are not who we say they are, but instead are who they choose to be at any given time and in different situations. They are resisting being subjected in the discourse, because they are challenging the very idea of them as subjects. How can we really know someone who does not have a stable identity to know?

Teenagers are also challenging the discourse because they are changing the knowledge from that which is observed and studied second-hand, to that which is experienced first-hand. They bring in personal accounts of their lives, and what is known about teenagers is an inside prospective that gives them more depth and understanding. They challenge the detached way

problems are dealt with—as something happening to someone else. They write about personal experiences in first person, as if to say, “It’s not someone else’s problem. It’s my problem.”

Despite these challenges, they do reinforce elements of the dominant discourse in their webzine stories. Teenagers do make themselves “alien”. The “normal” teenager, who goes to school, spends time with family, and does his or her homework does not truly exist in teen webzines. It is true that teenagers write about themselves doing very average things—dating, going to school, buying clothing, watching television—but these “normal” things are always turned into problems. When they are not writing about problems in their “normal” activities, they are oftentimes highlighting one person’s achievements or successes and as such they represent themselves in either very good or very bad situations. The “normal” teenager—who does not have bad things going on in his or her life, or who is not doing something overly positive or good, does not exist in the teen-generated webzine texts. Teenagers do in fact represent “normal” as alien because it is outside the realm of what is considered typical for teenagers. In this way teenagers are creating representations of themselves that are in accordance with what Aubrum and Grady (2000) suggest happens in the mainstream media.

And teenagers do reinforce the representation of themselves as troubled, albeit it through different types of problems. Much of the knowledge that teenagers create about themselves centers on the problems in their lives. Problems are at the root of all of their representations of themselves. They shift their identities—how they see themselves—around the presence of problems in their lives. It is through solving problems in their own lives that individual teenagers show their own growth and development.

It is as if they have come to accept the representation that has been created about them in the mainstream media, to believe that it is true. It is as if they have been disciplined to believe

that the teen subject is troubled and in need of fixing. The mainstream media creates this subject in need of fixing, and the ability to solve one's problems become what Foucault (1977) would suggest is a normalizing process. Those who are "fixed" are good or normal, and those who remain troubled are bad or abnormal. Teenagers' focus on showing how they have solved whatever was wrong with them, have fixed the problems that affected them and grown by dealing with a problem, shows they are striving toward what is accepted and thought of as "good."

That is in fact what teenagers do in their stories. They change how they see themselves and how others may see them in order to dissociate themselves from problematic behavior or align themselves with others whose actions might minimize their own bad behaviors. They focus on solving their own problems while perhaps ignoring larger social issues so as to be able to show that they are good, that they have gotten over the negative things in their lives. In all of these ways they can be thought to have been normalized as they are striving toward what has been impressed upon them as being normal.

They have perhaps been what Foucault (1977) describes as disciplined to believe that they are either very good or very bad. They do not ever write about themselves as just normal or average. There is always an element of positive or negative in each of the stories that they create. They are either suffering from a problem or getting over a problem in their lives. They are either highlighting their own achievement or someone else's achievement, or talking about how their actions are negative or troublesome. There are few, if any, stories about teenagers just being normal, average or every-day people, just as the youth as alien discourse (Aubrum & Grady, 2000) suggests occurs in the mainstream media.

Adult-generated Media for Teens

Adult-generated media for teenagers also challenge assumptions of the dominant discourse. In these media sources teenagers are represented as troubled by crime and violence, and they do face dangers, as Gilliam (2001) and Dorfman and Woodruff, (1998) suggest happen in mainstream media. In the adult-generated media for teenagers examined in this study, adults have a lessened role in attempting to solve the problems. Adults provide the advice and pointers, but it is up to teenagers to enact it in their own lives. What this means is that solving teenagers' problems is a collaborative effort between teenagers and the adults in their lives. Teenagers bear a good deal of responsibility for helping themselves. Teenagers are able to fix their own problems with adult guidance, rather than adults doing it all for them, as the imperiled youth (Gilliam, 2001; Dorfman & Woodruff, 1998) and youth in crisis discourses (Males, 1999) suggest.

Adults do not solve all of the problems that afflict teenagers. Larger, societal problems are not discussed as having any solutions. There are problems that plague teenagers, such as smoking, substance abuse, and Internet dangers, for which no solutions are given. These problems are presented through the reporting of studies, surveys, and polls as facts about teenagers, without any mention of what can be done to combat them. This lack of advice or pointers for adults or teenagers toward treating or fixing the problem suggests that this is not something that needs solving or that can be solved at all. It is as if these problems are just expected to be there and cannot be avoided or dealt with. It challenges how we think about teen problems and about the resiliency of teenagers because these problems are unable to be assuaged. It also diminishes two-fold adults' role in fixing things for teenagers. Teen problems are not fixable, so adults cannot do anything to help teenagers. When there is a way for

teenagers' problems to be addressed, the solutions also come from teenagers themselves. Adults are still a necessary part of problem solving, just not as much as the dominant discourse (Gilliam, 2001; Males, 1999; Mazzarella & Percora, 2007) indicates.

