A Semiotic Phenomenology of Consumptive Pedagogy By College instructors in a General Education Program

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ABSTRACT

A SEMIOTIC PHENOMENOLOGY OF CONSUMPTIVE PEDAGOGY BY COLLEGE INSTRUCTORS IN A GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

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Northern Illinois University, 2022
Laura Ruth Johnson, Director

The purpose of this study was to describe the instructional and visual pedagogy of university faculty teaching sociological consumer education within an interdisciplinary general education program. This study addresses gaps in the literature regarding program and course format, visual utilization, and teaching philosophies from faculty members’ perspectives. Utilizing a semiotic phenomenological approach, implications for instructional facilitation are discussed at length.

Findings of this study include five themes that impact the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, as well as sociological consumer education. Participant life experiences and disciplines are implicated as instrumental towards participant instructional philosophies. The nature and impact of interdisciplinary program and course evolution on instructor facilitation is described. Previously researched educational philosophies are illustrated, analyzed, and expanded to include countercultural frameworks, transformational viewpoints, and visual pedagogical approaches. This study adds to the body of knowledge concerning the task of teaching sociological consumer education to traditional-age and adult college students within a general education program structured to include and support that task.
A SEMIOTIC PHENOMENOLOGY OF CONSUMPTIVE PEDAGOGY BY COLLEGE INSTRUCTORS IN A GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

BY

GISELLE L. BETTS
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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELING AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Doctoral Director:
Laura Ruth Johnson
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Put a premium on those few people who can appreciate you for what you are.

- Gail Goodwin

I am fortunate that I have been surrounded at all points during this long journey with a small handful of people who believed in me and did not give up on me. I am grateful to my first Committee Chair, Dr. Lisa Baumgartner, and a former Committee Member, Dr. Rhonda Robinson, both of whom helped me evolve the unclear notion of this subject into a researchable topic. I am grateful to Dr. Trenton Ferro who was my first editor, dissertation coach, and provider of stability during the years of flux within the department. I am grateful to my Committee: Dr. Jorge Jeria, who was an immensely supportive and knowledgeable resource throughout my entire degree, and Dr. Rebecca Hunt, without whose support I would not have been able to continue my journey. I am grateful beyond words for the clearheaded guidance, steadfast optimism, and unwavering encouragement of my Committee Chair, Dr. Laura Ruth Johnson. She has been my light and my anchor; her dedication has been invaluable.

Among others in my personal support network, I extend my sincere thanks to Dr. Lora de Lacey, Dr. Laurel Church, Dr. Michael Sawdey, and the late Drs. Walter Sublette and Joan Arteberry Zavitz, respectively, whose unfailing support throughout many years has been treasured. This degree is a promise kept to my family, who did not relent in their support even when I became deaf, especially my parents, the late Mrs. Everlena Betts and the late Mr. Charles M. Betts, teachers for almost 90 years combined. Above all, may the glory be to Him who establishes this work, the One in whom I live and move and have my being.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

After decades of consumer education in 33 states and the District of Columbia, adults have yet to become proficient and conscientious consumers. Consumer proficiency is statistically low in both high school students and adults; since proficiency has never been over 60% for students or adults, this situation has been occurring for some time (Bonner, 1993; Brobeck, 1990). Consumer education can be defined as "the process of gaining knowledge and skills to manage personal resources and to participate in social, political, and economic decisions that affect individual well-being and the public good" (Bannister, 1996, p. 1). The focus of consumer education is consumption. McCracken (1990) defines consumption as “the process by which consumer goods and services are created, bought and used” (p. xi). A second and deeper definition implies that the individual acts of consumption, skilled or unskilled, must occur in a larger context of society, especially in consumer societies. In short, consumer education is a complex exercise in contextualization for individual and collective purposes, and this exercise has been progressing with varying degrees of success while raising several areas of concern.

The vast majority of research concerning consumer education focuses on standardized and state-mandated, K-12 institutional, educational efficacy, which is just one manner whereby individuals learn about consumption in American society. One justification for the complex nature of consumer education has to do with the multifaceted manner in which individuals encounter consumption and its related messages in their daily lives. Sandlin and McLaren (2010)
identify four methods of consumer education in the United States’ capitalistic society. These four methods function while intertwined with each other, are constant in their effect on the learner, and serve to highlight the various manners in which individuals encounter consumption: (1) the market as consumer educator, (2) lifelong learning through consumption-related social practices, (3) learning through consumption at the intersections of the market and institutions, and (4) the institution as consumer educator.

The Context of All Consumer Education: Market and Media Messages

Part of the market is “the current technological revolution,” which includes “the role of media like television, popular music, film, and advertising,” (Kellner & Share, 2005, p. 371) as well as the Internet. “Modern consumerism also depends upon a set of symbols becoming comprehensible to potential customers” (Bocock, 1993, p. 54). Therefore, the communication of the market is largely visual and carries a strong, biased agenda concerning the representation and interpretation of “boundless social and cultural issues” (Griffin, 2001, p. 433). The “dominant groups who do the majority of the representing” (Kellner & Share, 2005, p. 370) infuse market-based messages with bias (e.g., multinational corporate mass media). These messages, for example, concern not only advertising, leisure pursuits, branding, and fashion, but also categories of culture like race, social status, ethnicity, and power (Sandlin & McLaren, 2010). The impact of these messages is widespread and highly consequential: “Messages are naturalized, such that people seldom question the transparent social construction of the representations” ((Kellner & Share, 2005, p. 370).

Lifelong exposure to the consumer education of the market starts for many in infancy, and children are targeted to become consumers at very young ages (Degraff, Wann, & Naylor,
The American construction of identity is bound to the messages of the market because of the market’s portrayals of “childhood, the national past, beauty, truth, and social agency” (Giroux, 1999, pp. 2-3). This unquestioned exposure instills the impetus to strive towards a constructed ideal that is communicated in images (Baudrillard, 1988). Even though the past and current focus of federal and state governments have been on the training of consumers through educational institutions (e.g., middle and high school mandated consumer education, as well as college education and adult-related programs), the market is the earliest method with which consumers come in contact, as well as being the context that surrounds the other three methods of consumer education (Sandlin & McLaren, 2010).

**Lifelong Learning Through Consumption-related Social Practices**

*Lifelong learning through consumption-related social practices* describes the various ways individuals respond to consumer culture throughout their lives. Individual acts of consumption respond to brand name, identity, and self-esteem and are also tied to judgments about one’s freedom and quality of life; consumption is also a relationship of reciprocal expressions of power and influence (Patterson, 2006; Princen, Maniates, & Conca, 2002). Whether the practices of individuals will be applied toward self-expression (lifestyle), self-analysis (confessional), or outer social defiance (critical) depends on that individual’s determination of their needs at that time in their lives (Sandlin & McLaren, 2010). While lifestyle and confessional practices will occur naturally in a consumer’s life, critical practices must be fostered through institutional, community, or otherwise obtained educational exposure.
Learning Through Consumption at the Intersections of Market and Institutions

Learning through consumption at the intersections of market and institutions analyzes how institutions work with the market to redefine society at large for the population. Institutions include family, politics, and education (Sandlin & McLaren, 2010). Examples of institutional redefinition would be how ideologies and themes are set for periods of time in specific cultures or in a nation’s history (e.g., how children are socialized as consumers, how the rest of the population accepts this socialization, and how the nation behaves in a certain political climate, like the movement of women into the workforce and the patriotic climate of World War II). Visual contextualization is prevalent within the socialization of consumers as children and its lifelong reinforcement. This socialization creates a challenge for consumer education within educational institutions because “while American students have been increasingly taught information through highly manipulated images that influence their points of view and behaviors, few are those who have adequately analyzed and critiqued these images in order to make informed decisions about them” (Matusitz, 2005, p. 101). In short, critical thinking and media literacy are both necessary to prepare students to deal with market pressures. Media literacy has been defined as a literacy that “seeks to empower citizenship, to transform citizens’ passive relationship to media into an active, critical engagement capable of challenging the traditions and structures of a privatized, commercial media culture, and thereby find new avenues of citizen speech and discourse” (Bowen, 2002, p. 8).

College Institutions: Consumption-based Media Literacy

Sandlin (2007) is only one of many researchers who argue for a more sociological and critical approach to the instruction of consumer education in higher education (Goodman, 2008; Martins & Brooks, 2010; Ringberg & Reihlen, 2008; Tian, College, & Walle, 2007).
Sociological consumer education focuses on instructional approaches that investigate the impact of consumer society on all aspects of human behavior (Holt, 1997). Critical consumer education presents consumption as a “site where power, ideology, gender, and social class circulate and shape one another (Denzin, 2001, p. 325). Additionally, several researchers have debated the need and possibility for an interdisciplinary approach to economics and consumer education (Cavigla-Harris, 2003; Mansilla & Duraising, 2007; McGregor, 2007). While consumer education in college is more contextual than K-12 standardized consumer education, the most documented variations in the use of visual imagery focus on advertising. Yet, one interesting documented example of visual imagery during college consumer education is culture jamming.

Researchers have written about the use of culture jamming technique and analysis as an instructional method for consumptive pedagogy (Dartz & Tavin, 2010; Lasn, 1999; Sandlin & McLaren, 2010). The technique stems from the international practice of social marketing, which are messages tied to a social cause that are meant to “persuade people concerning their social beliefs, attitudes and behaviors,” (Flowers et al., 2001, p. 5). While social marketing is the advertising for various causes and charities, culture jamming consists of altering an advertisement to be its visual opposite or a visual critical of the original message. For instance, compare the two visual images below. The alteration of the flag from its original state to the AdBusters use of corporate symbols is meant to imply that corporate entities have more power than the states and their citizens.
Several educators tout culture jamming as “a critical intervention that opposes corporate brand culture and the omnipresent advertising ethos” (Scatamburlo-D’annibale, 2010, p. 225). While altering advertisements does display an understanding of the messages proposed by corporate entities, and the evolution of that message into a more thought-provoking visual does subvert corporate purpose, “is this enough (educationally) without an implication of a strong understanding of social class, Marxist labor, and capital?” (Scatamburlo-D’annibale, 2010, pp. 232-233). Therefore, the contextualization of visual imagery within history, theory, and philosophy is also an issue of concern in the use of visuals.
Statement of the Problem

The example above of culture jamming highlights several issues that this study will attempt to address. First, the sociological and interdisciplinary context for which some researchers within higher education have advocated is the evolving common framework for general education courses in higher education. If consumer education is taught interdisciplinarily within general education programs, what manner of consumption related pedagogy can be ascertained from the various instructors’ approaches? How does higher education attempt to prepare students to be conscientious consumers through the utilization of a general education format? Secondly, while the consumptive pedagogy of culture jamming is founded in critical theory, not enough is known about the use of visual imagery in college consumer education or general education to assume (a) that this is the only manner of visual consumptive pedagogy in utilization, (b) that this is a prevalent or popular manner of visual pedagogy outside of social marketing, or (c) that critical theory is the most prevalent theoretical foundation amongst institutions or educators. In an age of television, fictional, educational, and documentary film, limitless Internet websites, and other technologies, it is quite possible that other visual imagery could and is being utilized in the teaching of consumption and consumer education. Since various theoretical foundations exist for different viewpoints within consumer education, it is entirely possible that more than one theoretical foundation exists among a selection of interdisciplinary instructors (Sandlin & McLaren, 2010). Research is lacking as to which theoretical foundations are evident, and how these foundations direct the instructor’s pedagogical approach or their choice of visual imagery.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe the instructional and visual pedagogy of university faculty teaching sociological consumer education within a general education program.

Research Questions

In addressing the stated purpose of this study, the following questions were pursued:

1. What forms of visual imagery do instructors select and/or create when teaching consumer education in general education courses? How do participants describe the instructional philosophies that inform their approach towards the topic of consumption and their choices of visual imagery? And from what sources do they select visual imagery (printed materials, video sources, the Internet, etc.)?

2. What issues are covered as a part of a sociological consumer education program, and how are these courses structured? How do instructors view consumer society and what facets of it do they believe college students should understand? What experiences do participants have in relation to teaching consumption in a general education format, and according to participants, how does interdisciplinarity impact their experiences and approaches? How do the experiences and viewpoints of teaching sociological consumer education support, problematize, and reject McGregor’s calls for critical education pedagogies?

These research questions were explored using a semiotic phenomenological qualitative approach, which entails in-depth interviews and a visual semiotic analysis of artifacts indicated and utilized by the college instructors who participate in this study.
Importance of the Study

This study is important because it will add greatly to the body of knowledge about how higher education attempts to prepare students to be consumers. More knowledge will be ascertained about the efforts of general education and interdisciplinary programs to prepare students to be critical and conscientious consumers. Another benefit of this study is that it will add to the body of knowledge concerning how instructors of the topic attempt the contextualization of consumer society in general education. Giroux (2003) argued that “in opposition to the corporatizing of public schools, progressive educators need to define public and higher education as a resource vital to the democratic and civic life of the nation” (p. 9).

Furthermore, this study details (a) the usage of culture jamming in the classroom, if any, (b) what other visual formats and technologies are prioritized in the facilitation of consumption, (c) what theoretical foundations, beliefs, and perspectives are evident within consumer education instruction, (d) how college instructors experience the phenomenon of teaching interdisciplinary consumer education, and (e) how college instructors view the abilities and challenges students face while encountering the subject matter.

Many researchers call for an investigation into consumer imagery. “In a world that has become pre-packaged for consumption of information and mediated images, understanding visual communication provides a key to reading culture and society” (Matusitz, 2005, p. 99). Buckingham (2003) calls for consumer educators to train a more critical questioning towards media imagery so that larger social consequences can be taken into account and the number of uncritical consumers can be lessened. This study attempted to provide a greater knowledge of the visual contextualization of consumer society in higher education.
Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was devised from teacher knowledge research (Boyer, 1990), critical consumer education pedagogy proposals (McGregor, 2005), Peircean educational and semiotic theories (Harrison, 2003; Smith, 2005), as well as rhetorical media criticism (Sillars & Gronbeck, 2001). Rosiek and Atkinson (2005) argue that teacher knowledge research can serve to enhance teaching through the creation of a body of knowledge derived from teacher’s classroom experiences. Specifically, the teacher knowledge approach for this study was influenced by Boyer’s (1990) Scholarship of Teaching paradigm and his concept of integration, which is a concept of expanding disciplinary borders for the purpose of making larger connections. This concept of integration aided this study’s second research question concerning how an interdisciplinary group of instructors approached consumption within a general education program. Furthermore, Boyer’s (1990) argument that practice can lead to theory and shape research was also integral to this study’s focus on instructional pedagogy.

Critical consumer education is the viewpoint that consumption represents “a site where power, ideology, gender and social class circulate and shape one another,” (Denzin, 2001, p. 325) not an inevitable, natural, or neutral process of participation in consumer culture. McGregor’s (2005) typology of critical consumer education would apply to the first research question by framing the visual imagery and the teaching purpose in a consumption based pedagogical framework. Her typology was devised from the research of Sandlin (2005) and Flowers et al. (2001) on classifying effective consumer education, it identifies four types of consumer education: “consumer information, protection and advocacy, individual critique for self-interest, critical approach for self-interest, and empowerment approach for mutual interest”
(McGregor, 2005, p. 441). Because her framework includes critical and noncritical pedagogical methods, the open nature of her framework allows for discovery to occur.

All visual imagery is a presentation of social signification, and visual imagery presented for analysis or critical thought is posed to the viewer as a problem (Wlodkowski, 2008). The focus on visual imagery was intended to disclose several implications that could clarify other attempts toward consumer education that have been largely undocumented, thereby shedding light on how higher education attempts to contextualize consumption. Peircean pragmatism guides both research questions and serves to specify the focus of the study. Peircean pragmatism has the broad capacity to address consumption in larger society (Mick, Burroughs, Hetzel, & Brannen, 2004) as well as educational philosophy (Chaisson, 2005; Rosiek & Atkinson, 2005; Smith, 2005). Peircean capability occurs because of its pragmatic investigation of the continual individual’s discovery of social reality and how they make sense of these realities in their minds (Chaisson, 2005; Mick, Burroughs, Hetzel, & Brannen, 2004; Rosiek & Atkinson, 2005; Smith, 2005). Because Peircean semiotics posits that “human activity is a component of sign activity” and the sign is a social construct upon which all human significations are built (Rosiek & Atkinson, 2005, p. 433), reality is a composite of signs. At the foundations of the signs are the repeating human processes of qualification, analysis, and interpretation that undergird human reason. This reasoning at the foundation of sign use, analysis, and evaluation allows this study to focus on the visuals chosen by instructors as indicative of their pedagogical approaches and addresses all the proposed research questions.

Postmodern visual rhetorical analysis is built upon Foss’s (1994) theory of visual rhetoric and Peterson’s (2001) reconfiguration of the same theory, which was initially argued to evaluate
imagery by its function according to the purpose identified by the analyst (Rice, 2004). Instead of focusing solely on function, which would be a deductive process within a modernist framework, Rice (2004) has increased the complexities of Foss’s process of visual rhetoric to include contextualization and the postmodern assumption that the interpretation of the text by the analyst is subjective and may even be contradictory to other interpretations. That visual rhetoric is arbitrary within postmodern theory and creates a process of abduction, which is both inductive as well as deductive and concerned on the creation of meaning (Rice, 2004). This analytical approach allows for the instructors to frame the visual imagery, while preventing my analysis of the consumption-oriented visuals to overrule their purposes for the imagery within their pedagogical approaches. More importantly, this process ensures that their contextualization of the image would not be negated or superseded by the function of the image within itself.

Because of the rich and varied nature of these theoretical foundations, a phenomenological approach was utilized to attempt to uncover the experiences of educators who address consumer society in their classrooms, and the presence of visual imagery they choose to utilize during their instruction (Husserl, 1970).

**Conclusion**

Consumer education in higher education is a multifaceted and highly consequential educational concern, mainly because this consumptive instruction might be the last that consumers receive before they enter society and are expected to use that knowledge towards their best interests and the interests of society. The focus of this study is shaped not only by such current impacts on the educational method involving technology and media related influences, but also by the various perspectives in the field that have shaped the current concepts of what
consumer education is. Chapter two will delve deeper into the body of prevailing research that influences this study. Chapter three will detail the methodological processes for gathering and analyzing of data for the study. Chapters four and five will detail the study’s findings. Chapter six will overview the findings and provide suggestions for future research.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumer education is a field that has evolved from several different disciplines and frames of thought (Bocock, 1993; Sandlin & McLaren, 2010). This review seeks to present the existing research that has influenced its development and delve into the complexity of theory and practice that has shaped and influenced the educational approaches to the field. This chapter will begin with a description of the purpose of this research and the manner in which this review is structured.

This review of the literature is divided into three separate sections that encompass the influential research foundation for this study. The first section discusses consumer education related theory, history, and various pedagogical approaches in college instruction. The second section details interdisciplinary theory and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, and literature concerning problem-based learning, active learning and student-centered approaches. Finally, semiotics, the significance of visual imagery and the importance of visual imagery within national and international organizations and the research concerning the defining and importance of visual communication is discussed.

The Institution as Consumer Educator

Sandlin and McLaren (2010) identify institutions acting as consumer educator as one of four primary manners in which learning and education “intersect” with consumption (p. 6).
Early research indicates that Langrehr and Mason (1977) were the first to identify four perspectives that frame the purpose of consumer education: the economic perspective, the life-goals perspective, the societal perspective, and the individual consumer perspective. The economic perspective is founded on a concept called “buymanship,” which focuses consumer education on training towards the “money management” of “personal economics, which emphasizes the consumer activities of spending income, borrowing, saving, and investing” (Warmke, 1974, pp. 607-608). The life-goals perspective would utilize education as necessary to focus on strengthening the value system of students so that they can arrange to reach their own personal goals (Langrehr & Mason, 1977). The societal perspective posits consumer education as capable of improving the nation’s economy, while the individual consumer perspective supports personalized benefits (Langrehr & Mason, 1977). Since consumer education is mandated in the United States primarily within K-12 education, and taking into consideration that college instructors will encounter their student’s various skills and individualized conceptions of consumer knowledge, a brief overview of K-12 consumer education is warranted.

**The problematic nature of K-12 consumer education.**

The nature of K-12 consumer education is technical and skill oriented, with its foundation rooted in the economic life perspective. Traditional consumer education is based upon a purpose of training individuals to utilize properly their own resources and navigate the consumer landscape wisely and efficiently (Zabelin, 2009). Success towards these aims has been documented: When a state mandates focus on the teaching of a specific topic within consumer education, student test scores are improved significantly (Tennyson & Nguyen, 2001, p. 259). Research has also detailed long-standing and disconcerting statistics about the progress of these
educational efforts. In spite of a general consensus on the importance of consumer education in K-12 schools, amongst the states there are great variations in the topic areas covered, the training of teachers in those areas, and the usage of standardized testing on the subject (Consumer Education, 2011, p. 3).

This situation remains even though suggestions towards universal standards, teacher training in consumer education, and continual support for the teachers of the subject have long been recommended (Bonner, 1993; Brobeck & Cohart, 1988). For example, while many mandates are most likely to include saving, budgeting, investing, and balancing a bank account, areas like citizen participation or consumption in a global context are less common (Sandlin, 2004/2005; Zabelin, 2009). Critical thinking and contextual engagement are much more likely to be sacrificed within the emphasis on skill training and technical knowledge. Even though the presence of the market in society and K-12 education is largely visual and has been a constant presence among the majority of students from very early ages, within the mandates for K-12 consumer education classroom activities involving the visual analysis of consumption are suggested in some state manuals, but they are not focused strongly on, or required in, any state mandate. Even more obscure topics would include digital media and technology or sustainable consumption (Higher Education, 2009). Furthermore, the more generalized a consumer education state mandate is, the higher the chance that it will have no positive effect on the improvement of standardized test scores (Tennyson & Nguyen, 2001, p. 259). These issues help account for the varying levels in skill and understanding that high school students have about consumer education when they enter college.
Another issue concerning market and institutional intersection has to do with the corporatization of K-12 education. While financially necessary, this presence of the market within K-12 institutions has been cited as a barrier towards creating critical consumers (Kellner & Share, 2005; Margolis, 2001). Corporate involvement in K-12 education occurs primarily because of financial benefit for that educational institution (Farahmandpur, 2010; Margolis, 2001; Molnar, Boninger, Wilkinson, & Fogarty, 2010). After researching the ties between K-12 educational institutions and corporations, Molnar et al. (2010) found that this relationship manifests itself in seven ways: “fundraising activities, incentive programs, exclusive agreements, appropriation of space, sponsorship of programs and activities, sponsored educational materials and electronic marketing” (p. 87). As representative of the market, the presence of the corporate entity in K-12 education is embodied in advertising and social marketing. A modern example of this advertising would include what Molnar (2006) describes as Educational Management Organizations, corporate entities that partner with schools during curriculum development. A company called Cover Concepts promotes itself to schools as “America’s largest in-school communications partner” that offers to work “in tandem with school administrators to distribute free, advertiser-sponsored materials such as textbook covers, lesson plans, posters, bookmarks, specialty packs, lunch menus, and other fun educational materials” (Degraff, Wann, & Naylor, 2005, p. 61). Their motive and impact of their involvement is described as the following:

Corporations are not so much interested in preparing students for critical citizenship and civic engagement as they are in developing future consumer-citizens. Whereas the former encourages students to question, conceptualize, analyze, theorize, and reflect critically upon their experiences in the world, the later lures students into an uncritical and blind acceptance of market values and practices designed to reinforce and maintain capitalist social relations of production. (Farahmandpur, 2010, pp. 64-65)
The existence of the market in K-12 institutions is argued to have the potential to “morph” students into “commodities shaped to fit into the market economy as merely consumers and workers” (Kellner & Share, 2005, p. 380). In light of the unexamined and strongly visual presence of the market in educational institutions, “unless educators take a lead in developing appropriate pedagogies for these new electronic media and forms of communication, corporate experts will be the ones to determine how people will learn, what they learn, and what constitutes (media) literacy” (Luke, 2000, p. 71), and therefore, greatly hamper students’ ability to analyze consumer culture critically.

**Consumer education in higher education.**

College consumer education is focused primarily in business and professional schools in the forms of “consumer and family economics (CFE) departments, home economics (HE), human development and family studies (HDFS), and agricultural economics (AE) departments” (Zick & Widdows, 1995, p. 2). Even though there is a strong emphasis on the economic perspective and the strength of focus on the individual, lifegoals and societal perspectives vary based on institution and department goals. Stuhlfaut and Farrell (2009) is the primary research within the field of consumer education that prompted this dissertation’s study. Their findings provide the justification for this study’s focus on the instructional philosophies and visuals utilized by college instructors of consumer education.

