**Executive Summary- Teen’s Perceptions of Popular Media’s Influence**

**Background**- While working with high school juniors and seniors I noticed a rise in teen pregnancy and sexual confusion among this population. I wondered how much their exposure to sexually explicit imagery effected their identity and choices. This is a qualitative action research project focusing on the understanding of student perceptions of the influence of visual culture specifically popular media.

**Central question**-What are student’s perceptions toward the impact of visual culture on teens including popular media?

**Research questions**-

* What are student’s perceptions toward the impact of visual culture on teens including popular media?
* What is involved in teaching an art lesson that critiques visual culture and popular media in a school that teaches to the test?
* How would studio production that includes text and narrative regarding impact students understanding of personal issues?
* What can I learn to better inform my understanding of how teens perceive popular media?

**Approach/Methods**-

Participant Action Research Model: For this study I became the teacher of an advanced graphics class for one lesson.

Observations: During the lesson intro and throughout the art making process the use of constructivist teaching practices created an opportunity for class discussion. I recorded the student’s ideas and questions in a field journal.

Questionnaires: Students took part in anonymous introductory and exit surveys to access their perceptions at the onset and conclusion of the project.

Informal Interviews: Throughout the art making process I conducted informal interviews with each student participant.

Visual/ Written Documentation: Students created imagery that expressed their perceptions and criticism of popular media and reflected each class in a journal provide for them.

**Important** **Findings**:

Forging Your Own Path- In this class students preferred to think of themselves as leaders who did not buy into the media stereotype of a teenage life. They were critical of peers who chose to emulate what was seen on television or the internet.

Sexual Exploitation- The group also expressed criticism of the way in which advertisers use underdressed males and females to sell products.

Double Standards- Double standards regarding female sexuality and power were evident in this teenage population. Despite the hype about female empowerment even within this insular group values of the larger society are evident.

Narrative/ Holistic Teaching- I found that when given the opportunity to elaborate on their ideas students natural used storytelling as a means to validate opinions, further understanding of their ideas, and relate those ideas to their lives. I think that the need for the constructivist strategies engrained in bell hook’s(1993) “holistic” approach are needed to facilitate the narratives students use to make life connections.