Adult-generated media for teenagers also challenges the totality of teen problems. Being "troubled" or suffering from problems is not the only thing that defines teenagers. Teenagers are also capable of bettering themselves and bettering the lives of those around them. They can make themselves better students, or can prepare themselves for the workforce later on. They can also contribute to debate and discussion about controversial issues. In all of these ways they are doing things to improve themselves and their communities, with the guidance of adults who enable them to have these opportunities. While teenagers do have problems, that is just one part of being a teenager.

In addition to challenging the totality of teen problems, these media sources also challenge the youth as alien discourse (Aubrum & Grady, 2000). Being troubled is a part of the teen subject created in the discourse in adult-generated media for teenagers, but it is not the only state for teenagers. Teenagers also are involved with good things. They help out in their communities and they enrich others' lives. They are both very good and bad. This is not unexpected given that the youth as alien discourse (Aubrum & Grady, 2000) suggests the good teen/bad teen dichotomy as the only picture given of teenagers in the media. The teen subject in adult-generated media for teenagers is also very average. There are stories about teenagers doing regular, everyday things. Thus, the teen subject is good and bad, but is also "normal".

Network News

Representations of teenagers in network news on the other hand, reinforce the youth as alien discourse that Aubrum and Grady (2000) discuss. In network news it is normal for

teenagers to have problems. There are no stories that deal with teenagers just being teenagers. There is always some type of risk, danger, or problem associated with them. The teenager who goes to school and is not in danger or who is not causing others to be hurt does not exist. Neither does the teenager who uses the Internet and is not stalked or harmed or bullied, nor the teen that is not sick or tired or driving recklessly. The “normal” teenager whose life is not affected by something overly good or overly bad is therefore “abnormal” in the network news discourse.

Network news also reinforces the representation that teens are endangered, and that they face violence and crime. Teenagers are represented as needing adults to fix these problems, just as the imperiled youth (Gilliam, 2001) and youth in crisis discourses (Males, 1999; Mazzarrella & Pecora, 2007) suggest. The challenges to the dominant discourse of the troubled teenager in the network news texts in this study occur in that problems are not really fixable. In network news, teenagers’ problems are not solved as much as the symptoms of these problems are treated. It is like adults are putting a band-aid on the problem. Rather than wide-spread proactive adult initiatives to protect teenagers from impending dangers, (Gilliam, 2001) or to curb their violent tendencies, (Mazzarrella & Pecora, 2007; Males, 1999) the solutions to teen problems in network news are reactive and individual. Parents look for signs of a problem in their own teenagers and then can deal with the problem once it has already taken root. It is as if adults are saying that teenagers’ problems are too big to be attacked all at once, so instead the problems will be handled bit by bit, one teenager at a time, as it appears that a teenager needs this help. It is the equivalent of putting a band-aid on the problem without ever trying to fix the problem in the first place. Interestingly, while teens are always portrayed as facing problems, the solutions are all individual rather than being focused on solving the wider social problems.

The network news representations found in this study provide a different way of looking at adults' role in helping teenagers, a difference that may also be considered as a new way of thinking about the ability to make teenagers free of their problems. If adults are the ones to fix the problems, and if they cannot do so, then the problems will remain, if not for every teenager at least for a number of them. This approach would suggest that problems are not necessarily fixable at all, that teenagers will remain troubled because adults are not getting at the large issues that impact teenagers in any broad manner. The teen subject, one whose problems could be fixed on a large scale, does not really exist in the network news discourse examined in this study. It is replaced by a different teen subject—one who must be treated individually to get over the problems he or she has, but for whom the larger problem, at its root, is never really addressed.

These stories might be considered to be pessimistic in the sense that they suggest that teenagers cannot really get better from the problems they face. Mazzarrella and Pecora (2007) suggest stories often have a pessimistic tone when adults are quoted. Sound-bites from adults are plentiful in many of the network news stories examined in this study because adult experts are involved in on-set interviews. Because it is the adults who are “speaking” and offering advice, rather than the teenagers who are talking about their own problems, these problems may be somehow less “solvable”.

And these problems are largely represented as something that teenagers bring on themselves. This may be linked to business norms which value story quantity over story quality, and which often lead to episodic coverage of teenagers (Bantz, 1985). Journalists do not have the time or the motivation to uncover issues that contribute to teen problems, or underlying societal issues that could contribute to teen problems. When teen problems are divorced from the underlying societal problems that relate to them, it makes teenagers out to be responsible for the

bad things that happen to them (Males, 1996). In this way, business norms are contributing to teenagers looking like they are to blame for their problems.