Stuhlfaut and Farrell (2009) analyzed the teaching of ethical, legal, and societal issues in advertising education. They defined “teaching ethical issues about advertising” as commentary on the “behavioral conduct of people in the advertising field and their relationships with peers, clients, audiences, and greater society” (p. 173). They defined a pedagogical focus on legal
issues as instruction that focused on “legislative, judicial and regulatory bodies of government” (p. 173). Lastly, they defined an instructional focus on society issues as a pedagogy that “examined the institution of advertising and the social or cultural system in which it exists” (p. 173). In an analysis of 91 institutions of higher learning and 75 syllabi from these institutions, their research questions looked for (a) a dominant structure amongst the approaches for the facilitation of ethical, legal, and society issues, (b) the identifying title of the courses, (c) the degree the courses were required learning, (d) the goals of the courses, (e) the content of the courses, (f) the methods for facilitating the issues, (g) the textbook used, and (h) the evaluation of student performance.

They found a high level of variation in course organization, with little agreement concerning textbook selection, course standards and evaluation methods of student performance. Combining all of the issues in one course, or requiring a course on each was also evident in the university structuring of the topic. They found the most prevalent structure was the requirement of one law and ethics course, with no social issue course required. It was discovered that the social issue courses were offered and focused on mostly as elective specialty courses, with 34% of a requirement concerning social issues compared to an 82% requirement of legal issues. While a social framework was focused on institutions where ethical advertising issues were required curriculum, these issues were defined as including “privacy, propaganda, conflicts, and the balance of society and individual rights,” while the social issue courses delved into “stereotyping, consumerism, globalization of the mass media, pop culture, and economics” (p. 180).
The extreme variations in institutional requirements and topic focus are attributed by the authors of the study to be caused, not just by the lack of a prevailing pedagogy for advertising curricula, but also because of differences in the backgrounds of the instructors and their definitions of social, legal, and ethical issues that pertain to the consumptive subject. My study attempts to determine whether consumer education within an interdisciplinary general education format will provide more continuity and less variation than the findings of Stuhlfaut and Farrell (2009). My study also attempts to describe the aspects of an interdisciplinary program with a strong focus on sociological consumer education.

**Germane Studies and Theoretical Instructional Frameworks**

Below are examples of consumer education research within higher education that highlight different pedagogical approaches and student results within Langrehr and Mason (1977) perspectives.

**Economic perspective research example.** Fisher and Smith (2010) challenged their marketing students to generate their own theories about “how people think marketing works” (p. 65). Students were charged with choosing, interviewing, transcribing and generating theories from two other individuals about their consumption practices and reasoning. After presenting their research to the class, the ensuing discussion engaged learners in redefining the process of marketing for themselves and personalizing their understanding of how others justify their behavior as consumers.

**Life-goals perspective research example.** McInnis-Bowers, Chew, and Bowers (2010) utilized a reflective thinking framework to attempt to get marketing students to be more
culturally sensitive and better adapted “for the real world” (p. 17). During one semester, 48 students assessed themselves using the Myers-Briggs type indicator to make themselves more aware of their own personality traits. A Likert scale assessed the students’ perception at reflective thinking at the beginning and end of the term. While not enthused by the course’s self-analysis methods in the beginning of the term, the students assessed that their ability to “thoughtfully and deeply reflect on the implications of your actions during an encounter/situation with others” improved from 48% to 77% (p. 19).

**Societal perspective: The postmodern perspective.** The individual consumer perspective concerning personalized benefits is represented in the work of Baudrillard (1988), Debord, (1995), Bourdieu (1989), Barthes (1972), and Bocock (1993), along with numerous other postmodern theorists; these authors have written extensively on America’s transition from a society of consumption for the fulfillment of needs to a society that consumes to satiate desires stimulated by the visual imagery of advertisements. The postmodern view of consumption is sociological in nature and built upon the understanding of how sign value (the giving and taking of meaning through symbols) has permeated consumer culture, affecting the average individual since infancy. Needs, desires, identity construction, image perception and views of social class are all intertwined within this perspective to place the focus on the individual’s motivations to establish a self through the use of consumer symbols. Identity, arguably, “can be constructed and expressed through consumption as a mode of becoming, the dominant mode through which individuals can creatively construct and express a fluid identity from a variety of possibilities now open to them” (Usher, 2010, p. 37). Implied in this definition is a tie between expressions of
identity and social class. Limitations are placed on the accessibility of certain expressions so that they are restricted by class and, therefore, are expressions of class.

Marketers and advertising agencies manipulate and further the evolutions of identity expression for profit. Working within the framework of these various psychological ties between consumption and expression of identity, psychographic researchers within the field of marketing have developed several typologies to accompany the demographic information (age, race, gender, etc.) that marketers and advertisers rely on to best promote the consumption of their products. For instance, the VALS I and II typologies were developed to help describe different kinds of consumers based on the attitudes and values that motivate how a consumer constructs their lifestyles (Berger, 2015). For instance, the VALS I typology describes nine categories of consumers:

- Need driven consumers (survivors and sustainers), who are money restricted and have a hard time affording basic needs.
- Outer directed (belongers, emulators and achievers): want others to feel positively about them. Belongers and emulators (upwardly mobile, status conscious, competitive and distrustful of the establishment), and achievers (leaders who have status).
- Inner directed (I-am-me, societally conscious and experientials): purchase to meet their inner needs rather than thinking about other’s opinions (strong individuals).
- Integrateds: psychologically mature, tolerant, confident, and self-actualizing leaders (tend to actually ignore advertising, but have high tastes—about 2% of population).

The VALS II typology revises the first typology to reflect the impact of purchasing ability on consumer motivation and the resulting presentations of identity. These categories are more geared towards decision making and are as follows:

- Actualizers: successful individuals who with image as a reflection of taste and character; are interested in social issues.
- Fulfilleds: practical, mature, satisfied and financially comfortable people who value functionality and durability in products.
• Achievers: career oriented and purchase to gain an image reflecting their success; value intimacy, self-discovery, and structure.
• Experincers: impulsive and enthusiastic young people who take risks and love to spend money.
• Believers: highly principled conservative consumers who stick to well-known brands.
• Strivers: aren’t as well off as achievers; concerned with the opinions of others and desire outward approval.
• Makers: self-sufficient, active consumers (fix own cars, grow own food).
• Strugglers: bottom of economic totem pole (Berger, 2015, pp. 147-148).

Responding to the identity evolution and possible crisis described by postmodern theorists in response to a consumer society that targets an individual’s intimate concept of self, postmodern consumer education is focused on the effects of visual imagery on identity formation, effects that became a growing concern to educators and theorists in response to the increasing impact of television, social media, and magazine advertising on individual consumer choices during the postmodern era (mid-to-late twentieth century through today).

Postmodern perspective research example. Ahuvia (2005) studied the appeal of objects on the expression of self. Utilizing a hermeneutic approach, Ahuvia (2005) conducted 70 interviews that were narrowed down to a set of ten in-depth interviews. Two case studies were chosen from the ten in-depth interviews. He found that “loved” objects were described through narrative form as part of individual identity (p. 171). Furthermore, these objects, which become identified individually as representative of self, come from a trend increasing since the early 1980s in which objects were being marketed “for their own sake, instead of their function” (Belk & Pollay, 1985). The image matters and is prioritized over the reality as “images circulate as true value;” commercials and reality television are preferred over documentaries because they produce an image that is desirable (Baudrillard, 1998, p. 11). This prioritization occurs while documentaries are called into question for having a hidden agenda. Therefore, the imagery
utilized during classroom facilitation will have a reaction and impact on the consumer education at the time, because “consumer goods are part of the way in which people construct a sense of who they are, of their sense of identity through the use of symbols in consumption patterns” (Kellner, 1992, pp. 141-177).

**Societal perspective: Critical theory.** The four perspectives defined in the research of Langrehr and Mason (1977) have evolved due to the impact of critical theory. Critical theory is founded in the works of Marx, the Frankfurt School, and various other social theorists, and it serves as a questioning of the basic premises of capitalism, focusing on the social classes that are created and how individuals are manipulated by establishment mechanisms (advertising, commercial culture, television shows, and other mechanisms of manufacturing identity through desires, etc.). The purpose of critical pedagogy “is to help us examine the social learning processes (particularly as they are exemplified in commercial advertising and the mass media in general) through which we come to identify ourselves as consumers rather than producers” (Collins, 1998, p. 103). Examples of research concerning critical pedagogy include exploring how schools function as marketplaces, analyzing the commodification of higher education, and propositions toward a critical reflection of lifestyle practices.

**Research Example #1.** Treagor et al. (2007) provided an example of the critical perspective when she analyzed qualitatively the reactions of marketing students who were tasked with the job of being “critical” (p. 412). Twenty-five honors-level British marketing students participated in two “critical approach” modules, “modules that have critical thinking as an explicit objective,” to address the following research questions:

How do students perceive “critical approach” modules relative to other modules? How do students perceive the task of “being critical” and what strengths and weaknesses do they
associate with it? Which factors appear to influence or moderate students’ perceptions of “critical approach” modules? (Treagor et al., 2007, p. 413)

While a few found the task “overwhelming” and “daunting,” most participants reported that the modules trained them to question information they used to accept at face value (p. 421). Furthermore, the critical questioning made the field of marketing “seem more important” because it was more socially relevant in a broader way (p. 420).

Further examples of consumptive research that would be critical would include a criticism of American culture as a homogenized culture in which individuals feel powerless to change, control, or escape establishment consumptive ideology. These critiques normally accompany or spur proposals that envision an American culture that is not driven by consumption. These are just some of the various foci of critical consumer pedagogy that are documented in sociology and higher education literature and research (deMarris, 1991; McLaren & Houston, 2004; Usher, Bryant, & Johnston, 1997; Collins, 1998; Hoechsmann, 2010).

**Research Example #2.** Greenwood (2010) documents how students have displayed a lack of direction in reaction to the contextualization and problematizing of consumption-related issues that have an impact on them due to the “ethic of place” that underpins his consumptive pedagogy. After researching with his class of teachers the production history of where the majority of American chocolate comes from, students were confronted with the dilemma that workers who are dealing with human rights abuses and oppressive conditions are also working for their livelihoods. Therefore, should consumers’ response be to consume more or less of a product produced under such conditions? “What should we do with this kind of knowledge as consumers? … Does an ethic of place require deprivation” (p. 197). The study produces the questions of whether or not students can be made to understand the importance of the knowledge
of human impact that is associated with their consumption, that their lack of impetus towards that knowledge is a kind of privilege, and lastly that such knowledge may have an impact on how they prioritize their consumptive needs?

**Critique of the Research**

The studies of Treagor et al. (2007), Fisher and Smith (2010), and McInnis-Bowers, Chew and Bowers (2010) all have a pedagogical focus on attempting to contextualize society for their students with the dual purpose of realizing their own identities and roles as individuals who would help the surrounding community achieve its goals, and for them to learn about the community of consumers they would serve. While the contextualization in these studies has an intrapersonal and interpersonal aspect in these studies, which are all underscored with a critical thinking and theoretical foundation, Ahuvia (2005) demonstrates that how people function as consumers is an individualized and varied perception of desirability to the consumption messages to which they have already been exposed. Therefore, while the focus was to contextualize traditional marketing education, are Treagor et al., Fisher and Smith, and McInnis-Bowers, Chew, and Bowers reporting on the purpose of that contextualization to produce critical thinking in students who would eventually create the images that compel consumers, or to make students question what roles they will play as part of the marketing apparatus upon graduation? That students become culturally sensitive and more thoughtful aligns itself with the hope that the students do not lose sight of the people they serve in favor for a consumptive institution that prioritizes profit at the expense of the citizenship of those people. Treagor et al. provides the outcome that some students were able to comprehend the social relevancy of the field, even while other students were overwhelmed, which mirrored an experience of Greenwood’s (2010)
These studies influence this research by prompting this question: What did the instructors hope to achieve in their contextualization of traditional marketing approaches? It is already clear that this pedagogical approach is not the only one that instructors in the technical and statistic-based field utilize. Yet, all of the aforementioned studies failed to ask the follow up question of how the contextualization impacted the view of how students defined their roles as marketing and business majors, and whether or not any redefinition of role was the goal of the instructors. Also, all of the aforementioned studies were situated within traditional consumer education departments. The research proposed has an interdisciplinary focus, and research is incomplete concerning the pedagogical approaches of instructors within general education.

**McGregor’s (2005/2011) typology and educational philosophies.** Therefore, my study’s framework is a typology of critical and consumptive pedagogy structured by McGregor (2005), who provides her typology as a description of how critical theory would frame consumer empowerment. “Separating the notion of citizenship from consumer empowerment reinforces the conventional understanding of the empowered consumer as a self-advocate for self-interest” (p. 438). This typology is influenced by the *European Module for Consumer Education (2001)*, which has recommendations towards the educating of consumers on a collective level to empower them to be able to alter institutional frameworks. A critical insight provided by McGregor (2005) is her assertion that enabling individuals to make a purchasing decision by informing them is not the same as empowering them to take action in a manner where they have the authority to redefine roles and positions in society. Most of the consumer educational principles explained above concerning mandated consumer education are non-critical and are focused on training individuals towards functional survival in a system they can neither change
nor choose to not participate in. McGregor (2005) argues that the role of critical consumer educators is “to create a safe learning environment so that people can feel comfortable examining their values, perceptions, attitudes and world mind set” (p. 442). This learning environment can, in turn, empower individuals to choose differently for themselves than they would ordinarily be trained to do by educators who view consumer society as inevitable.

McGregor’s (2005/2011) typology defines four types of consumer education and the types of consumer that would result from that specific pedagogical approach. Furthermore, she aligns 11 educational philosophies in with her four approaches:

Type 1: Consumer information, protection and advocacy: Relies on the assumption that individuals must participate as consumers, but must do so in the most informed manner possible while actively preventing exploitation.
- Social adaptation: informs the student how to manage social problems, conform to, and fit into, the existing social order in maintenance of the status quo. (2011, p. 6).
- Essentialism: transmitting the view of seeing the nation as a consumer society, and educating people to see themselves as major economic players whose primary role in a consumer society is to consume (2011, p. 6).

Type II: Individual critique for self-interest: Responsibility for self and individual changes in lifestyle creates individuals who cannot focus on the larger society, but are questioning what it means to live in a consumer society. (2005, p. 441)
- Existentialism: curriculum emphasis on humanities, fine arts, history, religious studies, as students examine the meaning of life through emotions, thoughts, actions and responsibilities to answer the question of “what is the good life? Who am I if not to consume.” (2011, p. 6.)
- Cognitive: a critical thinking, problem solving, and reflection-based pedagogy that teaches students to think through consumer situations and be confident in their problem solving. (2011, pp. 5 & 6)

Type III: Critical approach for self-interest: Critical citizen consumers are reflective in order to not propagate the current capitalist system. (2005, p. 441)
- Self-Actualization: focuses on personal significance, autonomy and inner potential to become a self-governing agent, rather than to solve social problems. Equating individual consuming with various levels of personal power. (2011, p. 6.)
- Social Reconstructivism: the school as an instrument of social change through citizen students who study current problems for the purpose of problem solving to challenge consumer society and the ideology of consumerism. (2011, p. 6.)
- Cognitive (previously defined)
Critical: critical reflection leading to consciousness raising and emancipation from oppression, exploitation, discrimination and marginalization (Eisner, 1979, as seen in McGregor, 2011, p. 6).

Type IV: Empowerment approach for mutual interest: Focuses on mutual interests, meaning that inner power and potential help individuals focus on national and global interests and become global citizens who function from a holistic perspective. Language and imagery are called into question. (2005, p. 441)

- Self-Actualization (previously defined)
- Social Reconstructivism (previously defined)
- Progressivism: teachers are facilitators of real life, authentic learning experiences as well as student centered instruction to foster character development and create independent thinkers for the public good. (2011, p. 6.)

- Personal-Global: integrates cognitive, self-actualization and social reconstructivism to focus on social change, global citizenship and stewardship. Presumes that each individual student is a unique, holistic being who is continuously in the process of becoming, seeking full integration with his or her changing environment. (2011, p. 6)

McGregor argues for liberated learning approaches that challenge material oppression from a foundation of conscientization. Furthermore, a much more interesting and widely applicable proposition from McGregor is that consumer education must utilize three different languages, specifically “a language of critique, a language of possibility and a language of action” (p. 444).

While consumption-based pedagogy grounded in critical theory is a popular concept, it is not without complications. Are instructors that are on an investigative journey within consumer education overwhelmed as well? Greenwood (2010) states of his experiences working with middle and high school teachers, “I am intimidated by the shadow of ignorance that shrouds my consumption and I don’t feel capable of dramatic transformation” (p. 194). The assumption cannot be made that instructors are experts in all matters pertaining to consumption when they are citizens who may be on their own journeys of discovery and self-analysis. Greenwood (2010) writes how, as an instructor, “arguing for a less-commodified existence is essentially hypocritical
unless one is prepared to reveal the ways in which one’s own privilege is encumbered in money and what it provides” (pp. 194-195). He argues for an ethic of place concerning his instructional pedagogy, stating that it should be required that he “know something about how my consumption is connected to other people and places, and that I endeavor to act, however imperfectly, on that knowledge” (p. 194). In communication theory, the term of “place” has a particular definition that goes beyond simple geographical location:

A position in a social hierarchy, a physical setting, or the niche that is properly occupied by a thing, person, or idea. Place is also how one discovers or explores a subject by the use of mental images. Speech is the principal medium for creating meanings in social interaction, it holds different meanings for the various peoples whose views of the world afford it a place. (Martin, et. al., 2002, p. 193)

While a contextualization of society is evident in the research, do instructors of consumer issues see themselves as capable of creating the environment supported by McGregor (2005) for the examination of analyzing consumer culture? Greenwood’s (2010) ethic of place is indicative of McGregor’s (2008b) five orders of consumer adulthood, which defines the orders of consciousness people have about their identity as consumers and how they should act on it.

Greenwood’s ethic of place is indicative of what McGregor (2008b) conceptualizes as the “Interindividual” order, meaning that he can view his consumption as needing to be responsible on the social realities of others. The other orders provided by McGregor (2008b) include the following:

First order – Impulsive (egocentric; age 2-6): actions based on emotions and impulse (no sense of self). Second order – Imperial (egocentric; age 7-12): motivated by one’s own desires (notion of self is emerging). Third order – Interpersonal (ethnocentric; age 13-30): self is totally defined by the group and values given by society. Fourth order – Institutional (world; age 30 and onward, at least middle age): self is self-authored and unique identity emerges. Fifth order – Interindividual (world; mid 40s and onward): self is a system in formation, made up of a weaving together of elements from other systems. (McGregor, 2008b, p. 3)
These classifications of maturity could have implications towards the experiences of consumer education, namely what levels of maturity they are encountering in the classroom and what impact that has on their instructional approaches.

McGregor (2013) also built on environmental education research by Selby (2010) concerning his terms of sustainable moderation and sustainable contraction, that he formulated in response to his critique of education for sustainable development. Being only one of many critics who state that human consumption and environmental behavior is not sustainable and will take more than educational methods to create a responsible ethos towards consuming, Selby (2010) argues that the dire nature of our environmental ecosystem requires that “business as usual production and consumption” (p. 37) be countered, which means that people be educated to do more than use and require less as a matter of function. That development ceases altogether, as people are educated to become denizens of property they learn to sustain themselves through what Selby defines as “sustainable contraction” (Kagawa & Selby, 2010, p. 41). Furthermore, this contraction and cessation of development/production is meant to continue until the ecosphere reaches a state of “sustainable moderation” (Kagawa & Selby, 2010, p. 41), which means that the world has become able to truly sustain itself in a functional relationship with the environment that prioritizes humanity over acquisition and accumulation.

My study was influenced by both McGregor’s typology of teaching philosophies, her orders of consumer adulthood and her embrace of Selby’s (2010) environmental proposals. Maturity and adulthood are issues involved with my study because non-traditional age students are also students of consumer education from institutions of higher learning.
**Consumer education for adults and curriculum.** Modern examples of consumer education programs for adults include bankruptcy financial education, credit certification programs, homebuyer education programs, and individual development account programs (O’Neill, 2007). While these programs tend to vary greatly across the nation, their existence increases the ability of educators to “earn additional income as trainers, secure much needed revenue for their employers, and provide unbiased financial information to “hard-to-reach” audiences that need it most” (O’Neill, 2007, p. 79). While these programs tend to be governmentally regulated and organizational, there are also programs that occur within higher education.

Sandlin (2001) interviewed two women who were not of traditional college age concerning the materials they came across in consumer education courses. She found that the curriculum approached all individuals in need of consumer education as if they were hedonistic, unreasonable, and incompetent. This curriculum was based on research done with traditional-aged college students, making it inadequate for adult learners. The textbooks described learners as having little experience with real world skills who would go into debt from making unwise consumer decisions without instruction, while the ladies proved that they are experienced women whose life history and knowledge were much more complex and knew how to manage their finances wisely (Sandlin, 2001). The textbooks assumed that their readers had insatiable consumer appetites, while the ladies displayed reason and restraint. The learners interviewed saw themselves as much more competent consumers than the textbooks portrayed them to be. Ignoring the experience of older consumers,
The consumer education materials, for the most part, assume that the learners using their materials need to learn a variety of technical skills about money, shopping, banking, and paying bills, and that learners do not already know very much about these topics. The women in this study, however, both have had banking accounts for over a decade, understand how credit cards work, keep budgets and use them to run their households, prioritize their needs and wants, shop for bargains and compare prices at different stores, and know how to pay bills. (Sandlin, 2001, pp. 11-12)

These frameworks allow an investigation into the manner of pedagogical approach, and allow instructors to inform research concerning student ability, student maturity, and student resistance. The need to ascertain issues of maturity stems from research in consumer education demonstrating that adult and non-traditional students may not be served by the curriculum provided to traditional age college students.

**Boyer’s Scholarships of Teaching and Integration**

Interdisciplinary research and teaching are very important to the scholarship of higher education. Through this method, original research is reinterpreted (Braxton, Luckey, & Helland, 2002). Ideas must be integrated and boundaries against doing so must be overcome. Schon (1995) viewed teaching as action research, which Rosiek and Atkinson (2005) defined as an approach to teacher knowledge research that generates a local understanding that focuses on the personal theorizing of educators. There are researchers who attempted to support the need for higher education to direct itself towards social good; these attempts are made on the foundation of Boyer’s scholarships of teaching, application (social service) and integration on action research (Schon, 1995).
Of Boyer’s (1990) four domains of scholarship (discovery, integration, teaching, and application), he proposed the scholarship of integration to counter a historic overemphasis on the scholarship of discovery (research) in higher education, stating that “First colleges and universities need to serve society” (Boyer, 1990). He described the scholarship of integration as the manner by which higher education would propose to students a manner to “better understand the interdependent nature of the world” (p. 77). This means that research must be done on the margins where fields unite. Likewise, Shulman (1987) proposed that The Scholarship of Teaching approach to teacher knowledge research establish publicly available resources that are both peer reviewed and critiqued for “practical teaching knowledge that will inform other teachers’ practice and perhaps inspire future inquiry” (Rosiek & Atkinson, 2005, p. 424). The following areas detail research that has influenced the framework of this dissertation’s study from the areas of Boyer’s domain of integration and teaching. Research is included concerning SoTL on college campuses, problem-based instruction, the multifaceted dimensions of interdisciplinarity and interdisciplinary issues within consumer education.

**Defining and Participating in SoTL**

Secret et al. (2011) evaluated the status of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) at one university campus. Their study argued that there is a variation of definition and a lack of consensus concerning what the SoTL means and how it is achieved on college campuses. They surveyed faculty of 159 participants and disseminated a list with scholarship activities to the faculty members to determine which were part of SoTL and which activities were not. Utilizing a Chi square, the researchers found that faculty of different statuses (full time, clinical,
tenure-track) thought differently about what activities were or were not considered SoTL, and nearly half reported no experience with SoTL.

In an attempt to educate and facilitate SoTL amongst the faculty, Saylor and Harper (2003) researched teacher scholars at a university who used reflective narrative research, action research, and traditional empirical research to evaluate their own teaching methods. Saylor and Harper (2003) state that research on college campuses can help college instructors achieve the goals of evaluating “the effectiveness of their teaching, inquiring into the nature of student learning, assessing innovations in the classroom, curriculum, or discipline, and inform policy decisions ranging from curriculum development to rethinking the nature of the university” (p. 151). After surveying 1300 students, and engaging in campus workshops with other instructors, participants consulted the literature on how to evaluate their findings and report their results, allowing them to identify for themselves how they would interact with students and faculty about SoTL evaluative methods towards the quality of their teaching.

These studies are important because if faculty is allowed to be confused or unclear about SoTL, let alone be allowed to participate in it, instructors of higher education will find it difficult to learn from the educational practices of others; likewise, if faculty dedicate themselves to the manner of pedagogical evaluation, they may assist themselves in their evolution of conscientious educators.

