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Contextualizing the Need for Critical Advertising Pedagogy

The hyper-mediatization of children's lives, at least in affluent parts of the world, and the altered nature of advertising reinvigorate concerns about how children become engaged in consumerism early on in life. Of course, the commercialization of childhood is not a recent development, with its modern beginnings in the 18th century, when industrialization processes enabled the mass production of consumer goods (Murphy 2000; Plumb 1976). The trend accelerated in the 1950s (Wasko 2008), followed by an escalation in the 1980s (Levin and Linn 2004). What makes the issue pressing nowadays is children's intensifying and increasing media use (see for example Kaiser Family Foundation 2010), for they are continuously exposed to the consumerist attitudes and images the media promote (Hill 2011). The social pleasures, democratic gains, and educational opportunities of contemporary media thus come at a steep price.

At the same time, the proliferation of media platforms and the rapid succession of technological innovations facilitate the omnipresence and perpetual reinvention of one of commercialization's most effective tools, i.e., advertising. Online environments in particular have changed the features and characteristics of advertising. They facilitate immersive and interactive configurations, making it very difficult to detect where advertising is present (Martin and Smith 2008; Nairn and Dew 2007) and how to distinguish between informational and/or entertainment substance and commercial content. Online, embedded advertising such as advergaming, advertising in social games or on social networks, and in-game advertising are more difficult to capture precisely because of their interactive and affect-based nature (An, Jin, and Park 2014; An and Stern 2011; Owen et al. 2013; Van Reijmersdal, Rozendaal, and Buijzen 2012). Accordingly, advertising regulations, guidelines, and controls applicable to traditional media lag behind due to their incompatibility to the technological, economic, and political economy of online media (e.g., Drumwright and Murphy 2004). Inasmuch as governments and regulators cannot keep up with media developments and calls for renegotiation or revision of acceptable practices (Freestone and Mitchell 2004), the Internet will remain "*the Wild West*" of advertising (Drumwright and Murphy 2004, 87).

Interventionist research concludes that children's advertising literacy concerning those new advertising techniques and formats lags when compared to conventional (broadcast television) advertising (An, Jin, and Park 2014; An and Stern 2011; Owen et al. 2013; Van Reijmersdal, Rozendaal, and Buijzen 2012). And advertising literacy's current conceptualization does not guarantee its effectiveness (e.g., Rozendaal et al. 2013). Occasionally, advertising literacy is even linked with more positive brand attitudes or increased purchase intentions (Livingstone and Helsper 2006; Rozendaal, Buijzen, and Valkenburg 2009; Van Reijmersdal et al. 2012). As argued by others, being media savvy does not necessarily amount to critical media literacy (Teurlings 2010, 368).

This is where the issue of critical advertising pedagogy surfaces. Indeed, advertising texts are frequently the subject of media literacy and analyses of marketing as the whole (see for example Šramová 2014). Furthermore, the notion of (over-)consumption has instigated arguments for critical pedagogies (see for example Sandlin and McLaren 2010). Contemporary critical pedagogy perspectives often criticize schools -mainly public ones (Kirylo et al. 2010)- for prioritizing facts, figures, values and roles that service and legitimate capitalist, consumerist societies (see for example Jaramillo and McLaren 2009).

This chapter addresses arguments for a critical advertising pedagogy that critically examines commercialization, commodification and the pivotal role of advertising therein. We bring together insights from media-effect studies to cultural studies-inspired research to present an account of not only what is to be criticized, yet also what is to be celebrated. Precisely this double-sided perspective is at the heart of critical pedagogy. Finally, particular guidelines are presented as to what critical advertising pedagogy's theorization should and its operationalization could entail.