News Production as a Disciplining Process

Journalistic norms and practices therefore influence teen representations in network news. These ways in which journalists do their jobs may be thought of as a disciplining process in network news as well as in adult-generated media for teenagers. They may also be a factor in teen-produced Internet webzines although the journalistic practices in these organizations are likely different from those in network news and adult-generated media for teenagers.

Journalists are always writing stories for a particular audience, and they are often motivated in story selection by what it is that they think people will want to see—by entertainment norms (Bantz, 1985). Even if they never meet these people to whom their stories are directed, or ever know for sure that the audience is watching, journalists are adhering to what it is that the audience would expect or want. Foucault (1977) talks about a panopticon tower from which a guard can watch prisoners. Even when prisoners cannot see their observer, there is always the possibility that they are being watched, and so they behave in certain manners. Producing the news may be likened to subjecting oneself to a virtual panopticon. Journalists never know for sure that someone is watching, but because they recognize that they could be, they adhere to reporting on teenagers in a manner that would be accepted or expected.

For network news journalists, it would be other adults who are at the helm of this virtual panopticon. And it could account for the prevalence of stories that involve polls, surveys, and studies about teen problems. It is expected that teenagers have problems so such studies and surveys are done in the first place. It is a case of knowing that the problems exist, so there is a need to find out more about them. Because journalists feel they need to act in a manner that

would be acceptable to an adult audience—in other words create stories that are in keeping with what we know about teenagers--network news journalists include stories that probe into these problems.

This idea of the virtual panopticon, that someone could always be watching you, could also account for the framing of network news stories as learning opportunities for parents. If it is known that the teenage subject has problems, then these lessons for parents would provide the knowledge about how to handle them. It would be knowledge that would enable parents to control this troubled teen subject. And who better to provide this knowledge than those people who have been deemed experts—doctors, psychologists, and even other parents. Such experts are often attractive to journalists because including them allows journalists to appear objective (Moloch & Lester, 1974).

Journalists may also be disciplined to produce a lot of news. If news stations become compared by their story content, then a process of normalization (Foucault, 1977) could occur in which stations and individual journalists are considered good or bad based upon their ability to produce. That might motivate journalists to strive for quick turnaround for their stories. This focus on high story count is what is often referred to as business norms (Bantz, 1985). Relying on polls and surveys allows journalists to work more quickly. These stories are already packaged for the journalist, which Moloch and Lester (1974) suggests make such stories more attractive for inclusion in news programs. Journalists do not have to spend a lot of time digging up information, interviewing people, or doing any outside research, so they could work more quickly. If these stories are mostly about teen problems and negative aspects of adolescence, then there will be a preponderance of stories about such problems, creating a teen subject that is understood to be troubled or plagued by problems.

Journalists are also disciplined to be objective, to tell the facts and avoid opinion in order to keep from being attacked or criticized or from embarrassing their news station (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Gans, 1979, as cited in Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Given the importance of objectivity, it is likely that people judge news stations and journalists on their ability to be objective. Striving for objectivity might motivate journalists to include stories about surveys and polls. Polls, studies, and surveys provide a convenient way to attempt to be objective. Such studies are often conducted by universities and large organizations, entities that may be considered to be experts. Use of information from experts is a way in which journalists attempt to remain objective and unbiased. In addition to allowing for expert opinions, the quantitative nature of surveys and polls makes them appear to be objective sources—the belief that “numbers don’t lie.” Journalists therefore see themselves as reporting hard facts, absolving them of the risk of subjectivity.

It is important to note that this is an *appearance* of objectivity. In several cases, journalists do not report the sources of the information or the size of the study, saying instead “a major study” or “a new study” or a “recent survey.” Just as press conference organizers can package information that suits their purposes, (Moloch & Lester, 1974) so too can those who conduct polls and studies. They also do not include the size of the study, making it difficult to know how accurate the data is in representing a trend. Despite the fact that the survey information may not be objective, using it may allow the journalist to appear to be objective.

The disciplining process acting on journalists may therefore be responsible for the teenager representations found in this study. It is the knowledge of teenagers as troubled, as needing help to fix things, which itself may come from the media, that motivates journalists in their work. It may be why they choose the stories that they do, or choose to tell those stories with

the language and organizational techniques that they do. Journalists develop a “mental catalogue of news story themes” (Berkowitz, 1997, p. 363) which they use to decide how a story will unfold. With preconceived ideas about teenagers, it is possible that stories are formulated in the same way over and over again, reinforcing each time teenagers’ troubled nature. In doing this, they are also creating what it is that we know about teenagers. They are both making the representation and reflecting it. The teen subject is created by the texts that are produced about teenagers. It is “knowing” what this teen subject is like that is partially responsible for journalists writing the stories that they do.