Crebbin (1997) conceptualizes the discourses that describe good quality teaching in higher education. She focuses on the differences between three of many differing discourses: 1) a management discourse, which describes the characteristics of teaching as being well supported and well administered according to institutional goals, 2) a discourse that focuses on the
characteristics of teachers (their dispositions of being knowledgeable, dedicated, and interested) and how these characteristics relate to learning experiences, and lastly 3) the characteristics of “academics-as-teachers” (p. 29), which takes into account the differences among the students they instruct and the nonlinear educational dynamics that mirror the “complexity of the ideas and concepts they are teaching” (p. 29). Furthermore, the academics-as-teachers perspective also views teaching “as an expression of the person, their values, and experiences, and their views of knowledge and learning.” (p. 30) with their history of positive and negative experiences impacting their educational and pedagogical philosophies.

**Problem-based learning (PBL)**

Nikitina (2006) defined problem centering (problem-based learning) as one of three basic teaching approaches to interdisciplinary curriculum, along with contextualizing, which is “embedding the facts and ideas in the cultural, historical or ideological fabric,” and conceptualizing, which is “if the scientific method guides and sets the standard for integration” (p. 251). She defines the problem-based approach as occurring when “the spirit and mode of inquiry is that of the applied sciences or creative product-development … of urgent or tangible issues” (p. 251), “which require more than one discipline to solve” and is intended to “apply understanding to action and social change (p. 253). Furthermore, Hursh, Hass, and Moore (1983) argue that the inclusion of perspectives from different disciplines is necessary for cognitive development.

Keebaugh, Darrow, Tan, and Jamerson (2009) researched how interdisciplinary educators in courses would implement PBL where multiple disciplines are represented. Keebaugh et al. (2009) reflects on this difficulty and others facing interdisciplinary instructors, and they identify
another difficulty as having to “develop a coherent set of ideas and teaching strategies to facilitate communication with undergraduate students who have very little understanding of the disciplinary divides that can confine us as teachers and researchers” (p. 124).

PBL is evident in the generalized structuring of the course because instructors documented the use of delayed teaching during the groupwork of the course, and initial lecturing to provide the foundation from which students would be able to be more self-directed and reflective in their learning (p. 120). Also indicative of a combination of PBL instructional pedagogy with scaffolding were the faculty’s use of “mentoring, debate, discussion and mini lecturing” (Keebaugh et al., 2009, p. 125). Sociological exercises that would situate a social problem and its various private and public complexities were also utilized in the beginning of the course. After making sure that each section had a similar model and content overlap, each instructor used their own research in their pedagogical approaches, and structured assignments like debates over ethical issues and writing assignments that would allow students to explore the real-world applicability of the scientific issues they were addressing in the course. The understanding of the instructors of their different backgrounds aided them in structuring a course in which students would notice the “continuity across various scientific disciplines” (Keebaugh et al., 2009, p. 121). Unfortunately, the research is unclear as to whether the disciplinary boundaries that had been crossed were evident to the students of the courses. While these boundaries may have been the intent of the authors, if students did not clearly understand the disciplinary boundaries, that lack of understanding would not have rendered the interdisciplinary collaboration and facilitation of the instructors a failure.
Conceptualizing Interdisciplinarity

Because interdisciplinarity is “an elusive concept” that many feel is essential to fostering who can be successful and proactive in society, there are many different aspects to the theorization, pedagogical application and institutional definitions of what it means (Dezure, 2010, Latucca, Voight, & Fath, 2001; Mansilla & Duraising, 2007; Shor, 1992; Spelt et al., 2009). I found it necessary to provide an overview of interdisciplinarity for this study, because the term evolves into many forms throughout educational institutions.

One of the seminal theorists concerning interdisciplinarity is Julie Thompson Klein (1990; 2010). In her Taxonomy of Interdisciplinarity, she provides definitions for the application of various interdisciplinary formats in higher education, and explains why those applications might be different, which is highly useful because the implementation of an interdisciplinary pedagogy can vary for many different reasons, with only one of those reasons being the instructor’s approach to that particular subject matter. There are several concerns about the teaching that relates to a larger social context that would spur sentiment towards the necessity of interdisciplinarity in higher education: “the inherent complexity of nature and society, the desire to explore problems and questions that are not confined to a single discipline, the need to solve societal problems, and the power of new technologies” are just a few of them (Klein, 2010, p. 26).

First of all, there are several differing definitions of interdisciplinarity, as well as interdisciplinary education and interdisciplinary teaching, but the following definition of interdisciplinarity encompasses the various sentiments towards what all of this is: “Interdisciplinary research or education typically refers to those situations in which the integration of the work goes beyond the mere concentration of disciplinary contributions”
(Petrie, 1992, p. 304). According to Klein’s (2010) taxonomy, there are several formats of interdisciplinarity (ID) pedagogy and synthesis. Narrow ID occurs between disciplines that are similar in thought, methods, and theoretical framework, while Broad ID occurs “between disciplines with little or no compatibility, such as sciences and humanities” (p. 18). In this, Klein (2010) also defines the difference between methodological and theoretical ID, stating that the two have different motivations underlying them. Methodological ID in research is results oriented; the researcher wants to use a different concept from another “discipline” to better analyze research results (Klein, 2010). Theoretical ID is a “comprehensive general view and epistemological form” (p. 20).

Under the heading of theoretical ID, you have various epistemological views that range from broad to detailed. Instrumental ID functions one of two ways: either Generalizing ID applies a single theoretical perspective to a wide range of disciplines, or integrated ID uses “concepts from one discipline towards problems and theories of another” (Klein, 2010, p. 22). Another specialized version defined from Klein (2010) is critical ID, which “interrogates the dominant structures of knowledge and education with the aim of transforming them, raising questions of value and purpose silent in instrumental ID” and has obvious roots in critical theory. Gunn (1992) states that “the inevitable result of much interdisciplinary study, if not its ostensible purpose is to dispute and disorder conventional understandings of relations between such things as origin and terminus, center and periphery, focus and margin, inside and outside” (pp. 241, 243, 248 & 249). While interdisciplinary pedagogy is not at all a simple process or approach, it is “concerned with fostering in students a sense of self-authorship and a situated, partial and perspectival notion of knowledge that they can use to respond to complex questions, issues and
problems” (Dezure, 2010, p. 384). While these taxonomies are useful in conceptualizing how instructors might approach information differently in the classroom, Latuca, Voight, and Fath (2001) proposes four more specific types of interdisciplinary teaching that might provide insight to instructor thought and motivation.

Latuca, Voight, and Fath (2001) provide the concepts informed disciplinarity, synthetic interdisciplinarity, transdisciplinarity, and conceptual interdisciplinarity as being more indicative of motivation and pedagogical usage. Informed disciplinarity occurs when instructors within a discipline utilize other disciplines to better explain content from their field. Synthetic interdisciplinarity is a combination of methodology, theories, and information from different disciplines, but those disciplines remain identifiable, “revealing relatively bounded content areas and perhaps distinctive methods of inquiry” (p. 25).

Transdisciplinarity has the most common definition amongst theorists and is not without controversy. Latuca, Voight, and Fath (2001) describe this as being an integration of theoretical concepts and approaches across disciplines in a manner in which a single discipline is not specifically prevalent anymore. Petrie (1992) states that the integration of knowledge into an indiscernible whole is characterized as a “repudiation of the disciplines and disciplinary work” that is “fragmented and incomplete” (p. 305). This might be explained through Klein’s (1990) detailed discussion of this, in which she describes it as prioritizing knowledge over discipline, by “encompassing the several parts of material handled separately by specialized disciplines” (p. 66). Because disciplines become “irrelevant, subordinate or instrumental to the larger framework,” (p. 66) to the theory created by the combined influence of them, the offense towards those who are strongly identified by discipline is understandable. Yet, because of examples Klein
(1990) identifies as indicative of transdisciplinary theory, such as sociological biology, gender studies, and peace research, the interconnection of knowledge with the purpose of social benefit is important and indicative of a theoretical social action emphasis (Schon, 1995).

This debate over transdisciplinarity is related to the debate concerning whether disciplinary knowledge is necessarily fundamental to interdisciplinary work. Researchers such as Meckley (2005/2006) state that the expertise of one discipline increases the comfort instructors feel, making them more likely and more able to teach interdisciplinarily. In light of interdisciplinary consumer education naysayers, Shepard (1984) insists that interdisciplinary consumer education is only possible if students are given a strong foundation in consumer education before any interdisciplinary efforts can be appropriately successful. On the other hand, Dezure (2010) includes under the heading of interdisciplinary pedagogies those instructors who describe the courses they teach in light of their own “interdisciplinary synthesis of disciplinary materials without formal explication of instruction on how to employ disciplines to arrive at integrated interdisciplinary solutions” (p. 374). Mansilla and Duraising (2007) present this side of this argument by interviewing faculty members who discussed interdisciplinary assessment, stating, “if students are drawing from multiple disciplines, it is unreasonable and unnecessary to expect them to master all of the disciplines involved,” thereby assessing work based on the combination of perspectives involved (p. 224). All of these findings are indicative of the conclusion by Spelt, Biemans, Tobi, Luning, and Mulder (2009) that, after a systematic search of four scientific literature bases, research concerning interdisciplinary higher education is still limited and explorative.
Interdisciplinary approaches and problem-based learning are already evident in consumer education research, but not without conflicts. There is documented resistance to interdisciplinary consumer education as part of general education. Below is a brief overview of the reasoning behind the resistance to interdisciplinary offerings of consumer education on college campuses, as well as what attempts within documented research concerning what these offerings can look like.

**Resisting merger and interdisciplinarity.** Much research has documented a debate over how much focus can be given to consumer education in departments where consumer education has been combined with another economic area (Demirdjian & Senguder, 2004; Kasserjian, 1994; Shepard, 1984). This concern is compounded as these departments face constant threats of merger with other economically focused disciplines. Furthermore, research has also documented that college consumer education is also provided interdisciplinarily and as a part of a general education program.

Zick and Widdows (1995) surveyed 190 department heads to gain their assessment of the budgetary and enrollment complications their departments faced and the likelihood that their department would “merge with another department/program and change from its current form” (pp. 2-3). Using a regression equation on the responses from 86 participants, Zick and Widdows (1995) determined that the department heads who lacked support for the continuation of their programs made pessimistic predictions for that program’s future. They also found that campus and community political support, which could be defined as an understanding of the importance and relevance of “consumer research and teaching,” is important in supporting the enrollment and functioning of these departments on college campuses (p. 5). While these mergers are seen
to have the effect of strengthening the consumer education aspect to the economics discipline to which it is partnered, Zick and Widdows (1995) argue that “the centrality, identity, visibility, and disciplinary integrity of the consumer economics component is eroded” when merged with other disciplines (p. 6).

**Interdisciplinary consumer education.** Sandlin (2007) is only one of many researchers who support a more sociological and critical approach to the instruction of consumer education in higher education (Goodman, 2008; Martins & Brooks, 2010; Ringberg & Reihlen, 2008; Tian, College, & Walle, 2007). Researchers also have proposed an interdisciplinary approach to economics and consumer education (Cavigla-Harris, 2003; Mansilla & Duraising, 2007; McGregor, 2007).

Caviglia-Harris (2003) demonstrates an application of her model for “teaching economics at an introductory level using an interdisciplinary approach” (p. 196). Her interdisciplinary approach to economics builds upon Siegfried and Raymond’s (1984) proposal that introducing the topic at the introductory level would increase interest and enrollment in the major of economics itself. Her model is designed for application in “any economics field that is traditionally taught as upper-level classes” (p. 196). In attempting to instruct underclassmen on the importance of economics to other disciplines, she describes structuring the teaching within such a framework as a “challenge” because she had to instruct non-economic majors on economics principles (Caviglia-Harris, 2003, p. 201). To address this accommodation, her model is comprised of structuring course content into the three components of “introductory economics material, economic theory specific to the field addressed, and applications related to the course theme” (p. 197).
Reiboldt (1996) documented how instructors from the traditional consumer education departments on her campus worked together to produce an interdisciplinary, team-taught course. The course could be chosen for the fulfillment of a general education requirement and became popular among the student body. She supported the creation of the course, not because the education in the separate disciplines was lacking, but because it was a possibility that “the diversity and richness of consumer problems” were not being investigated with enough depth (p. 23).

Kurland et al. (2010) documents the process, success, and challenges concerning how seven instructors from the fields of family and consumer sciences, geography, management, political science, psychology, recreation and tourism, and urban studies worked together to find a sustainability institute on the campus of CUNY and create an undergraduate course on sustainability as part of that campus’ “Campus Greening Initiative” (p. 459). The “upper division interdisciplinary course” was developed with the 15-week semester split per the disciplinary boundaries of the instructors to allow the team teaching of the subject to provide students with a thoroughly comprehensive facilitation on the topic (p. 463). While the course was determined to be successful by the students, researchers found that even though they strove for an interdisciplinary perspective, a multidisciplinary approach was the result, with faculty leadership and expectations not being clear or uniform. They also found that the differences in major field amongst the students created barriers in terminology that prevented some students from learning from each other.

Likewise, Eisen et al. (2009) documents a university wide effort to create an interdisciplinary focus on the sustainability issue of water conservation. This effort culminated in
the creation of two courses that were “cross-listed and satisfied a general education requirement” (p. 101). Professors from the fields of geology, philosophy, literature, anthropology, and biology worked together in striving to help students “think about the impact of water in their daily lives” (p. 101). Students positively evaluated the engagement and diversity of perspectives in the initiative, and all but one thought that the course achieved its goals to assist students to view the issue from the perspectives of other disciplines. The instructors also stated that the effort allowed them to learn from each other while using the new information to approach possible solutions to the issue of water conservation.

The interdisciplinary research above documents university-wide efforts or team-taught offerings that are limited amongst the instructors in topic or availability. My study’s research concerns the interdisciplinary and varied offering of consumer education within many courses as part of the general education curriculum.

Petrie (1992) posits that interdisciplinarity is an attempt to view the world in various ways that might be more appropriate (in several instances) than traditional (disciplinary) approaches. In the same vein, Silver (1999) states that interdisciplinary developments could be catalysts for curriculum prompted innovations. The interdisciplinary efforts of Caviglia-Harris (2003), Reiboldt (1996), Kurland et al. (2010), and Eisen et al. (2009) are examples of faculty creatively innovating to utilize their combined knowledge and experiences to best fully educate their students about the gravity and various aspects of consumption. Three of the four studies were team-taught and two of the four were offered in the fulfillment of a general education requirement. All four of the studies also exhibited a characteristic of interdisciplinary integration in that the courses were problem-based rather than discipline-based (Hursh, Hass, & Moore,
1984), with the depth and detail of consumer issues being the focus over any one discipline’s perspective on that issue. These studies influence this research in two fundamental ways: the first is that not all interdisciplinary education is structured as part of general education or team taught with multiple instructors converging on the same course. Secondly, and more importantly, these studies were written under the assumption that the fields of the various instructors would suffice in describing that instructor’s approach to the consumptive issue at hand and, therefore, state nothing of the individual instructor’s educational philosophy or individualized pedagogy. Yet, research indicates that an instructor’s pedagogical approach is more determined through their own “knowledge, beliefs and approaches within and concerning their disciplines” (Neumann, 2001, p. 139). In short, this study has framed its inquiry to investigate “the intellectual dimension of the practical work of teaching” (Rosiek & Atkinson, 2005, p. 421): the teaching philosophies and approaches of instructors who teach consumption related issues in an interdisciplinary format, and how they discern and frame the topic for students using consumptive imagery.

**Semiotics**

Because of this study’s focus on the selection and choice of visual imagery, qualitative research can include for investigation of the perspectives of each instructor’s teaching philosophy and classroom approach, as well as the format and content of any visual imagery. Semiotics has a solid foundation within the broad field of qualitative research. Specifically, this study will utilize Peircean visual socio-semiotics (Jewit & Oyama, 2001; Harrison, 2003) for its method of artifact analysis.
Semiotics, the study of signs in language, how they are used to communicate, and how they embody meaning in a culture, is described as being part of the “thick” description that is indicative of qualitative research (Geertz, 1973). Signs can be a word, object, image, or anything representative of a social reality, and they have been defined differently by the two theorists that are credited with the field’s development, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) and Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914). The Saussurean sign is composed of two components: the signifier (the term in language for the sign) and the signified (the actual object itself). The Peircean sign is a triad, with the representament (the word), the signified (object) and the interperant, which is the sign within the mind of the person interpreting it. Peircean semiotics is credited by several researchers as being more realistic because of its ability to take into account the arbitrary differences in interpretation that can produce a dynamic and varied number of interpretations on the same reality (Gotttdiener, 1995; Smith, 2005). The format of semiotic analysis this study will utilize is influenced by both methods, but aligned more with the inherent flexibility provided by Peircean semiotics.

Because Peirce’s (1902) pragmatism is the educational philosophy that is the foundation for his theory of signs, the theory provided a cognitive framework called semiosis (Smith, 2005) to analyze how individuals (and for the purposes of this study: instructors) conceptualized and utilized those conceptualizations in their choice of visual imagery for classroom instruction. Specifically, his pragmatism is built upon the described triad above: it defined a state of Firstness (qualification), in which social constructs and words (the representaments) are discovered and experienced primarily through abductive feeling. It then defined a state of Secondness (analysis), in which the concrete embodiment of the social construct (the object) is analyzed through a
deductive process that Peirce does not separate from its initial emotional component. Lastly, the person who was part of the initial discovery makes sense of the social construct and what it signifies through an inductive process Peirce called Thirdness (interpretation) (Chaisson, 2005; Rosiek & Atkinson, 2005).

There are three versions of Peircean signs: the icon, which bears resemblance to the actual social construct (like pictures and paintings); the index, which indicates something else and has no meaning itself (a thermometer indicates the temperature but is not the temperature itself); and the symbol, which bears an arbitrary relation to what it signifies, and is probably determined arbitrarily and with a degree of dispute (Harrison, 2003; Rosiek & Atkinson, 2005). Because no sign has meaning in itself but is representational and given meaning by consensus within the larger culture and the individuals who utilize the sign for their purposes, semiotic analysis served to clarify the significance of the artifacts and visual imagery utilized by the participants of this study (Berger, 2015). This variation in meaning is called polysemy, and means that signs cannot only be interpreted differently based on minor disagreements or likability, but also that there can be vast differences and different basic understandings of how individuals interpret the same social reality (Aiello, 2006; Puntoni, Schroeder, & Ritson, 2010). Because any visual artifact is a compilation of several different parts to create its signification, the consumption-oriented signs provided by the instructors form this study described how they signified the nature of their facilitation. In this study, a semiotic analysis decoded these visual artifacts to articulate the complex presentation of consumer culture within the instructors’ pedagogical approaches as indicative of Peircean polysemic Thirdness.
Social semiotics carries many of the same tenants of general semiotics, but social semiotics “explores the correspondence and interconnection between social practices and discourse” (Meinhoff, 2004, p. 263), and rejects a tradition that has exhibited a deterministic approach to analysis. It allows for a fluidity and inclusion of various interpretations concerning the sociological and cultural contexts surrounding the symbols and signs that are utilized (Vannini, 2007). Socio semiotics is the study of signs to construct the life of a community (Lemke, 1990). Building off of Pierce’s (1902) theory, socio semioticians believe that people see the world in signs, that semiotic systems provide people with various social meanings, and that the meanings themselves cannot exist separately from the people who created them (Harrison, 2003). It was combined with aspects of communication rules analysis concerning the visual presentation of social roles, ideological presentation, behavioral rituals and performance analysis (Sillars & Gronbeck, 2001) to illuminate aspects of human behavior and power dynamics in the provided visuals. An interpretation of social semiotics is visual socio-semiotics, which studies “the description of semiotic resources, what can be said and done with images (and other visual means of communication), and how the things people say and do with images can be interpreted” (Jewit & Oyama, 2001, p. 134). Visual socio-semiotic analysis allowed this study to focus on the teaching philosophies of college instructors in response to the influence of their encompassing consumer culture. In education, phenomena are observed as data for future analysis; furthermore, a strong body of empirical research within critical social theory has viewed mass media (advertisements, films, magazines) as works that “encode powerful authorial claims about–and recommendations for–the social world” (Agger, 2006, p. 173). Socio semiotics captured the contextualization and problematization of larger society for the instructional purpose of the
instructor who is utilizing it. Also, socio semiotics functioned off of the perspective of the interperant (instructor) in that the usage of their chosen imagery will be indicative of their concepts of consumer culture and the instructional tasks.

**Semiotic Analysis of Instructional Visualization**

Visual imagery is the vehicle of consumer culture. Because the nature of visual utilization by the instructors of this study vary widely, two main areas of visuals in consumer education will be included for overview: social marketing and advertising.

**Social marketing.** An international report created by The Centre for Popular Education at the University of Technology, Sydney, states that organizations responsible for adult consumer education assume up to three different approaches toward the implementation of that task, either choosing among or combining the approaches of “informed choice, protection from exploitation, or a critical view” (Flowers et al., 2001, p. 3). This report generally defines the instructional approaches in both Australia and the USA to go beyond the informed-choice perspective. This means that the instructional focus in both countries tends to surpass simple “provision and transfer of information” (Flowers et al., 2001, p. 3) kinds of approaches. The remaining approaches, specifically the protection from exploitation and critical view pedagogies, are intended to educate people to be able to utilize their individual knowledge and skills to make better choices and defend themselves in the consumer society. Empowerment, citizenship, and decision-making skills are integral parts of these approaches. Specifically, this report draws from the fields of “health promotion, environmental education, and commercial advertising,” with social marketing prioritized over commercial advertising because of the education aspect within it (Flowers et al., 2001, p. 4). Social marketing is defined as a form of media message that is an
“organized effort to persuade others to change certain social beliefs, attitudes and behavior. It uses the standard marketing techniques and relies mainly on print media and mass media campaigns” (Flowers et al., 2001, p. 5).

While social marketing detailed by Flowers et al. (2001) mentions specific media campaigns located in Australia, North American examples of these campaigns would include the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP), which was an influential and successful social movement that utilized print and mass media to educate the public about the transmission of HIV/AIDS and reduce the stigma of the disease solely being associated with the LGBTQ community (Reed, 2005). Another example would be the TRUTH campaign, a highly successful multimedia campaign created by the American Legacy Foundation in 1998 to educate the American public about the dangers of smoking (Wojdacz, 2008). Another widely successful example would be the American Cancer Society’s numerous charitable drives and media campaigns to raise money and awareness for cancer prevention. A more consumptive based example would be International Buy Nothing Day, which was a protest that utilized advertisements to attempt to get the general public to think critically about issues concerning overconsumption (Lasn, 1999). Oddly enough, while Flower et al. (2001) documents such a strong and successful focus on social marketing, Ekström and Brembek’s (2005) international conference report documents the deficiency of studies about visual rhetoric. Visual rhetoric is “the actual image rhetors generate when they use visual symbols for the purpose of communicating” (Foss, 2005, p. 143). The above campaigns are examples of social marketing’s use of visual rhetoric, and the successful impact these visuals campaigns can have on societal norms and ethics. Yet, the research tends to focus on the treatment of the visual imagery that
accompanies both social marketing and advertisements as illusions for narrow information processing, instead of as vehicles for cultural communication.

What can be determined about the choice and interpretation of visuals by classroom instructors? Do students within higher education approach visual imagery as the analysis of an illusion or as visual rhetoric that is indicative of cultural messages and larger social realities?

Research indicates that the approach of students to visual imagery can be broadened from viewing ads as illusions to having critical and cultural implications if the educational impetus focuses on creating critical thinking about consumption-related issues and imagery. The following will detail research that describes student competency with marketing visuals.

**Advertising and college institutions: The state of student competency.** Because college students are products of K-12 mandated consumer education, the lack of societal analysis has an impact on not only the consumer capability of students who enter institutions of higher education, but also the ability of these students to analyze the consumer culture they are in.

Wong (2010) surveyed 410 college students at a private University with roughly a 3000-student population. The survey detailed power and prestige issues, financial anxiety and saving and monitoring habits. He found that, across the disciplines, business students achieve the highest score on the Total Money Attitude scale, which is a general measurement of the respect and attention an individual attributes to money. Unfortunately, this score was only in the 60th percentile. Education students scored in the 30th percentile, while Arts & Sciences students were in the 50th percentile. Along with discovering financial stress among students, he found that there exists a need among college students for money management education and financial training, even for students who are part of higher education’s business schools.
In ascertaining the understanding of advertising content in general among students, Morgan (2005) studied the perception of inference and visual imagery amongst undergraduate college students. One-hundred and eighteen students, the majority of them upperclassmen, completed a survey packet to answer the study’s research questions of whether (a) individuals infer similar claims when viewing the same visually dominant print advertisements, (b) whether individuals who are exposed to visually dominant print advertisements perceive multiple claims as being intended by the advertiser, and (c) if individuals perceive the claims made in ads to be true (p. 154). Several 5-point semantic differentials and Cronbach’s alpha determined the consistency of the results, which were that the claims within advertisement ads are inferred similarly, with main claims being understood, but underlying claims having a varied level of identification and comprehension. The study also found that while all of the claims identified were identified as intentional, only half of them were perceived to be true.

Concerning cultural analysis and awareness among college students, Duffelmeyer (2004) analyzed how student perception of globalization is influenced by the media, as well as attempting to ascertain perceptions concerning capitalism and “myths of technology” (p. 165). Seventy-nine students within a “Popular Culture Analysis” course provided statements on their previous conceptions of globalization and cultural issues, before analyzing a Land Rover advertisement, in which a new automobile disrupted what is depicted as an Asian cultural tradition (p. 171). In the analysis of the advertisement, students analyzed how the culture was depicted, how that depiction contradicted the technological advancement of the automobile, and how respect and admiration was given to the new automobile by those powerful in that cultural
depiction. The results of the study are that students can learn to analyze media messages for
deeper cultural meanings and learnt to view others in non-ethnocentric manners.

Chu and Martinson (2003) analyzed the visual perception and comprehension of symbols
in reference to cultural influence. The research questions were focused on “(a) identifying any
visual misconceptions between different cultures; (b) reducing visual misperceptions; (c)
increasing the cultural awareness of design students; (d) strengthening respect and appreciation
for cultural differences; and (e) to promoting international perspectives in this global society” (p.
70). The study looked at how business and national/cultural symbols were viewed by graphic
design students in different countries. Their sample consisted of 120 North American and
Chinese business students. Processing a seven-point scale through ANOVA, the researchers
found that students have more knowledge and understanding of national symbols as compared to
business symbols (corporate logos associated with business identity, such as the bitten apple for
Macintosh computers, the peacock feather for NBC, or the Nike swish). They also found that
students were more likely to affiliate themselves with symbols from their own culture. Lastly, the
researchers discovered a neutral attitude concerning positive and negative perceptions and
misconceptions, meaning that dealing with corporate imagery is not, by and large, something that
accompanies strong cultural biases as much as it accompanies individual identity.

Individual identity is found to be an important factor in the advertising and consumptive
behaviors of American college students. Seock and Norton (2008) found in their survey of 414
U.S. college students that perceptions of product information, customer service, privacy/security,
website navigation, and comparison-shopping impacted how students determined where they
shopped and which retailers were their favorite. Muk (2007) found in his cross-cultural study of
American and Korean students that, while young people from both countries will sign up and pay attention to advertisers, while American students will do so because of social pressures to use SMS (short message service, also known as social media, such as Facebook, texting, Twitter, etc.). This was determined using a 7-point scale semantic differential evaluation of questionnaires completed by 160 American and 162 Korean college students under the age of 35. Also concerning product evaluation, Briñol, Petty, and Tormala (2004) found that disposition of thought, specifically self-validation and confidence, affected the appeal of an advertised product among a sample of 93 American undergraduates for partial fulfillment of a course requirement. This study was accomplished using two qualitative experiments involving the Elaboration Likelihood Model, which determined that stronger advertisement persuasion and source credibility of a product created a higher favorability and level of consumer confidence. The study found that students had varied thoughts about their ability as consumers but may be appealed to through past consumptive behavioral success, even if they have not truly informed themselves about the product being sold.

The above studies provide a snapshot of the understandings of college age students concerning the persuasion of visual imagery. These studies indicate a need for skill-based instruction, instruction concerning self-analysis of the impact of advertising on their identity construction and lifestyle goals, instruction concerning how to connect their consumption to the larger social culture and education focused on how they should perceive and analytically approach consumer targeted visual imagery. These studies also provide a glimpse of the multifaceted manners in which instructors can utilize technology and consumer visuals for their instruction.
Summary

Concerning this study, the above literature review has attempted to overview the many different facets of the complexities of this study’s intent of focusing on the teaching philosophies and pedagogical approaches of instructors who use visuals imagery to teach consumption within an interdisciplinary general education program.

The need for financial training of college students is evident, and while institutions of higher learning are attempting to address that need, their institutional approaches cannot be assumed to be uniform. The use of visuals for communication and teaching aides is prevalent, the use of technology is also evident; the fact that students respond to this usage is also demonstrated within the research. Shavelson, Cadwell, and Izu (1977) found that instructors utilize relevant information as their pedagogical foundation when it is available. In lieu of a similar research foundation, Shavelson, Caldwell, and Izu (1977) also found that beliefs underpinned the approaches of instructors when research was not available. Yet, in light of the various manifestations of interdisciplinary on college campuses, while it is still possible, an interdisciplinary group of instructors cannot be assumed to be familiar with the same research, while it can be readily assumed that instructors will be influenced by research across several fields, including their own (Neuman, 2001). The research also indicates that an interdisciplinary offering can occur for various purposes stemming from one instructor to an institutional endeavor: to bring students into a department (Caviglia-Harris, 2003), to properly problematize the complexity of consumer issues (Reiboldt, 1996), and to create institutes within higher education for the purpose of university-wide topic investigation (Eisen, et al., 2009; Kurland et al., 2010). Specifically, the above review has included various interdisciplinary studies that vary
in what Shavelson and Stern (1981) has defined as the “nature of the instructional task” (p. 462). "The instructional task consists of three elements (a) goal or goals; (b) a set of givens (e.g., student characteristics, availability of materials); (c) a set of operations necessary to achieve the goals.” In short, the instructional task includes definitional and informational content, materials/texts and activities. In light of the findings of Stuhfaut and Farrell (2009) of high variations in course organization, textbook selection, standards and evaluation methods, how interdisciplinary college instructors view the instructional task of consumer education and consumption related issues is lacking in the research. What is not stated by these studies is how does the instructor conceptualize consumer culture, how do they view their roles as educators of the subject, and how do they view their tasks of providing consumer education.

This study’s inclusion of problem-based learning stems from the above studies in that the consumptive imagery utilized by the instructors (corporate logos, website advertising, print and television advertisements, and short message service (SMS)/ social media) was posed by them to their students as “problems”: coded cultural texts requiring analysis to discern deeper meanings. Primarily, one cannot assume that these visuals are the only visuals available: several studies have also analyzed food packaging, clothing, architecture, and the layout of grocery stores as texts for analysis. Lastly, because visual communication “entails discerning, information, establishing relationships, discovering patterns, and representing them in a way that enables the student to construct meaning knowledge” (Matusitz, 2005, p. 102-103), the choice of visual imagery by the instructors is indicative of their teaching philosophies concerning the issue. This study is an investigation within Boyer’s domains of teaching and integration, and hopes to add to the body of knowledge concerning the nature of consumer education within higher education.
Chapter three will detail the methodological processes for gathering and analyzing of data for the study.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology for this study. The purpose of this study was to describe the phenomena and visual pedagogy of university faculty concerning the teaching of sociological consumer education as part of a general education program. A qualitative approach was chosen for this study also because previous research indicated the need for analyzing the tacit knowledge of the instructors being studied (Cary, 1998). Tacit knowledge is the knowledge one acquires through “acculturation” or “socialization” (Cary, 1998, p. 248). A qualitative format allows for this study to focus on the instructors’ perspectives, backgrounds, and approaches to teaching, because qualitative research is the method by which researchers attempt to understand how people think and “how they come to hold the perspectives they hold” (p. 3). The research was conducted through the study of college instructors who prioritize consumer issues when they teach interdisciplinary courses within a required general education. Therefore, the approach of semiotic phenomenology was highly conducive for this study because of its inductive nature, prioritization of process over outcome, attention to participant perspectives, and development of descriptive data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam & Associates, 2002). First, the research approach is described. Next the context of the site of this study’s research is detailed. Informed consent, data collection, and analysis procedures are described. Then this study’s methods to ensure trustworthiness, credibility, and triangulation are detailed. The chapter ends with a description of the role and background of the researcher concerning this study’s focus.
Research Questions

In addressing the stated purpose of this study, the following research questions were pursued:

1. What forms of visual imagery do instructors select and/or create when teaching consumer education in general education courses? How do participants describe the instructional philosophies that inform their approach towards the topic of consumption and their choices of visual imagery? And from what sources do they select visual imagery (printed materials, video sources, the Internet, etc.)?

2. What issues are covered as a part of a sociological consumer education program, and how are these courses structured? How do instructors view consumer society and what facets of it do they believe college students should understand? What experiences do participants have in relation to teaching consumption in a general education format, and according to participants, how does interdisciplinarity impact their experiences and approaches? How do the experiences and viewpoints of teaching sociological consumer education support, problematize and reject McGregor’s calls for critical education pedagogies?

Research Approach: Qualitative Rhetorical Phenomenology

Because of its prioritization of human agency, qualitative research is suited to promoting a “deep understanding of a social setting or activity as viewed from the perspective of the research participants” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 8; Merriam, 2009). The naturalistic disposition of qualitative research allows for a strong focus on the setting of the issue being
investigated (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This structuring of consumer society by the program itself, as well as the disposition of each instructor towards the instructional engagement of consumer society, can clearly be investigated in-depth within a qualitative approach. Because of this study’s focus on the phenomena of sociological consumer education within a general education program, qualitative research can include for investigation of the perspectives of each instructor’s teaching philosophy, instructional approaches, and contextualization of consumer society, as well as their selection of visual imagery. Additionally, qualitative data tend to be multifaceted and come in the form of both words and visuals, including “interview transcripts, field notes, photographs, videotapes, personal documents, memos and other official records” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 5). Qualitative research was the best method for this study, because it allowed the various nature of the data and the interpreting of it by both me and the instructors to be taken into account. This study utilized phenomenology and rhetorical criticism as part of its qualitative approach for the purpose of most effectively providing a deep understanding of what sociological consumer education looks like when it is interdisciplinarily structured as part of a general education program.

Phenomenology focuses on the experiences of others and can analyze the relationship between a subject and any “phenomenon.” Qualitative research is largely phenomenological because of its open study design that allows for findings to emerge, and its inductive interests in the “thick” descriptions by research participants (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

Phenomenographic data analysis stems from Husserl’s (1970) philosophy of phenomenology, which is “the study of how people experience, understand or conceive of phenomenon in the world around us” (Larsson & Hölmstrom, 2007, p. 56). Phenomenological
data analysis was utilized for this study because of this study’s attempt to describe the phenomena of how consumer society is conceptualized in the minds of college educators, as well as in a higher education program. Another reason for this analytical method was this study’s attempt to ascertain the “what” and “how” aspects of consumer-based instruction within a general education paradigm (Larsson & Hölmstrom, 2007, p. 56). In other words, the format will allow for the instructors to designate their instructional philosophies and pedagogies and describe how they attempt to put them in place.

Rhetorical criticism focuses on the derivation of social meaning through the systematic analysis of human communication. Criticism itself is an analysis that creates an argument of meaning concerning the significance of a work. A work is “a finished thing such as a speech, a novel, or a film” (Sillars & Gronbeck, 2001, p. 9). Therefore, the argument created is composed out of the “visual, verbal, written, oral, pictorial, and other codes apparent in any work” (Sillars & Gronbeck, 2001, p. 9). In the analysis of visuals associated with consumer society, various numbers of works can be vehicles for consumer related imagery, including but not limited to songs, advertisements in various forms, documentaries, music videos, television shows, various forms of artwork, etc. Specifically, postmodern rhetorical criticism functions under the assumption that society does not have inherent meaning, but only the meaning given to it by human communication in society (Sillars & Gronbeck, 2001). Furthermore, because humans can derive several different meanings from any particular work, and this diversity in interpretation is tolerated as part of the postmodern tradition, postmodernist rhetorical criticism allows for many different interpretations to contradict and coexist at the same time, with the interpretation of any work being “constant, evolving and never ending” (Sillars & Gronbeck, 2001, p. 9). The
instructors interviewed as part of this study chose numerous visuals they included during their instruction of issues related to consumer society. The phenomenological and rhetorical nature of this study allowed for any interviewed instructor to identify the significance of the use of any chosen work as part of their instruction, while allowing me as the researcher to analyze the work as an artifact for the purposes of ascertaining the nature of said artifacts’ representation and/or embodiment of consumer society. This method included within my qualitative study allows for a multifaceted materialization of the phenomena to emerge.

**Context of the Site**

This study took place at a small, private, Midwestern University in Illinois. Racially, roughly 60% of the large city the institution is in is Caucasian, and 40% is Hispanic, with Black, Asian, and other residents’ minorities in the town. The institution’s website describes the institution as a “four-year, non-profit, independent, liberal arts, co-educational university” that serves roughly 6,000 students between its various campuses. Yearly tuition is quoted at $11,760 per semester, with financial aid and scholarships available to students. The student to instructor ratio is 17 to 1. There are twice as many female students as male attending the university, the ethnic composition of the student body has evolved over the duration of this study with minority students (8% Black, 40% Hispanic) currently outnumbering Caucasian students (approximately 40%).

**Courses Targeted for Study.** Various courses are included for focus in this study, which encompass a period of time at the site of the study where the general education curriculum evolved from one course that focused on consumer issues to several courses and campus initiatives that, based on instructor determination, may include a consumer focus. The focus of
this study was the former and current interdisciplinary courses that are part of the institution’s general education curriculum. The first course that was the catalyst for this study was the university’s specific general education course, which was titled “IDS 2000: Wellness and Social Responsibility” and was the sophomore-level step within a three-step process titled “The Writing for Success Process.” The findings of my study will detail the instructional approaches that were included by several instructors of this course, as well as instructors who now teach the courses that evolved as part of the interdisciplinary offering of the general education program.

Instructors who facilitated the interdisciplinary general education curriculum were from the university’s business and liberal arts and sciences divisions. The description of the initial course that was the focus for this study is as follows:

**IDS 2000: Wellness and Social Responsibility.**
3 semester hours
Understanding Wellness is the second interdisciplinary studies course in the core general education curriculum listed within the Ways of Living domain. This course explores the interrelationship of the physical self (body), the emotional / rational self (spirit), and the self as a part of the larger society and culture (mind) and provides a context for ethical decision-making regarding living well. The purpose of this course is to help you understand wellness within the American and global cultures and to express this knowledge through formal speech and through written communication. Through this course, you will examine and evaluate the variety of perspectives on ways that wellness affects society, the workforce, the environment and interpersonal relationships. You will read and discuss primary and secondary sources that focus on issues of wellness through historical, sociological, psychological, literary perspectives, and other academic disciplines.

This course connects most directly to the general education outcomes of critical thinking, skills development, writing and speaking skills development, and learning how to live a well-balanced life. This course is a writing intensive course and the second course in the Writing for Success Process. To demonstrate writing proficiency, students who are currently enrolled in the WSP process must earn a “C” or better in this course and must earn a “C” or better on the final paper to receive a “C” in the course. (IDS 2000 Statement, 2013)
The instructors were expected to develop the course based on certain core questions, as defined by the university. These core questions were as follows:

1. What does it mean to be well and live well?
2. What are the facets of living well?
3. What is one’s personal responsibility to others, self, the workplace, the environment and to the world?
4. How do one’s lifestyle decisions affect personal, environmental and societal wellness?
5. What are the responsibilities of social institutions toward the wellbeing of humans and other inhabitants?
6. What are the responsibilities of social institutions toward the wellbeing of our physical, cultural and spiritual world? (2000 core questions, 2013)

There are several statements that are guidelines to the instructors for their inclusion of consumerism and consumption-related issues. For example, to explore “what a well lived life … involves,” instructors were encouraged to utilize whatever textbooks and forms of visual imagery they deem appropriate to investigate issues related to “health, consumerism, and contemporary social issues” (IDS 2000 Statement, 2013). Materials “may also include resources from the sciences, social sciences, literature, philosophy and ethics, and religion” (IDS 2000 Statement, 2013). While the course was required to culminate in a final writing assignment that explores the core questions and goals of the course, the instructors themselves designed this assignment and all other assignments throughout the semester for their own section.

This study developed out of the fertile ground of instructional creativity involved in the various facilitations of this course. Because some manner of consumerism/consumption was required to be mentioned in each section of the course, and also since the instructors vary in educational background and specialization, the philosophical and instructional approaches could vary significantly in their instruction of the topic.
The evolution of the course offerings for the interdisciplinary component for the general education program was prompted in response to faculty feedback towards the prior course offerings. While initially there were two core courses, with a required third in a major of the student’s choosing, these courses evolved into four required courses that replace and subsume the prior courses. The three courses included in the findings of this study are the freshmen and sophomore and junior level offerings. Provided below are the course descriptions for the newer courses:

**IDS 1610 Being Human: Ethics and Morality**
4 semester hours

This first year course gives us the opportunity to explore different visions of what it means to be human, to think about how these ideas ground our ethical understanding, and to consider their practical consequences for our lives. Through close reading and discussion, you will learn how to think through and understand views about being human that are both similar to and different from your own, as well as to appreciate the extent to which ideas have implications for ethical action and for life, relationships, and institutions in various communities. Through writing and interactive projects, you will learn how to reflect on your own moral assumptions and commitments – as well as those of others – and work on articulating the ongoing development of your ethical understanding. Finally, we will have the opportunity to apply our ethical views, tempered by a reflective understanding of the views of others, to a project that explores and reacts to concrete ethical issues in today’s world.

Prerequisite: None. Required first-year core course. IDS 1610 and ENG 1000 should be taken in opposite semesters during the first year of study.

**IDS 2030 Science and Society**
4 semester hours

The mission of Aurora University supports the development of young adults who can generate independent thoughts, converse intellectually on diverse topics, and involve themselves creatively in our society as productive and informed citizens. This class challenges each student individually to better develop these skills using science as the context. Science encompasses a wide net of disciplines, but starts with central ideas and theories that humans have contemplated for some time. This course will help students recognize that inquiry is the nature of science, observe that the foundations of science
include evolving knowledge and practice, and describe how science and society shape each other. Universal themes that permeate the course and guide class discussions include: ethics and policy, scientific argument, history and culture, and inquiry vs. design. Through this course, students will be better able to comprehend new scientific information, translate current and past ethical questions involving how science affects society, and gain the skills and knowledge necessary to participate as more informed citizens.

Prerequisite: IDS 1610 and ENG 1000. Required second-year core course. [For AU students who entered the university prior to Summer 2014, IDS 2030 may replace IDS 2000.]

IDS 3040 Global Justice
4 semester hours

What does it mean to be responsible citizens in today’s global village? Which human rights should apply to all, and how can a global justice framework address issues ranging from income inequality to climate change to HIV/AIDS? In this interdisciplinary course, students will examine others’ worldviews on human dignity and human rights, justice and fairness, and social responsibility. After articulating their own global justice framework, students will investigate a contemporary issue of global significance, examine the issue from the viewpoint of various local and global stakeholders, and create a plan of action directed toward addressing the problem. Systems of government, activists/nonprofits, business/for-profits and social entrepreneurship will be analyzed as possible means of addressing these issues.

Prerequisite: ENG 2010. Second-year core course that may only be used by AU students who entered the university prior to Summer 2014 as a way to replace IDS 2000.

These above required courses span an undergraduate student’s career with the university offering 40 to 50 sections of these four general education courses during the Spring and Fall semesters. The information that prompted the visual analysis portion of this study lies in the visual imagery that the general education department made available to, though did not require of instructors of the IDS 2000 course. This imagery is in documentary film form and involves such diverse and critical social consumption analyses as “No Impact Man,” “Super Size Me,” “Maxed Out,” “Corporate Social Responsibility,” “Escape from Affluenza,” “Manufactured Landscapes,” “Thank you for Smoking” and various other movies (2000 film-resources). Last,
since these movies are just one manner of visual imagery that could be utilized in an Internet-accessible classroom, the options an instructor of the subject had to choose from were unlimited.

Demographically, five of the study’s participants were female, the other five were male, and all of them had over a year, if not several years of instructing general education curriculum in both the two- and four-year formats. All of the instructors involved used technology as part of their instruction, maintained a Moodle page for their courses, and utilized the Internet for educational purposes. Half of the participants presented me with a signed consent form at the beginning of the interview; the others signed the form prior to beginning the interviews.

Concerning the rank of the 10 participants, they ranged from adjunct instructors to associate professors and represented several different departments (Communication, English, Criminal Justice, General Education, Natural Sciences, Religion and Physical Education).

**Data Collection**

Per the traditional qualitative procedure for research for human subjects, and after my extensive IRB (Institutional Review Board) training, approval was sought and obtained first from the institutional review board of doctoral programs and then through the institutional review board of the site of this study. Then a recruitment email was sent to all faculty at the site of study (Appendix A). This study sought any faculty members who had taught the courses described above before and would be willing to be interviewed and, if they were teaching the course at the time, possibly observed. Because of my adjunct faculty status at the institution that was the site of this study’s research, I sought a convenience sample of 10 to 15 participants from this institution. After a response from 10 willing participants, these individuals were then sent this study’s informed consent form (Appendix B), which detailed the purpose and confidentiality of
the study, along with a statement detailing their rights and ability to withdraw from the study. They were notified that I was the sole researcher for this study, and that their confidentiality would be ensured through the use of first name pseudonyms. After the participant’s initial response to the recruitment email to participate in the study, they were then provided the consent form in my replying email that asked them to notify me of whether or not they would be willing/available for an observation, and a time they would be available to schedule an interview. After scheduling a time for the interview, the consent forms were obtained by me immediately prior to all interviews on the day of the respective interviews. All course documentation for each participant was obtained electronically from research participants. All (transcripts, documents, and recordings) data from this study remained in my possession and was only seen by me before it was destroyed upon the completion of the study. There were no direct risks to participants associated with this study’s research. The specific data collection procedures that occurred during this study are as follows:

**Interviews.** Interviewing is an investigation between the researcher and participant concerning issues germane to the research study (Merriam, 2009). The interviews were the primary mode of data collection, and relied on a semi-structured guide, with open-ended questions (Appendix E) that were based off a mix of preplanned and follow-up questions (Merriam & Associates, 2002; Merriam, 2009). Twelve semi-structured, in-person interviews were digitally recorded on my iPhone and transcribed to produce 10 verbatim transcripts. Two participants ran out of time and had to reschedule to finish the interviews later that week. The length of the interviews ranged between 47 minutes and one hour and 38 minutes.
were taken to document unplanned and follow up questions, as well as nonverbal communication during the interviews (Appendix C). Reflective notes were developed after each interview.

**Participant Artifacts.** The two kinds of artifacts that were collected for this study included official documentation for their courses (syllabi, assignment sheets, PowerPoint slides, rubrics, etc.), and the visual materials utilized by participants for their presentation of consumption and consumption related issues. Social representation was twofold in the collection of these artifacts, in that they represented communication between the participants of the course, as well as embodying how pop culture was signified within the course’s context. Artifacts can provide information that can either “support or challenge other data sources and literature, to generate or confirm hunches and to help provide a thick description of people and/or settings” (Given, 2008). Not including the syllabi, the artifacts for this study are classified below as follows:

Table 1: Categorization of Study Artifacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Artifact Description</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Various Media:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music Videos</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Films: Fiction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Films: Documentary</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television Shows</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisement: Video</td>
<td>1 specified (several unspecified)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisement: Print</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Video</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Various Literature:</strong></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiction</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Fiction</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion Texts</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Texts</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Various Media:

- Fiction Films: Gattaca, Babette’s Feast, Linkletter’s Waking Life, Into the Wild.
- Documentary Films: Fast Food Nation, No Impact Man, Food Inc., Half the Sky, A Small Act, Children of Sodom and Gommorah (Audio), King Corn, Forks Over Knives, North Korea, Bigger Stronger Faster.
- Television Shows: The Newsroom, Dancing with the Stars, Unnatural Causes (PBS), (PBS) Cracking the Genetic Code, The Weight of the Nation (PBS).
- Advertisement: Print (Cheerios); Video (Superbowl ad).
- Internet: The Bag Monster; Ted Talk Van Jones, The Smoking Fry.

The Various Literature:

- Plato, Bhagavad-Gita, Epicurious, Marx, Epictetus, Letters of Seneca, Intro to Guerin’s Anarchism, Meditations of Marcus Aurelius, Sartre’s “No Exit”, Skinner’s “Behaviorism”.
- Christian Bible, Koran, and Hindu Scriptures.
- Fiction: Pursuit of Happyness (dramatic biography); Death of the Kings Horseman (play)

Data Analysis Procedure

In qualitative research, data collection and analysis often are conducted simultaneously (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Because data analysis was necessary for both instructor interviews and artifact analysis, two processes were utilized: phenomenographic data analysis for the interviews, and rhetorical socio semiotic and ideological analysis for the visual artifact analysis.

Interview Analysis. All interviews were transcribed from their audio recording by me before they were put through several coding processes. An electronic journal was maintained for
each step of this study’s coding process. First, all interviews were manually coded using an open coding/initial coding approach. Open coding, otherwise known as initial coding, reflects the research paradigm that the instructor is open to whatever the research may indicate (Merriam, 2009). Creswell (2007) defines open coding as “the first step in the data analysis process” (p. 239), and involves the initial attempt to categorize data into categories by discerning similarities, differences, and areas of interest. Next, each interview transcript was imported into the Computer Assisted/Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) F5 TRANSRIPTION software for time coding, and then imported into the CAQDAS software NVIVO for Mac 10. Using the software, a combination of Initial and In Vivo coding, which uses “words or short phrases from the participant’s own language in the data record as codes” (Saldana, 2013, p. 264) produced 30 nodes, which were the initial codes I derived from the interviews.