Because journalists, through their stories, recreate well-known stories in a culture (Bird & Dardenne, 1988), it is likely that well-entrenched ideas about teenagers from past stories will find their way into the stories of the day. Because people believe that journalists know more than they do, when journalists portray someone as a hero or villain, that person becomes imbued with what that culture considers to be a hero or villain. In this way, journalists are creating the representations of teenagers that then come to reflect teen-related news.

Journalists who write for adult-generated media sources geared toward teenagers are likely operating under many of the same journalistic norms and practices as network news journalists, but it is teenagers who are the ones “watching”. It would therefore not be surprising that stories would be framed as lessons. This would enable teenagers to see how they could help themselves, rather than being stuck dealing with a problem without any relief. Channel One is shown in schools so there may be more of a push to educate teenagers, both on television and through the online site, and to show how a specific event in another part of the nation applies to them. This could also be a motivation on CNN Student News. If the goal of such teenager-geared news is to attract teenagers to the news, there would be an impetus to show them how a specific

issue directly relates to them. Framing a story as a lesson—showing teenagers how an event that happened to someone hundreds or thousands of miles away impacts them—would help to connect teenagers to news events that are not always in close proximity to them.

There are also some journalistic norms and practices that are not necessarily disciplining journalists but are important to mention as they play a role in the manner in which stories are told in adult-generated media for teenagers and network news. It is not surprising that adult-generated media sources for teenagers use the Internet to provide advice and information for teenagers, directing them online for tips and more information. The growing popularity of the Internet means that more people are relying on it, and are comfortable utilizing it as an informational source. This is particularly the case with teenagers.

In addition to utilizing the Internet's popularity as a vehicle for information, the Internet allows journalists to provide more information to those who want or need it without taking up space on air or on a homepage. As such, journalists can include more stories in the same amount of space (online) or time (broadcasted). In news operations that value story quantity, which many do, this would be a welcome pattern. Directing people to the Internet for more information also provides these news outlets with a means of self promotion. They can encourage those who are reading stories online to delve even deeper into the site and to spend more time there, versus moving to another site or news source for extra information. For those teenagers who are watching CNN Student News or Channel One News on television, these Internet teases can serve to drive them to the station's Internet content as well and may encourage future logs in to the sites.

It also would not be surprising that reporters would use language that emphasizes their presence in their own stories. Doing so contributes to a conversational tone for the story and also

emphasizes immediacy. This use of language that puts the focus on the reporter is not surprising given the norms of journalism. Putting themselves in the story may make for better storytelling and it is known that viewers want to hear news in story form. Also, by placing themselves in the story, it brings the story closer to the viewer, satisfying the goal of immediacy that Bird and Dardenne (1988) says is important to news.

Teen journalists are unlikely to be influenced by all of the same norms and practices that characterize commercial broadcasts and adult-generated media for teenagers. Teen webzines may operate under different norms and practices given their organizations' goals, and which thus influence the types of stories covered and the manner in which they are covered. For LA Youth, that goal is fostering "critical writing" and also teaching teen readers about the things that influence them in society and how to get control over their lives. For NYC, that goal is empowering readers and writers to make good choices in their lives by writing stories that can make a difference to those who read them.

These dual goals of improving writing skills and helping teenagers to learn about their world and to overcome problems influence the type of stories that are told. NYC aims for stories that can make a difference to those who read them, and personal stories, about which teenagers have experience and which are close to their lives, are encouraged in story meetings. BUZZ advertises its "Teens in the Newsroom" program as a way to improve writing skills.

Encouragement for teenagers to write personal stories could be the impetus for the number of stories that deal with relationships, clothing, peer pressure, fitting in, and concerns about the future. These are the subjects and issues about which teenagers would have experience. These personal stories might not be covered as frequently in traditional news outlets, such as teen magazines, because of these outlets' desires to remain objective. It would be difficult for such

news outlets to write about these issues and remain detached, given their often personal nature. NYC and LA Youth say that their mission is to help teenagers (writers and readers) to learn about the problems that face them and NYC says it wants teenagers to get control over their lives. These goals and objectives could be the impetus for a number of stories that deal with problems be it dating abuse, concerns about peer pressure, concerns about college, jobs, and the future, and relationships with family members. LA Youth has a foster program with stories written about experiences in the foster care system. These teenagers are dealing with problems in many cases, and by encouraging them to talk about what they are going through, as LA Youth does, it can contribute to the presence of stories that concern teenagers' problems and difficult issues they are facing in their lives.