Because codes in NVIVO can encompass the responses from several different questions, I further coded responses to questions that were combined under particular nodes. For example, participant responses to questions 3, 4, 7, and 8 wound up coded under the heading of “Teaching Philosophy Approaches” and “Consumer Behavior Content.” Responses for each instructor under these headings were then put through the process of causation coding (a 1st cycle coding method according to (Saldana, 2013) to attempt to clarify the logic involved in that question’s response. Forty-nine causation codes were produced from responses classified under these two nodes. Examples of interview statements and their resulting causation codes are below:
Table 2: Interview Coding Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Statement</th>
<th>Causation Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patricia: “Just make it all about their experiences and what is they’re viewpoints .. also sort of environmental wellness what is their footprint look like, you know and what is their emotional wellness look like, and we go to the grocery store and we look at different products that they would purchase there and where those products are from - we went to the farmer's market when they same thing and we compare prices and all that stuff, so again it's just real experimental … experiential and then I tie into a few books that we can read and we just go out and we do stuff a lot. We go on a hike and then going to the forest preserve to go for a hike, and talk about how that just sort of, you know, reenergized your exercising again. So you know there's different activities, there's like a whole lot of stuff that, you know, we can do based on Affluenza.”</td>
<td>• “Make it about their experiences, their viewpoints”&lt; trips to farmer’s markets and grocery stores; hikes in nature&lt; experiential learning &lt; “What is their footprint like” &lt; her experience of “spend more money for made in America” &lt; “students don’t realize that …decisions have a strong impact” &lt; conveying social responsibility as consumers and citizens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcie: “Well, I’m to sure I raised consumption related issues in sixteen hundred, maybe a little bit in terms of I always weaved media literacy into any course they teach. So as a journalist I'm someone who's very sensitive to the fact that there is a lot of misinformation, poor information, outright garbage being transmitted through the media. And I'm shocked at how as a culture Americans are very poorly educated to consume media. So, one of my themes is always media literacy how to be a discerning consumer of media. So, I probably did raise that in sixteen hundred because in looking at issues of diversity, we looked at how the media portrays diverse people. But in the wellness course, IDS two thousand, the issue of consumerism was part of the content,”</td>
<td>• Poorly educated to consume media &lt; misinformation/poor information/outright garbage &lt; Need for media literacy. &lt; Discerning consumer of media &lt; diversity and consumer issues &lt; tied to issues of mental, spiritual, social, and environmental wellness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These codes were then collected under each question, under each instructor and under each course heading to create themes concerning the detailed evidence of consumer philosophy and instructional approach. Pattern and structural coding (both 2nd cycle coding methods according to Saldana, 2013) were then used to create larger themes. Pattern coding allowed the codes to be combined into the areas that would indicate a theme, while structural coding directly referenced the research questions of the study. The interview analysis was then halted to proceed in artifact analysis.

Artifact Analysis. Per the visual focus of this study, the rhetorical analysis of the artifacts was limited to the various media areas of the graph included in the data collection area of this chapter, with a strong emphasis on the presence of documentary film in the instructor’s most preferred format of visual. During the interviews, the participants identified the types of visual materials they utilized during their instruction of consumer related issues, and their descriptions of the instructional purpose of these visuals are included in the data analysis process for the artifacts, contextually and rhetorically. Based on the instructors’ responses concerning why they chose a particular visual and their stance on critical theory, these statements created the context surrounding the purpose and significance of the visual in a particular course. Their explanation of why they chose the visual framed the interpretation of the purpose of the visual’s content concerning consumer society. Their individual stance on critical theory, and statements concerning their teaching philosophy, decided for me as the researcher whether or not to utilize ideological or sociological rhetorical criticism as the method for analysis for the visuals. Ideological criticism is appropriate to analyze media that delves into hegemony (the prioritization of a particular dominant ideology over others), power dynamics and the
empowering of social groups (Sillers & Gronbeck, 2001). This method is most appropriate for instructors who framed their teaching philosophies and approaches as being ones that embraces critical theory. Alternatively, sociological criticism focuses more on social relationships, identity development through relationships, roles, myth, and performative framing (Sillars & Gronbeck, 2001). For instructors who were skeptical or opposed to critical theory as part of their teaching philosophy, this analytical method was utilized. The umbrella both methods fell under was semiotic analysis, since all human existence is composed of signs that humans name and define to shape reality (Sillers & Gronbeck, 2001). Visual semiotic analysis focuses on visual depictions not just tied to the meaning of words, but also to the use of framing, the perspective, the use of angles, and use of color or lack thereof affect the rhetorical message of the image (Harrison, 2003). All visuals were analyzed with the dual focus on the reason the instructor provided and that visual’s depiction of consumer society.

Combined with the interview themes generated through the above process, the visual analyses was classified under each instructor and under each course heading to attempt to provide a complete contextualization of the instructional approaches and teaching philosophies of the instructors involved with this study. Lastly, I attempted to develop and describe the various methodologies detailed from the instructors, their visuals and, lastly, a greater statement on how sociological interdisciplinary consumer education as part of a general education program is conceptualized at this university.
Credibility

Credibility is concerned with the integrity of the data presented and seeks to ensure that the findings are reflected in the evidence (Merriam, 2009). Several steps were taken towards credibility.

Before the interviews took place, a matrix was constructed that aligns the research questions for this study with the preliminary interview questions (Appendix F). This matrix ensured that the interview protocol addressed all the issues raised as a part of this study (see Appendix E) (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Triangulation, which is the manner of cross-checking data (artifact analysis and interviews) thoroughly, addresses issues concerning credibility (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Merriam, 2009). While triangulation is “less important in a phenomenological inquiry or ethnography because it is participants' articulation of their experiences that is paramount” (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014), this study’s triangulation took the forms of theory and methodological triangulation (Guion, 2002). After bracketing my experiences, writing and rewriting supported phenomenological reduction that allowed for themes to emerge, because in phenomenological research, “data generation, analysis and writing are intertwined” (Bjorbækmo et al., 2018, p. 22). This writing and rewriting included the transcription process, the creating and referencing of interview notes, the creation of reflective analytical notes, and a multifaceted coding process. This analysis identified similarities and differences in the data that served to distill the information into identifiable areas of experience. Theory triangulation occurred through the interdisciplinary program’s sample, which included instructors from different schools and disciplines indicating similar viewpoints that converged into themes to indicate their theoretical and philosophical teaching approaches. The rhetorical
analysis of the visuals was a manner of “theme analysis,” which “refers to the process of recovering the theme or themes that are embodied and dramatized in the evolving meanings and imagery of the work” (Van Manen, 2015, p. 78). This thorough triangulation allowed a thick description of the reality of consumer education instruction within an interdisciplinary general education program to emerge.

**Researcher Role and Bias**

I am a graduate of the institution that is the site of the study. I am currently employed there as adjunct faculty. I am at a disadvantage in that most of the faculty are Caucasian and I am Black. Furthermore, most of the faculty members who taught me are retired from the institution; consequently, I am largely unfamiliar with most of the faculty members currently affiliated with the institution. Yet, I am middle classed as an adjunct instructor just as I was middle classed as a student at the institution. My educational tenure at the university will help develop a report among full time instructors. I have instructional experience as part of their general education program and familiarity with the curriculum. My familiarity with the format of these courses should give me the insight to create a rapport with other instructors of the course. My adjunct status has defined my past affiliation with possible participants as one of acquaintance, while allowing me access and knowledge to determine the purposive nature of the sample. Due to my prior role at the institution, I will be able to gain entry and correspond easily with participants. My age, as well as my status as a doctoral student and candidate who teaches the same curriculum, position me as a young colleague who is invested in the profession, specifically as an instructor who wants to learn from them about teaching complicated subjects and becoming a better instructor. As a lifelong native of the city, I am further positioned as an insider whose
fluency with the institution and the surrounding community creates a familiarity between the participants and myself.

My bachelors and master’s degrees are both from the field of Communication. Also, I am only 37 years old and have the disposition that technology should be utilized in classroom instruction. I am also of the opinion that almost any visual can be utilized for the purpose of critiquing society. I entered into this study with the knowledge that the participants may be more experienced educators, people who use less technology than myself if they use it at all, and people who may not be as enthusiastic about visual imagery during classroom instruction.

This issue matters to me because I can detail various experiences in which I paid a price because I was not knowledgeable as a consumer. Because we are a capitalist society, I am of the disposition that everyone should be armed with consumer knowledge of some kind. Institutions of higher learning would have to attempt to address this as part of general education curricula in order for this to be possible. Research about interdisciplinary and general education consumer education efforts is not complete, and I believed that this study adds to the body of knowledge concerning how colleges attempt to educate consumers.

**Researcher Background and Topic**

My interest in the topic of consumer education is twofold and includes the impact of my educational training in consumption on my life, and the strong theme of the topic in the college courses I was to teach later in life.

My own experience with consumer education occurred as I attended a private religious K-12 institution, whose curriculum did include mandatory consumer education and elective home economics that focused on sewing and cooking skills. I also took required accounting
courses that provided basic instruction on the creation of spreadsheets and checking account maintenance. The emphasis on the training of consumer education skills was questionable; the instructional formats were lecture and task-oriented deskwork, with no discussion, let alone a critical questioning of debate of the realities of consumer culture. One could have assumed at this point that the entire world was consumer oriented, and this was simply the way things were. One also assumed that if people struggled financially, they simply did not know these skills. Furthermore, today I can clearly state that I cannot remember most of what those skills were. The consumer education curriculum culminated in a standardized test. The lack of preparation in the state mandated consumer education courses contributed to my susceptibility to credit card advertising on my college campus. Within two years of college, I was well in debt. While I have learned painful lessons in regard to credit card debt, the now more conscious consumer in me wonders how this could have happened to me, and why this same issue afflicts so many others.

In becoming an instructor in the fields of Communication and Interdisciplinary Studies, it came as a shock to me how prevailing and intricate the theme of consumption is in areas and topics that are much larger than just skill-based training. How does one talk about poverty, politics, the environment, globalization, energy policies, self-image and self-esteem issues, women and civil rights issues, and the history of controversial topics like welfare without talking about consumption? In discussions with students, it has often been my experience that judgments of others from different cultures and countries were tied not only to a lack of factual knowledge about those people and their realities, but also tied more to perceptions of the social class of others. The external judgment is tied to a projection of consumer culture, whereas other countries and cultures might not view consumption in the same manner.
If college students have experiences that mirror mine in their K-12 consumer education, there are two unsaid truths in both experiences: The first is that the mandated consumer education was only skill-based training, while every single one of us, myself as well as my students, were raised in a visual marketing culture that ensured that our experiences as consumers began at very early ages that precede traditional schooling. What is ironic and troubling about this is that we have well encountered the visual imagery of marketing and are able to evaluate and alter our self-image and esteem by that communicated criteria, but at the same time basic skills were not included in these visual messages, nor did the consumer education we received prioritize the understanding of visual imagery to counter or better contextualize these criteria.

The second truth is that a conversation about power was missing and might still be left unsaid. I have found this conversation necessary to have in classrooms: if there are cultures and countries at the losing end of the consumption power dynamic, their realities are not known or understood. The assumption is that the struggle of others is due to ignorance or laziness, when at the same time average “trained” American consumers know little to nothing about the origins of what we buy, where these items come from and how different cultures from different countries might be impacted. I have found that displaying, creating, and analyzing visual imagery with my students have served the dual purpose of presenting the unknown and of sparking an analytical conversation that calls the dictates of consumer culture into question. This made me wonder how many other instructors experience and attempt the same thing.

The unavoidable nature of consumer education in my experience became my interest for this study: do other college instructors of interdisciplinary general education experience
consumption as an unavoidable topic? I am under the impression that an analytical viewpoint is instrumental in investigating the complex nature of consumer culture and how this culture shapes student identity and their worldviews. Also, there is an underlying implication that visual literacy plays a role in creating a critical consumer. Visual imagery can be defined as the visual representation of a culturally or socially constructed reality. This study explored the use of visual imagery by other instructors of consumption to add to the body of knowledge concerning the visual imagery in the instruction of interdisciplinary college consumer education.
CHAPTER 4

STRUCTURE AND INITIATIVE FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to describe the phenomenon and visual pedagogy surrounding the teaching of sociological consumer education as part of a general education program by an interdisciplinary collection of university faculty. These chapters present the key findings obtained through 12 in-depth interviews and the rhetorical analysis of 30 pop culture documents indicated by the study’s participants.

As the major curriculum changes of the courses offered through the IDS program shifted to including campus wide initiatives and student organization activity, instructor perspective of course changes, facilitation requirements, and course involvement in extracurriculars varied greatly. This chapter describes participant reactions to the evolution of the general education’s IDS curriculum, including a shift in the significance of the campus initiatives.

Interdisciplinary General Education Program Structure and Educational Orientation

During the duration of this study, the curriculum evolved within the university’s general education program, shifting from two required courses targeted towards freshmen and sophomores to four required courses that span an undergraduate student’s career, with 40 to 50 sections of these four courses being offered during the Spring and Fall semesters to traditional and adult students.
Program Structure

Figure 1: IDS Program Structure

Phil, the Director of the General Ed program at this university, stated that these courses were designed to accomplish four outcomes for the general education program: “effective communication, critical thinking, discovery and reflection, and responsible citizenship” (Phil). In
reference to McGregor’s 11 educational orientations, academic rationalism appeared only in each course’s focus on the development of analytical and reflective reading comprehension and college level writing skills. Cognitive problem solving was foundational to the entire program but became more evident in sophomore and junior level courses. The four outcomes of the program are indicative of progressive educational philosophy, in which learning is a lifelong endeavor, and said outcomes are meant to be skill sets that students take with them into their lives after graduation.

Specifically, Phil stated that the program at the Freshman level (1600 and 1610) is intended to be the program’s catalyst of “asking big questions” that start the students upon a journey of analysis about themselves and the world, while initiating the training of effective communication and critical thinking through the development of writing and analytical skills. The course itself is described as an investigation into the moral and ethical reflection of the human condition. In reference to sociological consumer education at this level, the course’s intention to commence student’s questioning of preexisting accepted viewpoints, beliefs and assumptions about themselves and society are indicative of McGregor’s (2011) self-actualization and existential educational orientations. The combination of the approaches stems from the cognitive inquiry that problematizes consumer culture’s influence towards identify formation, mindless consumption, and consumerism’s preoccupation with acquisition. The self-actualization and existential orientations were indicated by the program structure in how investigation of self would include identity tied to self-purpose, morality and ethics, while scrutinizing beliefs tied to personally relevant consumption, personal independence and “what it means to live in a consumer society” (McGregor, 2011, p. 3).
According to Phil, the second-year Sophomore courses (2000, 2020, and 2030) are focused on providing relevant larger social context, historical and scientific contexts specifically. These courses also identified various aspects of personal and collective wellness. Phil stated that the program’s purpose was “to broaden students’ awareness not just of our own society, but these topics on a global level.” The courses are meant to create the skills of framing issues within their historical contexts (globalization, democratization, and industrialization) or strengthening the skills of scientific inquiry (argument, design, and policy implications). Indicated in this aspect of the program concerning sociological consumer education is McGregor’s social reconstructivist educational orientation. This study found that the differences in instructional approach stemmed from variation of focus on transformational experiences, along with different parameters of contextualization (local and national).

The third-year Junior level course (2040/3040), which was available to junior and senior students, was focused on issues of global justice, which Phil described as including “courses of action, along with the various complexities and obstacles to action” concerning issues that impact the common good of humanity. The course is meant to focus squarely on human responsibility, progressing towards investigating and proposing solutions to issues involving power dynamics and institutional engagement. The consumptive educational orientation of the program at this level is the personal-global orientation, because of the “social change, global citizenship and stewardship” indicated at this level of engagement for investigating wide ranging issues (climate change, trade agreements, water accessibility, protest, genocide, war, etc.) for international/global impact.
Per Figure 1, the personal-global orientation of the whole interdisciplinary general education program is indicated in the structure that progresses through the complicated evolution of students who evaluate themselves and their environments, define problems that need solving, redefine themselves first as independent social agents and citizens of their community, then as citizens of their country and the globe. This in combination with the strengthening of the cognitive and written skill sets, it is evident how the program was designed to begin and strengthen in students a “holistic” and continuous “process of becoming” that is the personal-global educational orientation (McGregor, 2011, p. 3).

**Interdisciplinary Nature**

The newer combination of four specific required courses taught by a diverse group of faculty is a reflection of what Phil described as “interdisciplinary” faculty teaching within a “multidisciplinary” course offering, because the courses are “taught truly by the full range of faculty departments on the campus”, and “that multiple disciplines or multiple perspectives are being encountered within the same course rather than being directly brought to bear consciously and in a disciplined approach.” This is described in comparison to Eisen’s et al. (2009) study, where the university’s two cross listed courses were taught by instructors from five fields for the purposes of increasing student awareness of different identifiable disciplines. According to Phil, the administration and faculty see it as a positive attribute that students who take these courses be exposed to disciplines other than their own. Below, Phil provided further insight into his explanation of the structuring and facilitation of the courses:

When I look at the way this course should be taught, for example, of course the instructor might be drawing on multiple kinds of readings or multimedia experiences whatever the case is, but for a given topic, let’s say that topic had to do with, I don’t know, medical ethics. Let’s say that we’re a topic in a given week – the goal of the course wouldn’t be to
help us how a psychologist would think about medical ethics, and then how a biologist
would think about it, and then how a philosopher with think about it; we wouldn’t be
trying to give them again either a dialogue among disciplines for an assortment of
disciplines about how they have to take on that. But that said, over the course of the
semester multiple kinds of generates, multiple kinds of thinkers, a range of time and
place, a diversity of authorship, a diversity of applications for how does this apply to
issues that are happening around us right now in our culture on a global level. All that is a
different kind of interdisciplinary in that it’s all in the same space. (Phil)

This statement is indicative of three interesting facets of interdisciplinary general education at
this university: 1) An innovative conceptual framework presented by the general education
committee could be classified as broad interdisciplinary (Broad ID). The technical term Broad ID
applies here because the offering involves instructors from several disciplines that may or may
not have any compatibility (Klein, 2010, p. 18); 2) that both administrators or instructors of the
program did not view disciplinary distinction/identification as a goal or focus of the courses; 3)
and, lastly, that the disciplinary homogeneity of strict interdisciplinary approaches were not
required, meaning that instructors were free to assert their fields however they saw fit towards
the purpose of the courses. Specifically, the facilitation within these larger conceptual
frameworks wavered between multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary due to the instructor’s
teaching philosophies and backgrounds (“multiple genres, thinkers, applications and
authorship”). This means that the facilitation itself can better be described as theoretical
interdisciplinarity, meaning that a “comprehensive general view and epistemological form”
(Klein, 2010, p. 20) was evident amongst the approaches of all participants of this study.

**Participant Reaction to Program Evolution**

The director of general education at this time admitted that the evolution left behind a
course “directly aligned towards addressing consumer related issues” and replaced it with four
courses in which the subject may or may not include consumer education. The catalyst for this
study was the question of whether or not instructors of general education within an interdisciplinary framework viewed consumer society an unavoidable topic. Common to all the instructors who participated in the study, and in answer to the underlying question of this study, is that their view of the importance and unavoidable nature of consumer society and behavior would not permit them to exclude the topic from their courses.

Four of the instructors involved in this study mention positive and negative aspects of this program’s evolution’s impact on the inclusion of consumer issues in their particular section. Concerning positive statements, Marcie said that she thought that the evolution of the courses was a positive step in that it ensured more directly that students obtain “some basics in the liberal arts, like art, like literature” along with her consumer content. Oliver, another instructor, reinforced this view by stating that the structuring of four more specific courses allowed instructors to “introduce students to new ways of understanding themselves and the world within the context of what they've experienced” and increase exposure to “contexts, ideas, that they won't get otherwise, which may influence and affect the way they kind of see what it means to be human beings.” Critical reactions of the shift by two instructors detailed complications shifting from a broad two course format to four courses that are still meant to be interdisciplinary in nature, stating that the shift had a direct impact on their ability to ensure that students connect with the course content. Lucy stated that “in the way that I.D.S. was taught before, you could teach everyone.” This was because instructors had more control over the materials chosen and could use something from their own fields and knowledge base to achieve the same objectives. As an instructor in Health Education, Lucy explained the shift:

Now with these new classes you have an outline that they want to encourage you to teach … you're told here's a book that you have to go teach from. You are just as
knowledgeable about this book because you read it as the students are because they read it. So, I don't think it's helping the students if we are teaching stuff that we're unfamiliar with, because 1) we're not going to be passionate, and I think if you're not passionate when you're teaching you're just wasting everybody's time. And 2) you know, like you said they read it I read it we got both the same thing out we chat for a minute, and I try to you know bring in a few other things I read, but I'm not going to be able to tell them you know all the ins and outs of the tariff.

While Lucy mentions complications with the materials, Patricia’s experiences with the new courses highlight two issues. The first is that instructors with educational philosophies that are more transformational may lean on the broader approaches of wellness issues to drive the information home with students, as Patricia explained:

I was heartbroken when they got rid of the class, because I really saw a lot of transformation from this class. So, for example, I had a student who started a composting pile. He read about composting, and started one in his backyard because of this class. I had a student who joined the Peace Corps because she wanted to join the Peace Corps, and she was inspired by this course to actually go and join the Peace Corps, and another girl lost twenty pounds, and other gal who went to med school. (Patricia)

Patricia and Lucy both contend that the materials within the more defined framework created limitations where students had a more complicated time seeing where they could individually assert themselves to make a difference. In commenting on teaching the new Global Justice course, Patricia identified how the framework has complicated the delivery, and thereby impacted the relatability, of the course for her as an instructor:

It's really sort of taken the wellness piece of clay and just left this social responsibility piece, but they morphed into a global responsibility, not social responsibility so it's supposed to be more global … I mean like we're not supposed to pay attention to the poorly funded charter schools in Chicago, we’re supposed to look at them in Manchuria or something. Not that I’m disregarding the book, but again its a book and how do you learn about global justice reading a book, in my mind … That's how the course is written to be delivered, but I think it has some shortcomings to it and it's not so tangible for students, right? (Patricia)
The above quotation illustrates that, for instructors who utilize more participatory methods of attempting to instruct social causes, that local contexts being exchanged for a global concentration left them struggling to make the subject matter relatable and immediate for their students. Instructor knowledge and preparation underpins their choices, familiarity with and depth of investigation into course content (Greenwood, 2010). These comments indicate that program’s course evolution constructed interdisciplinarity in a way that was uncomfortable for some of the participants.

**No Impact Man: The Film and the Campus Initiative**

Part of the context of this general education program, and not evident in any prior research I encountered associated with the topic, is that the contribution of faculty mentored student organizations was included in the achievement of general education initiatives. Not specifically that the general education program worked with initiatives, but that the effort of faculty advised student organizations in covering topics supported by general education initiatives were actively taken into account by administrators and some instructors when structuring the frameworks of the four newly required IDS courses. This study has found that one of the main campus initiatives referenced frequently by study participants was titled “No Impact Week,” in reference to the 2009 film “No Impact Man: The Documentary.” Below, a summary and detailed rhetorical analysis of the film’s subject matter is provided. The rhetorical analysis of the film required both ideological and sociological frameworks to describe how the documentary attempts to visualize an answer to an issue for educators, students, and citizens interested in the ongoing conversation about “how” they could act to address their concerns towards our planet’s environment. Ideological analysis highlights issues of power concerning semiotic representations
of our living environment around ourselves and through the media. Sociological analysis highlights the basic question of whether the project is presented as a viable option to attempt, especially considering how the project impacts the relationship of the married couple. This analysis serves to demonstrate the fertile ground the film provides for various educational opportunities that are exhibited in this study’s campus initiative.

Following the documentary analysis, a snapshot of a few semesters of the No Impact Week initiative at the campus will be provided, with McGregor’s (2011) typology referenced to categorize campus initiatives, as well as the interdisciplinary course offerings on this campus. Lastly, the instructional purpose of the film and campus initiatives will be described by instructors of this study.

**Rhetorical Analysis “No Impact Man: The Documentary” (2009)**

The film has been effective in strengthening existing social focus on environmental living, and starting various educational initiatives, as well as being “required reading at over 100 college campuses across the country” (https://colinbeavan.com/biography/). The documentary uses conversation, introspection, nuclear family dynamics and humor to capture the journey of a small family as they attempt to live daily life while having zero – to – minimal environmental impact. The small, upper middle-class, nuclear family at the center of the project consists of Colin Beavan, his wife Michelle and their small daughter Isabella, who all live in a Manhattan 5th floor apartment in New York. This attempt is the project of the husband, who is convinced by various environmental arguments to try this “eco-effective” project for a year. The project resulted in this documentary and the book *No Impact Man: The Adventures of a Guilty Liberal*
Who Attempts to Save the Planet, and the Discoveries He Makes About Himself and Our Way of Life in the Process that was published in 2009. Throughout the film, Colin is the still-learning educator and fallible human example of how a citizen may attempt to change how they live and what that thought process would look like. The narrative of the documentary weaves the personal viewpoints of the family as they come in contact with the media, others who share their cause, and the general public’s blunt and multifaceted reactions.

The film attempts to address the paralysis one feels towards the enormity of environmental issues by demonstrating through action the practicality, or lack thereof, implementing various environmental proposals (buying nothing new, eating locally and seasonally, composting waste, not using cars, not using electricity, growing their own food, no plastic, volunteering, etc.). Individually, the viewer asks themselves what practices they could integrate into their lives, to what extent, and what benefit could they obtain from it. The success of the film is that it prompts the viewer to seriously consider their waste production and petty consumption. As the film progresses and integrates public praise, judgments and backlash, the larger culture is addressed as the personal becomes more political for the goal of instilling a general and collective responsibility in Americans towards our environment.

The film is built on an assumption of citizenship that grows into an ethos of community, with the presumption that people do see the problem and want to do something, and that people have a sense of common good. The lingering question provoked several times, but not directly addressed by Colin in the film evolves around how American identity’s strong ties to consumption are related to ideas of success, achievement, social class and other important aspects of the American Dream. Considering the ever-evolving nature of the project in his mind
and the resulting impact on his family’s relationships and living conditions, several lessons are also visualized for the viewer: 1) how not to attempt to implement various environmental proposals, 2) the impact that judgment and conceptions of responsibility have on people making their own choices, and 3) how people who are rendered all but voiceless in the decision-making process may feel about losing control and having their lives altered by decision makers.

Semiotics. The socio semiotics of the film is layered and complex. The depiction of visual imagery attempts to make visible what is hidden and in plain sight every day in terms of how we consume within our living environment. The prevailing success of the film is the symbolism of daily living in the face of a paralyzing issue: living changes, strategizing, arguments, learning, volunteering, conversations, and interviews. Visual evolution and juxtaposition are clear foundational elements that are invaluable to the film’s impact. The narrative is grounded in presentations of people who represent a broad range of what people know about the environment and consumption otherwise known as a “taste community” of friends (“We’re the superficial friends, Colin’s out of style anyways”) who view their project as entertaining, a friend of the family that thinks his doubled recyclable Starbucks® cup with a non-recyclable lid and holder is environmentally friendly, various positive and negative responses from the online community, and environmental activists who grow their own food and fight toxicity and pollution. The married couple themselves are an odd couple concerning the issue, a pair with a person who is a self-described environmentalist (Colin) and a voracious and avid self-described consumer (Michelle). The relatability of emotional states, knowledge levels, adjustment periods, struggles, growth, and other reactions are the strongest relatable symbols for the viewer.
Another important aspect of semiotic representation is the presentation of the magnitude of the problems that stem from mindless consumption. Viewers see very large black garbage bags in piles bigger than people, piles that dwarf the couple’s toddler, Isabella, and are taller than Colin. Viewers see how dangerous it is to maneuver on bicycles through pollution-causing traffic. Viewers see overflowing garbage cans in Times Square, large flats of bottles of water wrapped in plastic, all of the packaging of meat, cereal, and other items in grocery stores, the size of the city’s energy grid, pollution in the Hudson, landfills disturbingly close to low-income housing complexes, and semi-trucks coughing black exhaust as they transport goods. From a social class perspective, the viewers not only see that the learners in the film are mostly upper and middle classed citizens, but also the visual differences in the buildings, apartments, and neighborhoods those citizens inhabit and those of the lower-class areas. The film does an excellent job of juxtaposing these visuals with more natural and less compromised environments: the contrast between the supermarket with the fresh market, the contrast between their child on the sidewalk and in the grass of the city garden area, the contrast between the family watching television and visiting the park instead, the contrast between the restaurant they stopped visiting and eating at home around the table, the contrast between the pollution of the city and its’ piles of garbage or the farms they visit, a beautiful sandy beach at Fort Tilden, the use of the solar panel, candles, refillable drinking containers and their compost bin. The activists involved with the issue are citizens who are trying to raise awareness of issues that are directly impacting citizens locally and have been for years. The consequences of various changes are also made evident to viewers of the film.
The extreme nature of the project does create this positive aspect that there is something always happening, the issue is made unavoidable, and daily life is altered in response to it. The viewers see people try. Viewers watch people learn different skills and different ways to manage their time, and also manage how they handle their basic living. Viewers watch people volunteering, actively cleaning around trees, taking the stairs, shopping differently, and even reclaiming a parking space. Viewers watch people actively question their happiness, social roles and needs; they watch people reassess their lives and attempt to redefine themselves. There is a semiotic visualization attached to choices that both Colin and Michelle make, and that choice is presented to the viewer as a possible option for them: a different household cleanser and/or cleaning method, a different way of shopping from a different market or a garden, a different mode of transportation, a different form of refrigeration, a different source of energy, a different method of waste management, etc. The viewers see their apartment be rearranged by their choices and can ask themselves if that living environment is something they could themselves live with.

**Reciprocity.** Relationship reciprocity, different perceptions thereof or a lack of it altogether, creates conflict between the married couple in the film. The viewer watches the author’s intentions towards the project and clarity of the project evolve throughout the progression of film. At the beginning of the project, not only is he unclear on what he is doing and why he is doing it, but he is aware that he has also situated himself as a model for others and is now concerned that people may just think he is out for attention. He himself is overwhelmed and uncertain, mirroring the starting point for people who are concerned, start informing themselves, and then ask, “now what?” As he sits backstage of The Colbert Report, a politics
themed satire show on Comedy Central, Colin attempts to clarify for himself why he took on this project, providing a predictable and unfortunately less convincing answer of “We’re cutting down too many trees and we need the trees to save the planet … and the polar bears … (sigh).” This as his starting point indicates that he sees a problem he could hope to attempt to do something about it as he tries “to live a life in line with my values.”

He is the leader of this project for the family, as they stop using their car, buy local, stop eating out, start composting their garbage, cleaning and interacting with as few chemicals as possible, and buying nothing new for a year. They give up their television and donate belongings during family trips to the thrift store and market. They find themselves spending more time together and connecting as a family outdoors at the park and rooftop gardening, with beautiful scenes of him dancing on top of the laundry in the bathtub with his wife and daughter, or them visiting local farms to see where their food comes from. Until halfway through the film, he is the upbeat protagonist in comparison to his wife, whose discomfort with certain aspects of the project are immediately apparent to the viewer and serves to mirror what many Americans would feel if they had to attempt drastic changes to habits that they have spent years cultivating. The shifting consumption habits of the couple as they start and progress through this project serves as a mirror to prompt the viewer to consider their own habits; furthermore, as those habits are removed and changed, we see the couple constantly reevaluate other aspects of their lives, like their relationship and emotional wellbeing.

In the beginning of the film, distinct identities are clearly established for Colin and Michelle. Colin states that he wants to become less of a historical writer and more an of “activist writer: “In some humble way, I want to have a sense that my writing is helping the world.” He
then goes on to show the website he has created and the parameters of the project, from buying nothing in packaging and buying local, to buying nothing new and no laundry detergent. He has described his wife Michelle in interviews as “one of those New York, media-industry, glam-girl fashionistas … grew up on Daddy’s gold Amex,” (Jacobs, 2009, p. BR18) while his family background stems from more middle classed roots. The family resides in what was Michelle’s Manhattan apartment when she was single (Jacobs, 2009). Michelle, a writer for Businessweek magazine, describes her reaction to the no impact project by stating that “I was really excited that he had an idea that he was excited about, ‘cause that was overall the most important thing.” The viewer then gets a shot at her very full closet, as she then describes herself as a “reality television aficionado, addict and expert. … with a real intense relationship with retail.” She then goes on to name high-priced couture clothing labels Catherine Malandrino and Jean Paul Gaultier:

Buying Marc Jacobs is, like, “I’m married, I’m a mom, but I’m still trying to work it a little bit.” I’m like a high fructose corn syrup addicted, screen addicted, meat eating girl. I am not an environmentalist. I’m a consumer. I’m a take-out junkie. (Michelle)

After showing her internalized shame with her being unable to even say the number out loud and having, instead, to show the $975 she paid for Chloe boots on the bank statement, Colin describes her splurge on the boots as “you were scared at not being able to consume for a year.”

She describes the purchase:

Her: “Custer’s last stand, spending all of my money on silly things.”
Him: “I don’t care how much you spend. This particular spending has to do with …”
Her: “Your project, no impact.”
Him: “I thought it was our project.”
Her: “Oh, yeah.”

The scene then cuts to her in front of her closet again explaining to the viewers that “It’s ‘No Impact Man,’ it’s his book and it’s his project and he’s no impact man, but in order … but
the project is our family is doing this.” This entire conversation occurs in the first six minutes of the 1:26:13 film and remains a point of disharmony throughout the film. The viewer feels that there is an unsettled nature to why the family is involved but not equally commanding in the project. This is just one example of the lack of reciprocity in the sociality of their emotions towards the project before the project even starts. The constructed mutual support of the relationship seems to disappear for the wife and be optional/threatened for the husband, based on his satisfaction of the wife’s adherence to the project. Sociality means that “Human beings need to associate with others in protective, developmental, and self-confirming ways” (Sillars and Gronbeck, 2001, p. 166) through a variety of relationships that are all impacted by discourse-based reciprocity (e.g., power dynamics). This is not just a couple who were nearing 40 years of age with well-established identities, this is an upper-middle class family led by adults with independent careers who are reconstructing their daily lives without the coping mechanisms and expression-based symbols that their consumer habits used to provide them. Whether or not Michelle can do without those symbols has been tied to her devotion to supporting her relationship, and the viewer watches her struggle and chafe under the invasive nature of Colin’s expectations and his judgment that follows.

In the above conversation, her purchasing was formerly tied to her expressions of her femininity, age, social status, and family relationships, echoing very American conceptions of success and financial independence from her upbringing and society’s various gender based commercial messages. Swiftly, with little time to negotiate or adjust, her purchasing is now tied to his expectations of respect towards his project. Even though she is also a writer, she has already indicated feelings of exclusion based on the fact that the project, website and book all
focus on his observations and perspective of his family’s sacrifice. In her desire to be a supportive wife to a husband trying to more clearly define himself, the film includes several instances of where habits tied to her identity are seen by her husband as unsupportive, which, in turn, makes her conscious of his disapproval. Colin states in his describing of the project’s goals that he wants to inspire people to do whatever they can do and whatever works for them (Beavan, 2009), while watching this not be the case for his wife as she attempts to capitulate to a host of lifestyle alterations and navigate his restrictions or risk being seen as unsupportive. It is clear in her unease that she misses television and eating out, but she attempts to be supportive in stating that the family has had a blast over halfway through the project, even when they have turned off the electricity and are using candles. He decides to put her makeup in a box until the year is over, with her visibly upset by the decision. Her social roles and choices are altered greatly with seemingly very little understanding received from her husband. Furthermore, while she is excited about certain parts of the project and does want to better manage her money and her diet, she articulates that in having to abandon her habits, she feels sad for the death of the “wanting” part of herself and describes a “hole” left. Her lack of voice in the decision-making aspects of the project creates for the perception that her participation is a test to see whether or not she is doing well and being supportive, almost as if she is being graded on her adherence to his rules.

A tangible level of resentment is evident through several situations from the beginning of the film to the very end. In watching their conversations and relationship evolve through the project, any discerning viewer would ask themselves if they would want to attempt this if it was going to impact their relationship(s) similarly. The following dialogue embodies the relationship
issues and the appeal of the project to viewers. In another instance in which she is told to quit drinking coffee because the overwhelming majority of American grown coffee is not grown locally, she states the following:

   I mean, out of everything, out of the stairs and the scooter and the no garbage, I definitely found the food to be the hardest. There’s no locally grown coffee, so I have to cut it out. Today is my last hurrah with the iced quad expressos. I’m worried that I’m gonna have a slip, that I’m not gonna be able to do it, and I’m worried about the wrath of Colin. It really bothers him when I have slips because it makes him feel like the project is going to pot. Basically, this is easy for Colin and like murder for me, the food and the caffeine. (Michelle)

   An issue that enters the film roughly half an hour in is her desire to have another child, which is something that Colin does not originally support. The viewer is given the impression through the conversation that Colin’s project has created a dynamic where she feels a distinct imbalance in the marriage because she does not have a project of her own and feels with this issue that she supports his life goals while he does not support hers.

   Watching his wife having to sneak coffee and ice cubes or risk implications of being an unsupportive partner seems extreme. Watching her use her job as an escape from some of the oversight of her project is relatable. Their relationship dynamics are further complicated when the scope and what he admits is the “extreme” nature of the project complicates the presentation of the project to all who react to it, including public reaction to the television appearances and interviews and the viewer of the film. In watching her reactions, the viewer not only asks themselves about what he is choosing to do and how he is choosing to do it, they also ask themselves about realistic expectations concerning everyday American life. Even though Michelle’s statement above happens towards the beginning of the film, the viewer predicts that an American movement focused on giving up coffee is not going to be instigated by this film or
its environmental concerns. From a sociality and reciprocal aspect, if these things could be accomplished with more communication, inclusion, consideration, and detailed research placed into how to achieve certain choices, would attempting to live this way appeal more to American citizens?

**Project persuasiveness.** The scope and presentation of the project impacts the likelihood of the viewer deciding to adopt some of the changes in their own attempts to make a smaller environmental impact. We watch the family sleep in winter coats due to them turning off the electricity combined with the use of candles around small children, while we live in a nation where social services can get involved if parents do not provide a warm home for their children. We watch her strongly question and indicate her lack of comfort with his inflexible impracticality, but also worry about the public backlash associated with his decision to “confront a disposable culture” by not using toilet paper or disposable diapers for their potty-training daughter. We actually watch her discover that her husband has gotten rid of toilet paper while she is cleaning their child, another decision that her input was not involved in. The ensuing argument has her stating, “Do we really wanna be this graphic? … isn’t it just making no impact man so fringe and wacko that you’ll be discounted as a fringe wacko?” Working in the press, she has a stronger grasp on what the public reaction would be, and she winds up being right. This issue garners media scrutiny and public backlash for the both of them, with a New York Times article titled “The Year without Toilet Paper” (March 22, 2007) is published about his project. She states more than once how the public scrutiny of the project is difficult for her and even meets with an online food critic of the project for an apology and explanation. This food critic
describes her reaction and other negative reactions to the project and provides one of the few mentions of identity in the film:

It makes people feel guilty and defensive about their consumer habits; people are “traumatized” if you suggest that they do without something. People think ‘I need it’ or ‘I don’t need it, but I want it, so why shouldn’t I have it?’ This is being a good American.

The film is also excellent in communicating how certain ideological visualizations fail. Complications to the project appear roughly 50 minutes through the film when his compost pile produces flies in the kitchen. His resolve is shown as weakening as he attempts to replace their electric refrigerator with a Nigerian version called “pot in a pot.” As the milk and other perishables are not prevented from spoiling, the viewer finds him sitting despondent over not having a refrigerator. “Who’s gonna go without electricity?” Then he says, “by the time the book comes out, everyone will have moved on and it will be just another irrelevant book.” He’s not perfect and admits that he could be doing the wrong thing, or that the project feels like a curiosity.

On his evolving motivation and purpose for the project, Colin describes an online comment he received where he posted, “Imagine if we made the city nicer to live in?” His responses including statements like “Let’s be realistic.” “As if you can’t make a city nice, so forget it.” He states that “There’s such a lack of idealism. I feel that realism got us where we are, you know what I’m sayin’?” The further the film progresses, Colin clarifies in his head that in answering people ask him “What’s the hardest thing” (to give up): “It’s not about deprivation, it’s not about not taking care of yourself. It’s the opposite, it’s about seeing is it possible to have a good life without wasting so much?” He goes on to cite reading/public comments that support the project (“I’m already doing a lot, but plan to do a lot more.”) to comments that tell his wife to
leave him ("D.T.M.F.A., Michelle.") and call his entire project a publicity stunt ("I can’t wait to wipe my ass with this book."). In response to the backlash, his wife Michelle states,

> I know that I can’t back out now, and I’m not gonna back out on you, but its making me not want to do it. … people calling us bourgeoisie fucks … a coworker of mine said “My wife has told me never to shake your hand” … I understand why people would criticize or whatever, but I don’t get why they hate us.

Complicating the family’s issues with public perception would be how the media frames the project in its coverage. From the lower thirds (captions for names, book titles, and segments under the faces of talking heads) created that accompany public appearances to the article titles and language used during interviews, it became apparent the level of dismissal the project faced from the start, partially in part to the unpreparedness of Colin to articulate his evolving purpose for doing it.

**Media Navigation.** The media not only attempts to dismiss the project through laughter or choice of salacious subject matter, but Colin’s lack of preparation for that onslaught impacts dismissal of the importance of the project. In reaction to the media’s pointed criticisms and biased coverage, specifically the various toilet paper related articles, Colin makes a point that illustrates his frustration with the insincerity and lack of gravity the project was receiving:

> Why don’t we call it the year I lost 20 pounds without going to the gym once, or the year we didn’t watch TV and became much better parents as a result, or the year we ate locally and seasonally and it ended up reversing my wife’s pre diabetic condition? There are actual benefits to living environmentally.

Though the first scene of the film is Colin’s appearance on The Colbert Report, which was Stephen Colbert’s conservative alter ego’s overreaction to the project, it is followed by further television appearances and interviews with Diane Sawyer that include lower thirds with captions of “living outside the comfort zone. no power, paper or coffee,” and her asking the
audience if they would attempt it and receiving a resounding “NO!” Coverage of the project on The Today Show and Nightline also focused on what they decided to give up instead of what could be gained if some of the behavior caught on habitually in society. Consider the language in general: “self-proclaimed no impact man” and “we begin tonight with one man, his family and a radical experiment to help the environment,” further the strong possibility of a public perception of dismissal and flickering contemplation. Unfortunately, one can see as Colin is doing these interviews while not having his purpose and motivation concrete in his own head, that he in part helped fuel these reactions. In response to the New York Times radio interviewer’s statement of the project being “Part change the world, part gimmick for your next book. Do you cop to that?” Colin replies, “Yeah, I totally cop to that, you know, I am who I am and this is what I do.” A French interviewer states that his compost box “Looks like shit.” He is asked during several interviews if he is going too far or being unreasonable. While the lack of clarity on the motivation, methods, and public statement Colin is trying to make with the project serves to keep the project interesting and has the viewers ponder for themselves how and why they might attempt something similar, it also provides the media and any naysayers ample reason to distrust and dismiss the project in its entirety as a publicity stunt or a political ideologue’s paranoia over an issue (the environment) that not everyone agrees is in a state of crisis. To a certain extent, his behavior fuels that response. This dismissal stems to criticism Colin receives concerning the actual gravity of what the project is attempting to achieve and how that is tied to how the media reacts to him. This is highlighted in the perspective of Mayer Vishner, the gardener who is teaching him to grow his own food:

My hesitation about your work is that it allows people to fool themselves, that all they have to do is change the lightbulb and recycle their plastic bag, and as long as they feel
that way no politician will pick it up … at the risk of being too personal, you know, it’s
not, it’s just the facts, Michelle writes for Businessweek … Millions of trees are cut down
on a regular basis in order to promote this thoroughly fallacious propaganda that
American corporate capitalism is good for the people, good for you and me. If it’s your
contention she makes up for it, that it evens out, because she doesn’t take the elevator in
your 5th Avenue co-op, I have to say, you are either dishonest or delusional … I mean
who, where did all of this crap come from? American corporate capitalism did all of it.
You know, if anybody really thought, you know, that you were gonna have an impact
there, you wouldn’t be getting the attention you’re getting.

The viewer cannot help but notice the contradiction that Colin is ideologically bombarded with
people who say that he is going too far and people saying that he is not going far enough; from
the standpoint of critical theory, both reactions are fed by the media in a reflection of power
dynamics that demand consumption remain an unquestioned focus in American life. The above
conversation with gardener citizen Mayer Vishner is the film’s ideological critical embodiment,
and it highlights the kinds of reaction Colin was receiving from the environmentally inclined
who criticized his lack of knowledge or motivations.

Yet, one notices as the film progresses that Colin’s scope shifts from “I” to “us”, and he
learns more about how these issues impact the community around him. With the solar panel to
help run his laptop, he states his ideological viewpoint as being more that about creating “a way
to get what I need in a sustainable way. That’s also what we need to do with our systems … to
figure out how to get people what they need in a way that doesn’t harm the planet.” We see a
broader evolution from himself and his project to the larger community in his comments after
touring poorer neighborhoods that surround the waste management facilities in that part of New
York with activist Majora Carter. Colin’s viewpoint on the book and project are clearer and
much more evolved:

12000 trucks a day go through that neighborhood. The diesel particulates in the air are
causing asthma in kids, causing brain damage in kids. When I started this project, I
thought I was just gonna like make less garbage, not travel so much and wouldn’t I be a hero sort of thing, and you know, I guess I wasn’t so clear on how many issues this was going to open up. I’m not talking about the polar bears. I’m not talking about the people in faraway island communities who are gonna be hurt when the ocean levels rise. I’m talking about people who are already living with the effects of our over consumptive society. One of the things that I get worried about when people talk about individual action not being important is that the thing about individual action is that it causes people to be engageducation. Our society is not set up to live sustainably. … we need hard changes.

Noticeable in the media interviews and coverage of the project is the focus on the family involved in the project and seeming sacrifice of personal choices (doing without electricity or coffee), not the collective harm that Colin discovers concerning air pollution for poorer people living in areas of waste management.

Towards the end of the film, Colin is visiting college campuses that have adopted his initiative, and meeting with Representative Jarrold Nadler (D-NY) about environmental legislation. At the same time, Michelle is dealing with her fatigue of the project and the miscarriage of their 2nd child. Them turning their lights back on at the end of the project was covered on Good Morning America. Even though the film ends on an adorable conversation the couple is having about what changes she would like to keep because of the project, with her saying “because I get to make some decisions around here,” she leaves with the couple’s daughter to see her parents, since she can now travel due to the project being over.

Reflective of McGregor’s (2011) personal-global educational orientation, the film starts with the family and carries the viewer on a journey that redefines Michelle and Colin as they question their social roles, values, and identities, define what they believe and care about, alter their lives and get involved in larger society. The film is brilliant on bringing the focus back to the evolution of two people over the course of a year-long project of examining the impact of
how changing their approach to consumer society has had on them. Colin finds a stronger purpose in line with his values to dedicate his career to; Michelle’s continual emotional upheaval has her reexamining her life, clarifying what she wants and discovering her unhappiness. Additionally, the film provides a glimpse of what is involved in consumer culture itself that makes it so hard for someone to challenge their own behavior, from media coverage with the theme of “different/less = bad,” to friends and critics disapproval of attempted lifestyle alterations, compounded with individual reassessments of identity, social status, and personal goals. Lastly, the film is amazing in presenting how ideological viewpoints weave themselves though society to impact how people define themselves and how the larger society supports and shuns various manifestations of human behavior.

The film’s ability to demonstrate the impact of consumer culture on individual choices is part of why numerous colleges and institutions have chosen to design various initiatives that examine and question individual and social consumption practices. Various narratives in the film were indicated during the interviews of participants of this study as the reason why they chose to have their various general education classes read the book, show the film, and/or take part in the weeklong campus initiative “No Impact Week.”

**Campus Activity Towards Consumer Education and Awareness**

Participants of this study indicated two campus initiatives that they included in their instructional approaches of sociological consumer education. They are “No Impact Week,” and “A Day without Shoes.” This section briefly details the first two initiatives and how instructor viewpoints concerning how they were incorporated into their instruction.
**No Impact Week.** The various weekly schedules from the No Impact Weeks of three separate semesters indicate a Type IV Empowerment for Mutual Interest personal-global educational orientation (McGregor, 2011). Various activities and information were made available campus wide to help students consider small actions towards stewardship, as students are prompted throughout the week to take part in various action learning activities that train them to consume conscientiously. Examples of activities during this week include using reusable water bottles and coffee cups, art exhibits made from recyclable materials, carpooling and clothing drives. Trash recycling day coincided with activities to repurpose trash and with film viewings of the documentary and audience discussions afterwards. Colin Beavan’s University guide is made available online for students to get more ideas on how to change their consumption habits. Each semester included presentations on energy conservation or sustainable agriculture. For instance, actually taking stock of the food waste or water usage on campus and comparing it to other campuses and larger society is an example of contextualization within the personal-global learning orientation. Rewarding students for bringing their own reusable drinking containers, recycling more and using less energy by carpooling, and consciously using electricity is Type III Critical Approach for Self Interest social reconstructivism of actively participating in solutions to some of our most pressing issues. More than one semester ended the week with the university’s semiannual Morning of Service to tie responsible citizenship to volunteering throughout the community. Furthermore, being that one semester’s No Impact Week was hosted by one of the junior/senior IDS courses is further indicative of social reconstructivist approach, that views our patterns of consumption as something that should be addressed and confronted by students who are now attempting to educate others while “actively
participating” in solutions (McGregor, 2011). The indicated, underlying personal-global orientation mirrors the learning progression of Colin in the film, where private actions and intimate socialization indicated a need for larger social action and political influence.