This goal of writing from personal experience could also account for the language used in webzine stories and the storytelling strategies that teenagers use, thereby contributing to a number of the themes that emerge in teen webzines, such as learning. The experiences that we have often cause us to learn something about ourselves or others. We look to things that happened to us as helping us to learn something or to figure something out about ourselves or about others. If teen writers are crafting a number of stories about personal experience, there could be a tendency to frame these stories as learning experiences. That could account for language in teen webzine stories that focuses on “lessons” or “learning”.

This practice of writing from personal experience could also account for teenagers shifting from past to present tense within their stories. Teens' experiences would be something that has already happened to them, a past occurrence that would have impacted teenagers today. As such it would be natural for teenagers to write in the past tense—to situate their experiences—and then to relate how they were influenced by it today; how the experiences

changed how they look at other people; how they act toward loved ones or how they approach peer pressure or the desire to dress or act a certain way. And this would be natural to place in present tense—to show, “This is how I am today, after living through such an experience”.

According to NYC, students who write personal stories are encouraged to “revisit events from the past to understand their significance for the future.” If teen writers are thinking about the past they would likely write in past tense and when they write about themselves today, shift to present tense, resulting in articles that are written in both tenses. This shift between past and present tense contributes to a theme of teenagers as being in flux in terms of their identity. This theme could therefore be traced back to the goal webzines have of encouraging teenagers to write from personal experience.

The practice of writing from personal experience could also be the impetus for the use of first, second, and third-person construction incorporated in the same stories. While teenagers are encouraged to write from personal experience, they also have the goal of making their writing relevant to their readers, making it “bigger” than just about themselves and to show others why it is important to them or affects them. This objective could manifest itself in writing that moves between the individual writer, the teen audience, and teenagers in general. This shift allows a story about one girl’s experiences as an AIDS educator to be more than just her experience. It is also about “teenagers” and “you”, the teen audience. It allows a story about teenagers who are evaluating anti-smoking advertisements to also be relatable to a teen audience who share common features that could make them prone to smoking, or a story about a teenager’s uncertainty about the future to relate to other teens who also feel this.

In addition to encouraging teenagers to write from personal experience, webzines also try to foster journalistic skills such as critical writing. Strong, critical writing comes from the ability

to build an argument, to support what you are saying with examples. This could be the impetus behind the repetitive nature of some of the stories. That teenagers write about different experiences in similar fashions can serve to strengthen their arguments and the points that they are trying to make. This goal of strengthening their writing by supporting their ideas with multiple examples could therefore contribute to the theme of teenagers as being trapped.

Strong writing also comes from providing background for a story, thus teenagers might be encouraged to include past experiences along with present-day experiences. A result of this practice could be stories that are written in a combination of past and present tense, which contributes to constructing teen identities as combinations of old and new selves and a representation of teen identities as being a matter of convenience.

Some of the patterns in webzine stories might result not from journalistic norms or organizational factors, but from an outgrowth of teen development and experiences. Adolescents' experiences with adults at home, at school and in their communities likely involve adults being in charge, helping teenagers in some way or doing things for them. Such giving and providing by adults is commonplace and accepted. If they are used to adults acting in this way, they would likely find it natural to credit the adults in their life with doing things for them. This might contribute to the use of language that suggests adults "give" or "provide" to teens.

Another reason for the shift among first, second, and third-person construction in webzine stories might be an outgrowth of the teen psyche itself. Kroger (2004) suggests that adolescence is a time in which there is a "heightened activity for most in this intrapsychic interpersonal juggling act" (p.10), in the process of distinguishing self from other. Teenagers are therefore wrestling with the boundaries between what is "me" and what is "you" or other people. This tension could come out in the way they write and move from talking about their own

experiences as individual (presented as “I” or “me”) to talking about how they are part of a group (presented as “we”), to differentiating themselves from a group, such as that of “teenagers” or “students”. Hence there could be a shift within individual stories between teenagers associating themselves as individuals, and associating themselves as a part of a larger group.

As was the case for adult-generated media, in teen webzines the disciplining process on journalists leads to the creation of the teen subject. It is because journalists adhere to certain processes that are expected of them in doing their work that they write certain types of stories and tell them in certain ways. It is these stories and the ways in which they are written and organized—things like use of first person and subjectivity in reporting—that create what comes to be our knowledge of teenagers in the context of these webzines. When teenagers internalize these ideas and act upon them, they then make themselves the subjects of the discourse, and a teen subject is created. Teenagers are the creators of the discourse and in making this discourse, they become subjected by it.