While this week is the most consumer-based campus initiative that is part of their general education program, other activities throughout the year also impart a personal-global orientation to helping students self-actualize concerning global citizenship and consumption.

Other Relevant Campus Initiatives. “A Day without Shoes” has been an event for several years now, where students are invited to go the entire day without wearing shoes so that they may understand what, according to the flyer for the event, is part of the reality of the world. “Experience what 300 million people around the world do every day because of poverty levels!” Four separate student organizations joined the campus religious center and one section of that semester’s IDS 2030 course to sponsor this event, which culminated in a donation for shoes that were sent to people living on a dump in Zacapa. “Sleep out on the Quad” has also been a yearly event for several years where students sleep outside on a night during the Fall semester to raise awareness about homelessness. Group discussions, a speaker, educational sessions, and a human rights presentation precede the event. Donations are also taken for the local homeless shelter. These events are just a few examples of how student organizations, university departments, and the general education curriculum work together to create a learning environment surrounding sociological consumption. These efforts embody what McGregor (2013) terms as transdisciplinary consumer education, because organizations that are part of the community are being involved with exposing students to the gravity and impact of social issues that are related to consumer society.
None of these initiatives are mandatory for all the sections involved in the IDS curriculum; less than half of this study’s participants, three out of the ten, mentioned having their sections involved with the initiatives. Furthermore, a discrepancy made itself evident concerning the role of the initiatives in covering content that previously had been structured into course content. According to Phil, the existence of the initiatives was viewed as fulfilment of covering consumer issues as part of the program after the course changes:

As you know in our previous curriculum we had a single course that was more directly aligned towards addressing consumer related issues … talking about questions of wellness to a range of ways of our food industry you know it set it up, or the impact of all kinds of lifestyle choices on our wellness. … so fast forward: We don't have that course, yet the past two years you've had student-driven projects on the cult film No Impact Man and one on No Impact Week going back to the previous year. That was a student activity driven event sponsored by one the faculty members every night had a different theme. But we're going to activity around raising questions about rejecting excessive consumption. So, for example they show this quirky documentary about a guy who tried to live entirely off the grid with his family for a year called No Impact Man and that is a theme into that week, and then the other activities throughout the week. (Phil)

It is evident in Phil’s statement that the campus initiatives were meant to be included in course planning and section involvement. Yet this study found that only three other participants mentioned the film and the week’s initiative, and two of them focusing more on showing the film itself in class apart from No Impact Week’s film viewing. Lena mentioned the initiative activity of tracking the waste in the campus cafeteria for a week and asking her students to get involved with the initiative as much as possible in her freshman level course. The importance of the film was reinforced by another one of the participants who taught the adult degree completion course of IDS 2000:

I do remember that this last section that I taught there were a number of students who did have “Aha moments,” and you know some of it was around the physical stuff because we looked at … which one… we watched No Impact Man. So that documentary: the guy with his wife who they didn't consume anything for a whole year or something. And what
Marcie, whose pedagogical approach is personal-global in orientation, experienced the relevance of the film to her students as one of contextual awareness: her intent was to have people be more informed and the film helped some of her students achieve that. She went on to mention the No Impact Week initiative and acknowledged that other course sections within the general education program are involved with it. Yet, with her instruction of adult students in night classes who were employed during the day, it became apparent that using a campus-based initiative for the coverage of course content may exclude the initiative from the planning of courses for non-traditional age students. In contrast, Oliver mentioned using both the book and the documentary in his course, describing the book as “campy” and the film as a “great documentary” for course discussion, but Oliver’s pedagogical approach is a combination of existentialist and perennialist orientations that focused more on global poverty and injustice. He referenced the Day Without Shoes initiative as more relevant for his course, stating:

The students are genuinely quite surprised to discover how well they are being the world's top two percent even though they don't think they have much money. So, I mean I think understanding the extent of world inequity is a big shock for many of them … for all of us, actually. (Oliver)

At a university where the majority of the students are commuters who also work, an optional initiative may not be the priority it once was when it was required content. But instead of the initiatives being utilized actively by instructors, participants of this study chose to engage the subject matter without involving themselves directly with the initiative. If the initiative is
optional in participation, changing the course offerings reduced the number of students exposed to the subject matter. The subject has not been made less important by the course alteration and campus initiatives, but it has been made less customary and less prevalent.

While the program structure, course offerings, and campus initiatives are indicative of McGregor’s (2011) personal-global educational orientation in its approach to sociological consumer education, the intricacies of the instructor’s teaching philosophies and usage of visual imagery complicate: 1) McGregor’s push for instructional approaches based on critical theory, 2) the classifications of some of her eleven orientations in light of analyzing pedagogical practice, and 3) the kind of result possible in reality due to the maturity and experience level of traditional and adult college students. The next section will delve into the nature and facets of the teaching philosophies of this study’s participants.
CHAPTER 5

PEDAGOGICAL FINDINGS

Individual Instructor Pedagogy in Personal-Global General Education Program Structure

This chapter details the instructional approaches of each participant of this study. Participant description of how their consumer background impacts their instructional approaches, their instructional approaches per McGregor’s theoretical frameworks, and the participants’ choice of visual imagery as instructors of interdisciplinary sociological consumer education are also described. Illustrative quotations are meant to provide insight on the complex and multifaceted experiences and approaches that encompass the phenomenon of interdisciplinary consumer education in this program.

Restated here for clarification, the following is a reminder of what McGregor’s (2011) educational philosophies of consumer education entail. McGregor’s (2005/2011) typology defines four types of consumer education and the types of consumers that would result from that specific pedagogical approach. Furthermore, she aligns 11 educational philosophies in with her four approaches:

Type 1: Consumer information, protection and advocacy: Relies on the assumption that individuals must participate as consumers, but must do so in the most informed manner possible while actively preventing exploitation.

- Social adaptation: informs the student how to manage social problems, conform to, and fit into, the existing social order in maintenance of the status quo. (2011, p. 6).
- Essentialism: transmitting the view of seeing the nation as a consumer society, and educating people to see themselves as major economic players whose primary role in a consumer society is to consume (2011, p. 6).
Type II: Individual critique for self-interest: Responsibility for self and individual changes in lifestyle creates individuals who can’t focus on the larger society, but are questioning what it means to live in a consumer society. (2005, p. 441)

- Existentialism: curriculum emphasis on humanities, fine arts, history, religious studies, as students examine the meaning of life through emotions, thoughts, actions and responsibilities to answer the question of “what is the good life? Who am I if not to consume.” (2011, p. 6.)
- Cognitive: a critical thinking, problem solving and reflection-based pedagogy that teaches students to think through consumer situations and be confident in their problem solving. (2011, pp. 5 & 6)

Type III: Critical approach for self-interest: Critical citizen consumers are reflective in order to not propagate the current capitalist system. (2005, p. 441)

- Self-actualization: focuses on personal significance, autonomy and inner potential to become a self-governing agent, rather than to solve social problems. Equating individual consuming with various levels of personal power. (2011, p. 6.)
- Social Reconstructivism: the school as an instrument of social change through citizen students who study current problems for the purpose of problem solving to challenge consumer society and the ideology of consumerism. (2011, p. 6.)
- Cognitive (previously defined)
- Critical: critical reflection leading to consciousness raising and emancipation from oppression, exploitation, discrimination, and marginalization (Eisner, 1979, as seen in McGregor, 2011, p. 6).

Type IV: Empowerment approach for mutual interest: Focuses on mutual interests, meaning that inner power and potential help individuals focus on national and global interests and become global citizens who function from a holistic perspective. Language and imagery are called into question. (2005, p. 441)

- Self-actualization (previously defined)
- Social Reconstructivism (previously defined)
- Progressivism: teachers are facilitators of real life, authentic learning experiences as well as student-centered instruction to foster character development and create independent thinkers for the public good. (2011, p. 6.)
- Personal-Global: integrates cognitive, self-actualization and social reconstructivism to focus on social change, global citizenship and stewardship. Presumes that each individual student is a unique, holistic being who is continuously in the process of becoming, seeking full integration with his or her changing environment. (2011, p. 6.)

In determining the general conceptualization of what consumer society meant to the participants of this study, it was found that there was a universal rejection of the drive of acquisition. All the instructors refuted the premises underlying what would be defined as Type I “essentialist” or “social adaptation” teaching philosophies, which are philosophies that are
described as “traditional based indoctrination” or acceptance of the consumer “status quo” (McGregor, 2011, p. 6). These rejected premises are the ones that underpin traditional consumer education’s assumptions that consumer society is something that should not be questioned, that all individuals must participate as consumers, and that students should be trained to function on the basis of self-interest and lifestyle idealization (Langrehr & Mason, 1977; McGregor, 2005; McGregor, 2011).

Type II – Type IV teaching philosophies were indicated by the ten participants of this study. This means that every instructor, in the very least, was utilizing problem solving and confessional self-reflection concerning identity and life purpose. Specifically, redefining McGregor’s (2011) Type II and Type III categories, three of the ten instructors are between Type II and Type III critique for self-interest and critical approach for self-interest and instructed the Freshmen level courses. Four of the ten instructors are Type III critical approach for self-interest and instructed Freshman - Junior level courses. The remaining three instructors taught upperclassmen, and are Type IV empowerment for mutual interest instructors, although they redefine this area differently than McGregor (2011) proposes. Eight of the ten instructors who participated in this study had experience teaching the Freshman level courses (1610 and 1600). Even though McGregor (2011) separates Type II existentialism from Type III self-actualization, four instructors combined both approaches within the program’s framework of cognitive inquiry. Four of the ten instructors who participated in the study had experiences teaching the Sophomore level courses (2000 and 2030). At this level, only one of the instructors was existential self-actualization in their instructional approach. Two of the instructors were social reconstructivism, while the remaining instructor had a personal-global instructional orientation. Instructors were
found to vary in how they identified the larger social context and the level to which they engaged
the global contexts. Two of the instructors who taught the junior/senior level course (2040) had
personal-global instructional orientations that were hampered by issues of student maturity and
experience. These instructional orientations will be explained in detail later in this chapter.

Seven of the ten participants engaged in sociological consumer education through self-
actualization and/or existential pedagogical methodologies per influence of the general
education’s program structure, meaning that their pedagogical approaches were strongly
influenced by the self-actualization and/or existentialism prevalent in the Freshman level
introductory course. The initial cause of this is the program structure that starts students realizing
themselves at the Freshman level and contextualizing out to the rest of society before analyzing
global justice. Another reason for this is that the instructors of this study blur the lines of
distinction between the two concepts: approaches focused on self-actualization and discipline
were combined with attempting to help students determine for themselves good choices and their
purpose in life. Also, existential moral and ethical considerations appeared throughout both
approaches. The final reason for the combination of self-actualization and existential is that the
perennialist nature of some instructors’ approaches did not contradict the universal goal of a
relevant curriculum. Perennialism is a facet of a few of the educational approaches used in this
study, not an exclusionary method as described by McGregor (2011). All instructors who
described educational materials that stemmed from the classics in literature, religion, and
philosophy were also, without exception, attempting to meet students where they were and make
the material applicable for self-actualization and existential purposes. Four instructors have been
classified in the following sections as having Existential Self-Actualization approaches, while
three instructors have been classified as utilizing Personal-Global approaches, with self-actualization being the first aspect of that orientation. Within the Personal-Global approaches, the existentialist orientation was evident in the reading materials chosen by the instructors and prioritized by one of them; the remaining two instructors negated the existentialist framework in preference of self-actualization’s personal relevance: the meaning of life focus was shunned in these approaches in favor of a focus on autonomous, responsible self-governing (McGregor, 2011).

Progressivism defines the extent to which the instructional approach is student-centered and contains components of being led by “facilitators who begin where the students are,” and make the students the center of the curriculum (McGregor, 2011, p. 3). Another tenet of progressivism is that it includes authentic learning experiences, such as active learning (life experiences combined with class time) (McGregor, 2011). Progressivism also includes a view mirrored by Phil, the Director of the general education program, and all of the other instructors interviewed, that education as not the obtaining of learning products, but as a “process that continues as long as one lives” (Oliva & Gordon, 2013, p. 123).

Within the progressive tradition of lifelong learning, details concerning the background and possible experiences of the instructors themselves illuminated the self-awareness of the instructors of this study, in terms of their own histories and consumption habits. The connections between the instructors’ backgrounds, their current consumption habits and their instructional approaches were self-evident in several aspects, which are detailed in the following sections.
A Discourse of Academics as Teachers

It is a finding of this study that instructors were universally able to start with the individual and grow from that point to social and global contextualization in their instruction because they could identify and articulate the impact of their upbringing and experiences on their own current lifestyles and teaching philosophies. This is theoretically indicative of Crebbin’s (1997) educational discourse of “academics as teachers,” which views teaching “as an expression of the person, their values, and experiences, and their views of knowledge and learning,” (p. 30). This finding is in response to a void in consumer research concerning the background influences and teaching philosophies of instructors of consumer education, especially interdisciplinary sociological consumer education. This study’s instructors already had strong misgivings about the intrinsic unconditional acceptance of the inevitability of “living to consume.” Specifically, every participant in this study could cite a living environment during their formative years, religious orientation, and/or educational experience that served to help create their negative anti-consumerist sentiments.

Former social status as influential. In describing the nature of upbringing evident in our participants’ experiences, there is a recurrent theme of stressing personal responsibility and the lacking material goods due to financial struggle. Five of the 10 instructors clearly demonstrate that there is an influential relationship between their upbringing, their current consumption pattern, and aspects of their teaching approaches. Phil described his background as being different from some of his peers:

My family environment my home I wouldn't have known it at the time, but you know we do have basic things like we didn’t have allowances, and we had a lot of chores to do, and we didn't go to places or maybe get to have on the things that my friends did. (Phil)
Phil described that it was not as if he was being instructed to be anti-consumerism, but that the value system of his upbringing was centered of being “very frugal, and careful and grateful and stressing personal responsibility.” Similarly, the stressing of personal responsibility due to hardship occurred throughout Patricia’s upbringing:

You know, I grew up milking cows and collecting eggs and feeding pigs and we had a big garden that we harvested the produce and we preserved it for the winter. You managed your own animals, I mean it was like completely self-sustaining … But there are really important values there, um, and we did it because we were poor growing up, we didn't think about it in terms of “Oh, this is healthier for us it doesn't have there's no hormones in the beans, and there's no preservatives in the vegetables.”

In both statements, Phil and Patricia describe a value system at the center of their upbringing that did not have acquisition and status at the center of their lives. The existential purpose of their upbringing was to consume to live, being aware of one’s needs. Both, Jeff and Lena describe their separate circumstances as even more economically distressed:

Jeff: Well, we grew up kind of poor, right? That year I think we make six thousand dollars, the whole family, and so very poor. And I think that probably shaped the way I see things. I still kind of think twenty dollars is a lot of money. Which is kind of silly, but I think early training where we can afford anything that cost over you know five bucks.

Lena: It was a really tough time for my family, and we were the recipients of government milk and government cheese and there was a little bit embarrassing but really good to have and I still remember those grilled cheese sandwiches that my dad would make for breakfast. I still remember the disgusting taste of powdered milk, but I remember you know feeling like well we're lucky we have this.

In all four of the above statements, gratitude and appreciation for survival is coupled with a focus on avoiding waste. These financial hardships were also coupled with a lack of access to and little to no prioritization of material possessions.

Phil: Whether it was you know simple things like requiring a computer in the early days or a V.C.R., or international travel … But when your day-to-day habits don't have a lot to do with consumption, and when going out to eat or going to a movie or doing something is truly special to you and not routine. Of course, that's influence.
Patricia: There’s no Coca-Cola products or frozen pizza in my house growing up, and I didn't realize how weird that was at the time until I went to college and that was like, “Whoa, this is really, really weird.” And as I continue to move forward in my life, I realize how incredibly strange that is.

Lena: I guess for me the fact that some people are buying seventy-dollar jeans and two-hundred-dollar shoes and my mom didn't have a doctor, couldn’t go to the doctor. That's problematic too, and that's a sign of, like, I guess, that's my experience right?

In each of the above statements, each instructor describes past experiences in living lives that dealt with financial struggle or had alternative values that contradicted with mainstream consumer messages. In comparing themselves to larger society, each instructor described their upbringing as one that made them feel like they were outside of what is American consumer life, or at least outside of what is framed by the media to be a full American consumer lifestyle. The participants describe the impact of these experiences, and others that involve the socioeconomic status of their upbringing, on their current viewpoints and habits. The origin of consumer goods was described as important to Patricia, Marcie, and Jeff. For instance, Patricia’s background influenced her current focus on buying local, buying American, and knowing where the things one purchases come from. She stated:

So, one of the examples I mean it's like my backpack, and that I have a Rickshaw, which is the San Francisco company, and you know for seventy dollars you can get a Rickshaw that's like custom made and it's made in America. The company is, you know, they pay their employees X number of dollars an hour and they provide this insurance to their employees, and so this is what you're paying for. Not only is it high quality, but it's also American made. And so, I’m going to I’m in a position where I can spend an extra twenty dollars on the seventy dollars I think is relatively cheap compared to what some people thought. I could spend a little bit more money to ensure that you know it’s being, it’s being made in America and that’s important to me.

Patricia’s above statements indicate an investment in consuming to support American labor and the rights of the workers involve education; Jeff stated a similar concern about the origins of
what he consumes due to the overwhelming presence of Chinese mass production in American consumer goods. Jeff also stated that he has “developed a scorn for material things.” He explains that,

I mostly shop at thrift stores even now almost all my clothes come from thrift stores. I splurge on shoes ‘cause my feet hurt otherwise, everything else comes from thrift stores. I drive a Honda…. I don't want to buy stuff from China until I know that the people are being treated right who are making those things. … So, that why I shop in thrift stores.

Even though Lena and Phil did not mention a strong focus on the origin of what they buy, they articulated their ability to prioritize utility and need instead of excessive want. The rejection of consumer society’s usual messages of competition, status, and rewarding oneself with material possessions are a reoccurring theme amongst the participants of this study. For instance, the below statements are indicative of the rejection of consuming for the purpose of filling an emotional void:

Lena: I mean I've lived for a long time and a fairly conservative you know cozy little house, it's done a good job. But so, I said I have a hard time saying I always want something more something bigger something better, … I have a car it functions. It's not the most attractive car but then again I'm not worried when people get into it have dirty shoes. I'm not worried if I scratch it. I just, the car is for getting from one place to the other. I like it to be clean in time but other than that really it's OK.

Phil: I am really a plain person when it comes to appearance and possessions … I tend to be cautious and suspicious of marketing and advertising and generally I'm happy to do without a lot of it. So, I come with some pretty clear biases about not liking a lot of consumption and I'm trying to again be environmentally sound. But even beyond that just not wanting too much stuff.

These statements indicate a construction of identity that is separated from traditional media messages that tie identity to brand names, and a rejection of tying amassing quantity and newness equated with happiness and social status. Marcie specifically identifies her consumption habits as “counter cultural” or in direct contradiction of pro-consumption messages. She also is
only one of these five instructors who includes her personal consumption habits in her conversations with students about consuming. Similar to Jeff, Marcie shared that “all of my clothes come from thrift stores, that I don’t buy anything new”:

And so, you know, I have students who are shocked to hear that and often say, “Oh wow you can do that?” and I’m like yeah, because I don't need to purchase a new skirt so that they can send the message to go make a new one when there's one that somebody is and isn't wearing that I can purchase. So, I mean I don't just shop at thrift stores because it's a dollar instead of twenty dollars, I do it because I feel like it. I grow my own food, I… I can pickles, you know, I talk about those things in some of my classes to talk about ways people can be counter-cultural.

Intentionally being “counter-cultural” and constantly cognizant of the larger social impact of their personal decisions is indicative of the existential and self-actualization philosophies at the foundation of the courses they taught. Phil similarly stated that his students are shocked to learn that he does not own a cell phone and laughed while speaking of his experience of several students offering to help him find the best deal to purchase one. Poverty related assignments were evident with Jeff, Phil, Marcie, and Lena. Phil had his class investigate the federal poverty levels and raising a family of four in poverty. Jeff tasked students with going without technology because others would not be able to afford it. Lena asked them to try to live on minimum wage with continually rising expenses. Patricia used several activities to tie in with her focus on buying American, buying local, and understanding the source of your consumption, as recounted below:

We go to the grocery store, and we look at different products that they would purchase there and where those products are from. We went to the farmer’s market when they same thing and we compare prices and all that stuff, so again it’s just real experiential and then I tie into a few books that we can read, and we just go out and we do stuff a lot … But then there are some inventories where they can get you know they can skip score themselves. It was all, you know, how consumerist they are, and some people realized that they just are (laughing).
Lena claimed that her own experiences shaped her teaching philosophy:

Those of my experiences that inform who I am and what I believe. So, I try and share those with my students, and my friends … my mom lived in a trailer for the last five years of her life and I wish she had more and if maybe the rest of us scale back maybe others could have enough to live on. And that’s pretty radical perhaps even socialist according to some.

Indicated in all the above statements about the instructor’s current consuming habits is that a purchase should have a purpose, should be a conscious choice, and that an individual can vote, in essence, with their dollars, with their purchases supporting specific brands and companies, those companies’ ethical history and treatment of their workers. The above statements imply their view that it is important to understand what you are supporting with your consumption habits in light of power dynamics that have a larger social impact. They attempt to relay these messages to their students because of how their own experiences shaped their consumer identities today.

Instructors of this study exhibited the self-reflection and analytical lens they attempt to help cultivate in their students, concerning the topic of problematizing consumerism and socially responsible consumption habits.

**Travel experiences and religious orientation as influential.** Three of the 10 instructors mentioned their experiences in foreign countries as having an impact on how they view American consumption. All three of them had a strong focus on contextualizing American consumption within the venue of larger global consumption. Marcie traveled extensively as a journalist before she became a college instructor:

I've been to refugee camps in Palestine. I've been to Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia, El Salvador, India, Ethiopia. So, I mean I've been to other countries but those are the developing countries that I've been to where as a journalist I was there to report on poverty issues and so that experience of seeing how people in the rest of the world live … so I've traveled to those countries too and seen people who live with a lot less stuff than we do.
In the above statement, being able to contextualize American’s standard of living with poverty around the globe and American consumption in light of consumption habits in the rest of the world was a valuable learning experience for her and the other two instructors who referenced travel. Those other two instructors were foreign born. Lena, who was born in Iran, described the impact on the changing political structure on the consumption methods in her native country compared to America:

So, I’ve traveled pretty extensively, and I’m troubled by the fact that in America we, I think, a lot of people take for granted how good we have it … buying expensive clothing in jeans and shoes and phones and when people don't have food that’s problematic to me. So, my family did I was Iranian, and we left Iran we came back to America after the hostage crisis in the Revolution a hostage crisis still kind of going on - the one nine hundred eighty - and so it was a really tough time for my family. Definitely taught me to be very frugal. It because I sought help first of all they don't have to do some just not good at recycling, etc. But you know you go shopping you bring your own bag, and you pick up your stuff. They don't waste very much, they use all parts of whatever including the animal you know the eat the lungs, they eat the kidneys …. 

Oliver, who was from the United Kingdom, mentions traveling to Guatemala and South Africa and described his travels in foreign countries as “striking” experiences:

And, um, I think that shakes your attitude a bit when you see that … the class of people that the whole sort of people who never have a choice, you know, consumerism rests on the virtue of choice, though what you realize quickly, I think, is that that's a choice that's a privilege of a few, a tiny few. It leaves the vast majority of the world's people without choices a lot of time, I think …you can go out on a city that I spent a week with a company few years ago. They work hard and they make a difference in their community, but lots of it is you know consequences of situations which can get handed down to them by choices made elsewhere, by richer more powerful people, higher up the food chain.

In all three of the above statements, the tourist experiences of these instructors taught them the impact of the global contexts of war, genocide, upheavals in the power structures, and an overall theme of having fewer choices, with choices bearing dire consequences towards survival of the
individual and the larger society. Both Lena and Oliver described the general and detailed impact of their travels on their instructional approaches:

Lena: So, growing up in another country and then I think being a teacher has really impacted me because my job is to teach kids how to think about their impact, I think, on this world and their own lives and minds of others. And I'm really struck by how much waste we have in America. It's given that I don't know I just am sure it would have been in other countries too I just don't see it as much.