Teen Webzines as Submerged Knowledge

These journalistic norms and practices contribute to the storytelling patterns and themes that create the representations of teenagers in network news, adult-generated media for teenagers, and teen-produced Internet webzines found in this study. Determining exactly how much of journalists’ decisions about what story to write and how to write it is influenced by these norms and practices is the subject of another study. Whatever the motivations for journalists writing their stories as they do, the fact remains that the representations of teenagers in each of these media sources call into question some of what it is that the literature (Aubrum & Grady, 2000; Mazzarella & Pecora, 2007; Males, 1999; Gilliam, 2001; Dorfman & Woodruff, 1998) suggests we “know” about teenagers and the teen subject.

The teen-related discourse in the teen-produced Internet webzines show the most prominent deviation from the dominant media discourses about teenagers. This was expected given that it is teenagers, rather than adults, who are creating the media texts that become the discourse about teenagers in the context of the teen webzines. Because the teen webzines are so different, in their scope, content, and form, from the other media sources, teen webzines may be thought of as an oppositional discourse, as a challenge to the conventional knowledge about the teen subject and what it means to be a teenager. Foucault (1977) suggests that a dominant discourse can be challenged either by a competing idea or by the surfacing of submerged information that changes our knowledge about a group of people, and therefore changes how we deal with such a group. I would argue that teen webzines are an example of the latter for two reasons.

The first reason concerns the fact that teenagers' voices have been submerged in the discourse about teenagers in the media. They have agency to create discourse in only one genre—the webzines that they produce themselves. The personal experiences that they write about in their webzine stories, their first-hand accounts of events in the world around them, and their focus on a vastly different set of issues, contribute to our knowledge about teenagers and thereby to the creation of the teen subject. With the exception of the small number of news outlets in which teenagers can be news producers, teenagers have not been afforded an opportunity to share this knowledge about who they are. This information about the teen subject, which comes from the teen subject him or herself, is therefore very much submerged. It is only recently that teenagers' voices have been able to be heard in as public a forum as Internet webzines. This means that for much of the history of journalism, they were a silenced voice.

Another manner in which such knowledge about teenagers may be thought to have been submerged is that the format through which teenagers discuss themselves is not considered acceptable in mainstream media. In traditional media outlets journalists are encouraged to remain objective (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). This would be the case for televised media as well as online media. They are thus disciplined to avoid bringing in opinions and use of first person. If their intention in reporting stories is to remain objective, they would not likely utilize past tense or to shift tenses as these would make the stories more subjective or personal. First person and shifting between past and present tenses are acceptable in teen webzines and that contributes to representations of teenagers in teen webzine texts. The discouragement of such tactics in the media as a whole may be thought of as having submerged the knowledge and information that might come with the utilization of such storytelling strategies.

The conceptualization of teen webzines as an oppositional discourse whose ideas and information have been submerged by a dominant news paradigm is an important one. Teen webzines and teen-produced media in general is a minority in comparison to those news sources that are created by adults. It is not to suggest that this formerly submerged information will overtake the knowledge and information that is already out there, and that is consistently being produced in network news and adult-generated media for teenagers. There are however, a fair amount of teen-produced news sources available on the Internet. This study examined just four of the dozens of webzines that are likely out there and accessible to audiences across the country. The news environment is such that anyone can post stories to the web and have them be considered “news”.

Given this changing atmosphere it is entirely possible that more teenagers will be enabled to tell their stories in a very public manner. The issues that are addressed by teenagers

about teenagers are, as this study seems to indicate, quite different from those produced by adults. They also take different forms which are themselves significant to representations of teenagers. The submerged ideas and knowledge may therefore stay submerged only for so long. It is not that we will turn away from the traditional media sources and the representations that are created there. It is just that there may be more variety when it comes to the teen subject and what it means to be a teenager. It is therefore important to recognize how these representations are created, and what they mean for our knowledge about teenagers.

As was mentioned in Chapter 1, it is because of this changing media environment that it is important to study teen representations, specifically in a comparative manner. Different people are making the discourse and therefore different stories are getting told. Stories are also being told in different ways. It is important to recognize and understand how representations are different when different people create the discourse about teenagers.

Myths about Teenagers

This dissertation has focused on Foucault's (1977) discursive approach to representation to inform the media representations of teenagers in network news, adult-generated news for teenagers and teen-produced Internet webzines. This is just one way to think about teen representations. Barthes' (1973) notion of cultural myths might also help to explain teen representations, particularly when it comes to the representations of teenagers as troubled. The representation of teenagers as troubled or as facing problems depends upon a cultural myth that adults are largely trouble-free or that they do not experience problems. It also depends upon a cultural myth that the world is not a dangerous place for everyone—young and old. In the absence of such a cultural ideology, teen problems would not be special or unique. Teenagers

would therefore be like everyone else. They would not be seen as troubled because adults would be troubled as well.

The fact that I conceptualize teen webzines as challenging the idea of teenagers being troubled is linked to a cultural idea that troubles are things that involve others and that are external, such as crime and violence. If this were not a culturally accepted idea, if instead there was a cultural ideology that being troubled involved intrapersonal troubles, then the representations in teen webzines would be more in keeping with what is expected.

Mainstream media, in creating knowledge about teenagers through the stories that are told, may be thought of as contributing to the cultural myths about teenagers. These cultural myths would be particularly strong when it comes to those who do not have direct contact with teenagers and for whom much of what they know is what they see in the news. But these cultural ideas may also be prominent for those who have some contact with teenagers. As Aubrum and Grady (2000) suggest, people's exposure to mainstream media stories about teenagers may call into question the personal experiences that they have with teenagers. Media coverage of teenagers may therefore be a driving force in creating a cultural idea about teenagers.

The Importance of Examining News Representations of Teens

Teenagers are a group that is not often covered in the news unless they are doing something very good or very bad. They have agency to tell their stories only in those media sources that they are creating. And they have a declining interest in traditional news in general. Whether representations of them are conceptualized through discourse or cultural myths, studying these representations is important. News media both create and reflect our knowledge about teenagers or about any non-majority group. We see the same representations over and over again, and it becomes what we know about teenagers. Because we know something, we as the

news audience expect certain stories about teens. Journalists as the creators of news texts tell certain stories about teenagers. These stories therefore perpetuate this knowledge. It is an ongoing process. It can become limiting and confining because the news is feeding off itself. Understanding representations can perhaps help counter the limited representations by showing us just how we are creating and sustaining them.

In addition to allowing us to better understand how we may be perpetuating limited representations of teenagers, studying what teenagers consider news, as well as the ways in which they create it and the representations that emerge, may also yield valuable insight into what it is that can attract teenagers to news information. By examining how they make news, we may be better able to uncover reasons why the news model that characterizes mainstream news may not be working for teenagers. That is not to assume that there is a way in which to fix the problem of teenagers' inattention to news, or that studying news content alone can yield such answers. It may however provide some clues.

Researcher Role

In Chapter One of this dissertation I addressed my own position with regard to the news media texts that I analyzed. I discussed how being a former journalist likely influences how I analyze stories, in particular those that involve teenagers and teen-issues. It is important that I recognize how I see my "1 ½ hats" as having impacted my findings.

One of the ways in which my past journalistic experiences influenced my findings was that they made me sensitive to what was missing in news texts. It is this sensitivity to what is not there that led me to focus on the differences between teen-produced texts and those produced by adults. I was therefore able to explore more deeply the fact that while all of the news texts represented teens as troubled, there were troubles that just "weren't there" in the teen webzines. I

was more sensitive to the fact that certain issues were not covered in teen webzines, and that much of what teenagers wrote about in their own stories was missing from network news and adult-generated news for teenagers. This had implications for the matter in which teen webzines broke from the dominant discourse and perhaps created a new knowledge about teenagers. I might not have been as sensitive to these differences if it were not for the fact that my experiences as a producer taught me the importance of considering what is excluded.

My experiences with the treatment of teenagers in the news also influenced my analysis in that these experiences impacted how I viewed these teen-related stories. I think I expected that all teenager-related stories must have a particular news hook, something that tied in to a specific example or occurrence, rather than being about a trend or issue that was evergreen. After all, the news organization with which I was affiliated covered teenagers only when there was some sort of news hook. I think that made me more sensitive to the individual nature in which teenagers' problems were handled in both network news and adult-generated media. I was primed to look for specifics with regard to teenagers rather than generalities because I expected that there would be something specific that would make a teen-related story important enough to cover.

The ways in which teen news stories were treated also influenced how I regarded teen webzine stories. I think I came to my analysis of these stories expecting that they would be the antithesis of adult-generated media—that teenagers would somehow be speaking out against the ways in which they were handled in the mainstream media. In other words, I expected that since teenagers were covered in mainstream news only when there was a specific situation or event, I expected that teenagers would write about themselves apart from specific news hooks. That likely made me more prone to see the ways in which teenagers covered themselves so very differently from how adults covered them. It likely made me more sensitive to the ways in which

they challenged the dominant ideas about them. I expected to see big differences, and so I was more aware of them when they happened.

Lastly, my experiences as a journalist made me more sensitive to the different form that teenagers used in their webzine stories. The shifting in tenses, the use of first-person, and the focus on the personal are characteristics of teen webzines that would likely be obvious to anyone who is familiar with news. These language patterns are so very different from what we expect in mainstream news. The fact that I was a journalist, and that I understood first-hand just how important it was to remain objective or detached from one's stories, made me think more critically about the implications this change in form might have for news texts.

The findings of a qualitative research study such as this one are entirely influenced by what the researcher brings to the study. I cannot say with absolute certainty that these elements I have mentioned might not have been considered important to my research had I not come to the project with several years of journalistic experience. I still may have seen all of these things, and come to many of the same conclusions. It is however important that I acknowledge my past journalistic experiences because they played a role in what I saw in the news texts, and in how I interpreted what I saw.

Study Limitations

This study added to my understanding of teen news representations personally. Because much research about teen news representations focuses on mainstream media and on the 18-24 year old crowd (slightly older than the focus of my study) this study expands our collective understanding about the ways in which news stories contribute to what it is that we know about teenagers. As with any research project, there are limitations inherent in this research.

One of the biggest limitations is that the study focused entirely on textual elements. There were no visual elements included in the analysis. I outlined in Chapter 2 of this study the theoretical, methodological, and practical reasons for my focus solely on the written texts of these news stories, as well as the implications for leaving them out. If pictures and language together tell us things that the one alone would not, then it implies that the language cues are impacting our visual cues and our visual cues what we pick up in language. That means that my analysis—what I saw in the language of the texts—might have been influenced by “seeing” the story itself. The visual images might have altered what I picked up on in the texts, and what I saw as important patterns and themes. This might have lead to alternative and different representations.

In addition, elements of photojournalism—camera angles and positioning of the camera--also contribute to meanings in a television news text. Much like the language and emphasis in a text that contribute to its latent meanings, so too do these visual cues. The consequence of leaving them out is that these meanings are missed. The meaning in a text—manifest and latent meanings—is therefore different when we are looking just at those meanings that are produced through language and when we are considering those that are produced through the interaction of language and pictures. For these reasons the analyses and findings might have been very different had there been visuals and language analyzed. This underscores the potential for future research to explore the impact of these visual images along with the language of these news texts.

Another limitation involves the relationship between the adult-generated news sources and the teen webzines. Network news, as well as adult-generated media for teenagers both on television and online, are national news programs while the teen webzines are regional. This

could have accounted for the differences in news issues that were addressed in adult-generated news sources and teen-produced webzines. Teen webzines do have the potential for a national and international audience but a number of the stories still maintained ties to the areas in which teenagers lived. Recognizing the regional nature of the webzines, every effort was made to obtain as regionally diverse a sample as possible. Due to the need to be able to access story archives, and to have stories on a broad range of topics, there were only a few webzines that could be used in the study. Two of the four webzines were based in California and the other two were on the east coast. The middle of the country was unrepresented. Including webzines from a bigger variety of geographic regions might have influenced the issues that were addressed and perhaps contributed to very different representations of teenager than were seen in this study.

Future Study

Expanding the diversity of teen Internet webzines is one of the avenues for future research. The webzines included in this study are just a fraction of the teen Internet news sites that exist. Future projects could expand the scope of the teen webzines analysis to see how these representations hold over a larger sample from different regions of the country. In addition, of the webzines chosen for this project, LA Youth and NYC were stand-alone publications, while BUZZ and Listen Up were teen sections of traditional newspapers made available online. Future research could explore how representations of teenagers compare between these stand-alone teen news sources and those that are part of an adult-generated publication.

Research on teen-produced media could also be expanded to include broadcast news programs produced by teenagers. These could be teen news programs that air on traditional or cable news outlets or they could be high school news programs produced as part of a school course or club. These programs could be analyzed along with teen webzines to see how

representations of teenagers differ across different teen-generated media platforms. More research would have to be done to identify such teen television news programs.

Future research could also incorporate both the visual and language elements of television news texts. Including an analysis of news video could enrich the study, and expand upon the language-based representations that are created in network news, adult-generated media for teenagers, and teen-produced television news programs once identified.

This research project focused entirely on the texts themselves. Future research could incorporate textual analysis of these media sources with teen interviews or focus groups. This would allow for comparison between the representations seen in the texts and the ways in which teenagers see themselves in stories written by teenagers for a teen audience. It could help to answer questions about what teenagers see in the news coverage about themselves, particularly whether or not they find these representations to be overly negative. Interviews with teenagers could help foster an understanding of how teenagers receive the news coverage about them, and whether or not it motivates them to watch it or to tune it out.

It is known that young people do not watch the news as frequently or with as much intensity as do their adult counterparts (Pew, 2004; Mindich, 2005) or perhaps as much as the journalists and adults in their lives want them to. It is also known that the representations of teenagers are often overly negative, focusing on their troubles and their problems (Males, 1999; Gilliam, 2001; Mazzarrella & Pecora, 2007). How much the two are interconnected is the question that drove me to explore teen news representations and to do so in a comparative manner with different media forms, different creators, and different consumers. As new news formats gain in popularity, and as we learn more about teen representations, I think it is an important avenue for future research. By analyzing news texts in cooperation with teen responses

to those texts, we can continue to unravel the relationship between teen media representations and teenagers' relationship with the news sources that are producing these images.

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