Oliver: We've done some work on developing countries and cycles of poverty, and how Western consumerism often, actually, how we're often is actually blind to the ways in which our own consumerism denies choice to others while keeping certain patterns of poverty in place. We've done some work, other classes do more than me, we have done some work in the past on… on ecology and stewardship of natural resources trying to sort of begin to think about, you know, the questions of how our own consumption, you know, affects others affects our planet, affects future generalerations those kinds of issues.

The above statements demonstrate that the instructors have allowed their experiences to guide the research of their students directly on issues of environmental impact and issues of waste and thoughtless consumer consumption. Furthermore, Lena stated specifically that “encouraging students to think about these issues is indicative of my role as a college instructor.”

Oliver, Phil, and Marcie had religious backgrounds that they cited as influencing why they view American consumer culture as having a negative impact on identity formation and self-worth. These participants rejected consumption on the grounds that they did not believe defining the human condition on those terms had a positive impact on society. Marcie thought the impact of her Catholic church on her negative views of consumerism stemmed from her formative years in the church during the 60s and 70s, when “it was very focused on social justice issues … very much countercultural about, you know, race, injustice, and a lot of economic issues.” She continued on to state: “Well again, as a person of faith I'd like to believe that I have
a bigger purpose here on life than just being put on this earth to consume things.” Oliver, who was an ordained minister, continued this sentiment:

I have serious misgivings about the extent to which it just trains instinctively really from our earliest days … seeing every experience and transaction is essentially a selfish one. You know “what's in this for me?” I think we're increasingly seeing in religious life, you know, that said across the religions an increasingly predominant concern. How do we get people of this way of seeing the world to something broader richer? So mostly I think it's problematic.

The above statements frame consumer society as interruptive and dismissive of humankind’s individual and collective calling to a higher purpose. Marcie believed that consumerism is “dangerous” when applied to “other things besides consumer products,” viewing the existence of Mega Churches as evidence of a “Walmart mentality” towards religious observation just to remain popular in a consumer society. In this, that religious observation is consumed as almost an entertainment experience, rather than a lifelong process of spiritual investigation, is an example of how consumer behavior has been duplicated in other aspects of society that are supposed to have a richer, more complex, more impactful, and more significant quality of communication. Also, both religious/spiritual beliefs and traveling experiences helped these instructors to “engage in the problematizing the naturalization of consumer culture” (Sandlin & McLaren, 2010, p. 16). Finally, religion and spirituality were not the only areas of society the instructors thought was depreciated within the framework of consumerist viewpoint.

**The Invasive Danger of the Consumer Mindset**

Instructors defined two main areas of society that have been harmed by the utilization of a consumer mindset to the overall quality of the human communication within those environments: social media and higher education.
Social media. Social media can be defined as “forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos)” (Merriam Webster, “Social Media, 2019”). Half of the instructors mentioned positive and negative aspects of social media interaction. Two of them stated concerns about the application of consumer behaviors concerning topics that require more listening, investigation, and deliberation. The accessibility of technology and the format of social media sites was a major concern for Kato, who taught the Freshman level course and was the most critical towards the format’s proliferation of consumer behavior: “We’re instantaneously available to connect to anyone at any time, including being sold things.” He believed that this has had an impact on deepening political divisions instead of strengthening citizenship, which then increased the problems created in a society in which we are not encouraged “to be critical and think and engage in thought about important issues.” He stated that the intentional “design of political messages for low information voters” pushes people to “decide now”: “Don’t deliberate. Use your instincts. I don’t think that important decisions on a day-to-day basis should be made with that kind of mindset.” He continued to state that the nature of social media has devalued human communication in making it too easy to shut out alternative information and viewpoints:

If you’re political and you don’t like the views of people who you perceived as being problems or having problematic views, you can block that person out of your life completely. You unfriend, treat as spam and knock it off of your feeds. That’s not social media’s fault. That’s our fault because we allow the tail to wag the dog, and that’s consumerism.

Lena, was the most positive about the interaction she has seen her students have on social media:
I think they have gotten to some extent fairly suspicious of images they don't necessarily trust everything they understand more. I think that's in some ways that did about social media is that on one hand that they get bombarded with its advertising, and then on the other hand they have these kids that are pushing back against that by showing you are so stupid or look at what they did, or did you know? So, there's been some good progress in that regard.

The above statements indicate the differences of opinion amongst the instructors. While Lena believed that it is good that social media strengthened the visual analysis skills of her students, Kato implied that consumer behavior has allowed us to isolate ourselves with people who mirror our own opinions back to us, while thoughtlessly discarding people and relationships. Human communication has been harmed in that the increase of exposure to consumer messages and political content deepens focus on self, acquisition and only communicating with similar people; yet, they have seen critical thinking towards the format and its messages, in that the constant exposure has aided in helping students identify false claims, identify altered visuals and learn from each other even when arguing.

**College education.** Five of the ten instructors mentioned the ongoing debate over treating college education as a commodity and, therefore, instructors as employees selling a product. A summary of this debate is the proposition that “Educational institutions themselves become part of the market, selling knowledge as a commodity and increasingly reconstructing themselves as enterprises dedicated to marketing their commodities and competing in the knowledge ‘business’” (Usher, Bryant, & Johnston, 1997, p. 14).

Oliver described it as an example of how “consumerism infects everything we do.” Phil used the term “dangerous” to describe applying a consumer context to higher education. Jeff stated that the similar devaluing of human communication has occurred in how college education itself is seen as a purchase instead of a process of intellectual investment. This mirrors another of
his viewpoints that consumer society is “reductionist,” in that it creates the “danger” of reducing
the intricacy of the human condition to an “exchange for goods and services.” Because the issue
improperly frames the role of teacher and student within a consumer context, in talking about
this issue, Jeff also provided how he views his role as an instructor:

You know, I’m very troubled by the notion (pause) that students are consumers of
education, that they’re our customers and that we’re employees, and technically we’re the
university’s employees, but we are not either. I’ve worked in retail and this should not be
like retail. It should not be here “all right, its time to vacuum the floors now.” “Yes sir,”
or, you know it should not be that, it should be. “All right, you’re an expert in your field.
Teach these classes. Do some research. Let us know what you’ve found.” And then of
course with the students it should not be “Well I pay your salary.” No, you probably
don’t actually. … But that that notion at the end that customers are always right, of
course. Actually, I think we’re better off thinking customers are wrong if the students are
customers. Not that they are always wrong but the fact that they should always be
questioned, their assumptions should never be allowed to slip by just because it wouldn’t
be nice to question their assumptions … we are not to be nice and it’s not to get repeat
business. Our jobs are to stir some stuff up, and we can do that in a polite way that
sometimes that doesn’t feel good.

Jeff provided the strongest assertion concerning the inappropriate nature of consumer behavior in
an educational context, but he also defines his role as an instructor to “challenge” within the
context of an interpersonal dialogue between the students and himself. Two other instructors,
Kato and Joseph, defined themselves similarly, stating that their role in the classroom is to
“provoke” and “confront” preexisting and unquestioned beliefs and judgments, and their
statements can be taken in light of what they see as problematic of consumer culture.

Furthermore, both of these instructors focused more on the ideas, behaviors, and stereotypes sold
by consumer culture media instead of environmental/sociological impact, when constructing
their courses. Kato stated: “I thought of one word: ‘provoke.’ Not to provoke them to anger, but
if you’re 18 years old … this is an age in a stage of life that mandates that you challenge what’s
been taught to you.” In his mentioning of parents, religious institutions, and other influences
incoming Freshman have been subjected to that creates their initial behaviors and ideals, Kato stated that he utilizes an “anti-consumerist approach”: “You don't have to be like anybody else, that's another aspect of consumerism … it's this kind of complicit conformity, not that we demand of people, but it’s much more subtle. We expect it, not demand it.” Similarly, Joseph viewed consumer culture concerning the socialization “into accepting what is comfortable or what is accepted culturally, such as … discussions … about gender stereotypes.” One of his Freshman level course’s main topics involved how we are sold who acceptable people are, what acceptable behavior is and how we are sold “what’s considered to be feminine and masculine according to gender roles and identities.” He stated that he challenges his students to be analytical and develop it as a skill set:

Too often their education is built upon that framework that under the sort of standardized testing models of high school … We don't always know the answer, but we do have to ask a lot of good questions and those questions will challenge the status quo … And I always stress to the college students that you know when you get your college degree … you have that kind of educational background that should allow you to challenge some of those consumerism stereotypes about where we should stand. And if they're able to do that I think they’re going to live better lives.

Critical thinking can be defined as “calling into question the assumptions underlying our customary, habitual ways of thinking and acting and then being ready to think and act differently on the basis of this critical questioning” (Brookfield, 1991, p. 1). In application to the above statements, this would include the customary nature of consumer media messages that we have learned to take for granted and not question, even as we continually dismiss their impact on our beliefs and conceptualizations of reality. Also, the habitual manner in which every student has behaved and thought about themselves and the world around them was obtained through the
authoritative messages of their upbringing. Kato is an example of how these instructors required better arguments that originated in research:

    Don't just tell me something is because it is that doesn't work: you can't say it because your parents because your parents told you to that's the answer, or because you were brought up that way. You can't do that … that doesn't keep you engaged.

    In all the above comments, instructors stated that their role in the classroom is to challenge and provoke their current concepts of identity, which “is stored within individuals, relationships and groups and communicated between relational and group members” (Communication Theory of Identity, Martin et al., 2002, p. 45). These instructors frame their role and tasks in the classroom in juxtaposition to mainstream consumer culture and in rejection of viewing higher education within a framework of economic transaction. Yet, coupled with a predictable variation in how instructors viewed their roles in the classroom, this study also found a problematic understanding of and positioning of themselves in light of critical theory’s instructional paradigm of “emancipation.”

**Role and Instructional Approach**

    A theme that became evident amongst all the participants is that they experienced sociological consumer education’s purpose as being “to counter socialization and media cultivation through identity and behavior reevaluation.” Cultivation theory states that television socializes its viewers to culture, providing them with a similar world view (O’Guinn, 1997. In response to the question “What do you wish everyone knew about consumer society?”, all ten instructors emphasized a focus on the larger social impact of their consumption habits, and half of those instructors also mentioned wanting everyone to have the analytical skills of media literacy, even though media literacy was not a focus of any of the course descriptions for any of
the IDS courses. Of the instructors who included a media literacy focus, two indicated a technical media literacy focus (media conglomerates, political bias, etc.) while the other three focused on commodification issues surrounding the use of gender, race, social class, and portrayals of stereotypical behavior to sell commodities. Furthermore, all ten participants viewed consumer culture as something to be challenged, problematized, globally contextualized, and intellectually redefined by cognizant, self-determined individuals. A sample of the statements concerning larger social impact included phrases like “I think they ought to be aware of the relative amount of consumption by a nation like ours compared to the number of people we contribute to the planet,” (Phil) or “You know, in looking at where things come from, and how they’re made, how they’re distributed, how they’re transported, used and reused, who gets what” (Kato). A sample of statements concerning media literacy included phrases like “Advertising is there to convince you to buy something, probably, that you don’t need, education, there are all kinds of social and cultural norms and stereotypes and rules that we embed into consuming, right?” (Lena), or “This idea of manufacturing need based on the emotional reactions of fear … that is the basis of advertising. Every educated person should be aware of the tactics used against them so that they can recognize them and choose wisely” (Marcie).

This study finds that all instructors redefined and problematized the lines of distinction created in McGregor’s (2011) classifications of instructional approaches. The following sections will detail 1) the intricacies involved that introduce a reality of application of McGregor’s categories of sociological consumer education, 2) the similarities and differences the instructors demonstrated in how they view their roles as educators, 3) how they structured their courses,
including visual imagery, and 4) how they respond to critical theory’s concept of “empowerment.”

Existential Self-Actualization: Identity and life purpose. Sally, who was one of three instructors of this study in Health Education, exhibited the strongest focus on personal and public health. She was the only one of the four instructors who had this teaching philosophy to exhibit an existential instructional stance that did not include any philosophical, religious, or theoretical framework. The evident, underlying goal of being a healthy human being successfully replaced these frameworks instead. Her pedagogical goal was “giving students something they can apply in their lives with their family or friends.” Per the construction of Type II existentialism, the course’s focus on “critical thinking, reflection” and “making responsible choices” led to assignments that had students reevaluate and examine their personal consumption in response to traditional media messages. Per the construction of Type III Self-Actualization, she facilitated her sophomore level course as one of personal significance and meaning in discussing topics like health behaviors, stress management, family history, and basic knowledge deficits. Sally explained: “When you can say my brother has diabetes and my father has heart disease, when it directly impacts a lived one, then they take the information more seriously.” Her contextualization of public health is her strongest indicator of sociological consumer education. Examples of this include assignments where students had to prove or disprove advertising claims of their choosing (print ads and YouTube videos), discussing the socioeconomics of food deserts and how the lack of produce has an impact on the health of those in urban areas, and research concerning the government agencies that regulate food and water.
Sally’s views were indicative of this study’s finding towards McGregor’s classifications. McGregor (2011) clearly permits that “most consumer educators will likely employ several philosophies and teach a meld of different types of consumer education” (p. 3). Sally was one of the four out of ten instructors of this study who combined existentialism and self-actualization in their instructional approaches. While the other three instructors taught the Freshman level course, which was not necessarily structured to focus on contextualization, they could not conceive of attempting to instruct existentialism’s focus on “morality and responsible choices” (McGregor, 2011, p. 3) without discussing the larger social context issues of media messages, the environment, and various philosophies concerning the common good.

The other three instructors with this teaching philosophy (Kato, Jeff, and Phil) started their semester with a self-evaluation survey. All three of them also mentioned several different philosophers. Kato utilizes John Stuart Mill’s Utilitarianism. Kato mentions the philosophy to get students to consider thoughtless purchasing habits: “Should I buy something just because I feel like buying it, or just buying any product without understanding where it comes from and where it is going?” He also challenges his students about “what we are sold” by the media, topics including American exceptionalism, media depictions of gender, and stereotypes concerning age, and other identity issues. Kato’s socioeconomic approach includes conversations about race, gender, and other issues that are strong examples of social construction. Jeff, on the other hand, utilized the Socratic approach in making his course mostly discussion-based education. He indicated several different philosophical documents (Marcus Aurelius, Marx, The Bible, Seneca), including Epicurean hedonism’s on whether pleasure is the highest good, and Skinner’s behaviorism in relation to advertising to discuss needs, wants and desires, money, status, and
physical possessions. He also has them “Practice Poverty,” where they write a paper on their choice stoic philosopher about how able they were to do without a consumer product they would miss for a few days up to a week. He references the larger culture in covering several philosophical viewpoints about value systems, using the UN Declarations on Human Rights, Declaration of Independence, and comparing North Korea’s economy, censorship, and propaganda to the United States.

Kato’s approach is more Type II self-actualization than philosophically existential, and his course contextualizes various aspects of American identity along socioeconomic groups. Jeff’s approach is more Type II existential than self-actualization and contextualizes using different value systems. In comparison to both these instructors, Phil, the fourth instructor of this teaching philosophy, appears to balance self-actualization and existentialism in his Type III approach. He referenced various philosophical frameworks from Aristotle and Plato to delve into different perspectives on happiness. He frames the topic from personal happiness and material possessions to collective happiness and the common good. He also utilizes readings from Leon Kass, Barry Schwartz, and C. S. Lewis to present and analyze different propositions concerning what constitutes “the good life,” human nature, and visualizing realistic expectations.

These four instructors present various fusions of self-actualization and existential instructional approaches. This study finds that various instructors utilizing this approach differ in the amount of contextualization, the philosophies utilized for self and social analysis, and the choice of visual imagery.

*Role in the classroom and critical theory’s “emancipation.”* The existential self-actualization instructional approach was used by four instructors, three of whom problematized
critical theory’s tenet that instructors can emancipate and empower students and one instructor who indicated comfort with the concept through his course structure. McGregor (2011) wrote that consumer empowerment through facilitation would “be to emancipate people from the chains of consumer culture,” which, because of this facilitation, would create the reaction that consumer culture is “unsustainable, unethical, irresponsible and even immoral” (p. 4). This empowered student would then be free “to strive for a culture of peace by consuming differently,” (p. 4). Instructors of the existential self-actualization teaching philosophy do not see this kind of facilitation as their role in the classroom.

Kato has stated that his role is to “provoke” thought in his students. Kato’s continual questioning of institutional power, including corporate, media, religious, and political power, indicates through his course structure what his “anti-consumerist approach” embraced critical theory in his facilitation of both the Freshman level and Sophomore level courses he taught.

On the other hand, Sally saw her role in the classroom as “we do make an impact on the process of learning and empowerment, and we are not just walking textbooks.” She also stated: “Classes should be fluid and adaptable to the students present. Hopefully that sparks something in them and they pursue empowerment (whether they realize it or not). I see faculty as facilitating a process that is internal in each student.” Phil mirrored these sentiments, stating that “if I model my curiosity, yes, I believe that helps empower students. If I celebrate their curiosity or celebrate their insights or sometimes with a little bit of humor challenge them and they follow through. Yeah. I’m empowering them.” Where Jeff stated that he views himself as an expert in his field, Phil stated “I don't look at myself as “I am there to be the resident expert.” Phil described his role as an instructor:
I want to see if I have a narrative where it is I think we can go together, and I want to help them to find their own connections, and then to work with them to make sure that when they walk into a world that has to take them seriously.

The student-centered nature of Sally and Phil’s instructional approaches is seen by each instructor to be a possible contribution to student empowerment in the nature of their roles as facilitator in a process with the students. Though Jeff viewed his role as also one of challenging and provocation, his sentiments on critical theory were similar to both Phil’s and Sally’s:

I was very in favor of critical theory and wanted to empower everyone, and I realize that there are some serious problems with the notion that a white guy from the Midwest is going to go in and empower people who weren’t empowered like “Here's the gift that I’m giving you. Here’s some power. You're welcome.” How condescending is that, and so I pulled back from that quite a lot and now the idea is learning to think empowers people, so I focus more on that than trying to be some … some savior of the “poor savages” who aren’t empowered do you know about them being so and I think you know I think that's a very uncritical theory and more of a critical view of what critical theory is actually saying.

The above statements indicate that three of the instructors see themselves as facilitating a process in which students empower themselves to reach goals they define for themselves by using the skills they learn in the courses. Even the one instructor who defined himself as anti-consumerist problematizes the hegemonic nature and ideological indoctrination of consumerism but does not go as far as to attempt to frame all of consumer society as immoral. In practice, the goals of critical consumer education may be different in actuality than theoretically proposed.

*Existential self-actualization instruction and visual imagery.* This teaching orientation chose the most varied visuals out of the instructors of this study. These instructors utilized documentary video the least, their use of commercials, cable program clips, music videos and fictional film composed of various visuals used to support the existential aspects of their teaching philosophies. Different manners of persuasion, different philosophical viewpoints, different
political ideologies, and different value systems were embodied in the various visuals and used by instructors within this approach to provide students with alternative possibilities concerning life’s purpose and identity.

For instance, Phil’s courses can be described as having the strongest emphasis on lifestyle analysis of this group of instructors. He utilized the fictional films of Gattaca (1997) and Babette’s Feast (1987) to underscore his course’s dual focus on the moral limits of choice, and the quality of consumption versus modern messages focused on the quantity of commodity accumulation. Gattaca (1997) was used in his course as a discussion point, with written assignments, to delve into treating human beings as commodities, and whether or not society can have too many choices. He also used the film to discuss whether people are more than their biology and the importance of “the human spirit” over genetic predetermination, and social judgments concerning those who are viewed as being less than ideal or imperfect. Phil stated that the film gets at “the social issues implied, to me social class that comes from being of the right genetics and there for the right reflections, and the people who are permanently under-class and especially in the minority.” Concerning, Babette’s Feast (1987), Phil stated that the film utilizes and well displays the creativity, simplicity, devotion, and aesthetic beauty of food preparation, as well as the human achievement and celebration of life presented through an intentional consumption that rivals the mindless consumption daily life provides.

In contrast to Phil’s approach, both Kato and Jeff utilized more pop culture references to more clearly define philosophical differences and challenge consumer culture’s visual messages. Jeff asked his class to suggest 10 music videos in which something is being sold. Being that a
music video is a commercial for a CD and/or artist, Jeff utilized these music videos to highlight philosophical themes in the lyrics and behavior:

And so, like for Ke$ha’s case it's really interesting because the first thing they say is that they've been conditioned to point out the dollar sign (in her name). OK. OK yes. So, we did that song, “Your Love is My Drug.” And so, you know she felt this image of like partying all the time and spending money and that being pleasurable and drugs. And so that’s we see on the surface, and then we talk about how over the top it is, and how honest she’s being. Is she really selling this or is this irony? And so, we can explore like you and I are to that song and piece and you can simultaneously seem to sell one thing while actually critiquing the thing that you seem to be selling.

He was the only instructor in this study who utilized music videos and commented on the nature of this video being one of the lyrics critiquing and providing critical analysis of her behavior in a video that itself is a commercial for her as an artist. He also referenced another music video, “Holding on to You” by Twenty-One Pilots, as an example of stoicism, with the lyrics emphasizing a desire to value cognitive awareness and understanding over materialism, as the black and white visuals, with skull makeup and skeletal graphics, underpin the inevitability of death. It was a goal of this instructor to present to the students how current pop culture texts embodied philosophical thought through their arguments concerning values and lifestyles.

Another example of how Jeff utilizes visuals in his instructional approach his choice of the film “Waking Life” (2001) by Richard Linkletter. The plot is framed by the main character’s interaction with other people espousing philosophical viewpoints as he drifts from one dream conversation to the next. Roughly three-fourths of the film is complete before you are able to discern any advertising logos and only twice for a brief scene in a convenience store and background noise the main character ignores while napping. Every sneaker logo, t-shirt design, billboard, and car emblem are either rendered generic or non-existent, as the film is presented in Rotoscope animation overlay. The most present advertisement is a scene in which the main
character hears an Efferdent commercial, but it is presented as part of background noise as the character focuses on trying to wake up. With the visual markers of consumer culture mostly few and rendered ineffective, the existential nature of the film is emphasized in that the main focus is human interaction and philosophical argumentation. This text is the most existential visual utilized by an instructor in this study, as it serves the purpose of removing consumer culture’s drive for acquisition from the presentation of reality so that people can truly ponder their life’s purpose and identity formation.

Non-fictional visuals were more prevalent with the other two instructors of this philosophical approach. With Sally’s focus centering on providing and teaching students to find resources for a healthy lifestyle, her visuals include PBS documentaries, the “Smoking Fry Addendum” to Supersize Me (2004), and health claim analysis of print and online advertisements: “Yes, the example is Cheerios because it’s the one that people are familiar with. We’ve seen the commercials … It lowers your cholesterol and that happens to be true, if you eat three bowls a day (laughing).” Kato relied on art, commercials and reality television clips for the purpose of challenging and questioning what the media sells us as a basis for reality. He explained that “consumerism is a lot of things, many of them good, but people don’t think that it’s something critical. It’s not something you really think about.” Considering that he views his role in the classroom as one of confronting predetermined assumptions, the visuals he utilized to challenge and spark critical analysis all include the kind of approach described below:

I go through Biblical history, art, archives and artifacts and Jesus somehow went from being a very dark-skinned guy who clearly looks African to having dark features and a dark complexion. By the 6th century he kinda looks like Brad Pitt (laughing). And that is consistent with the consolidation of the church, in the north and west, so that people always think that God looks like us. So, the question I asked them when I did that is "we are told that we are made in God's image, but do we remake God in our image?" … In
fact, one of the things I show is that, just after [Pope] Benedict stepped down, him and [Pope] Francis got together, and they went and prayed together in chapel in Rome. And in the front row, they looked at the black Madonna and Child. And the Vatican is good at controlling things and message control. The Vatican would not have released this historic footage all over the world if it didn’t approve of every single frame in the picture. I said, there it is – in Poland, there’s a black Madonna and child and millions of people are reared from and make pilgrimages there. So why is it that we walk around with this other idea? And it’s all about... It really is about trying to get some critical thinking in there.

(Kato)

Another example Kato provided involved stereotypes concerning depictions of femininity and masculinity and unrealistic constructions of behavior that people adopt to be credible.

I showed them videos of Gene Kelly dancing. When he went to the studios he told them he wanted to be a dancer. They said, you can’t do that. Why not? Because you don’t look like a dancer. He said, but I am a dancer. He had this very, you know, very rugged looking and Gene who insisted on being a dancer and being a male dancer, when they were saying that’s not manly … And you know I say that because I think those are important things. In a sense what is gender, it doesn’t mean that guys aren’t allowed to dance, but invariably the discussion arises in the situation after watching a couple of those videos.

Kato showed the Dove Campaign, clips of Dancing with the Stars, and other imagery that would be, in his words, “critical to this idea of pushing back on consumerism, which incorporates, to me, in some ways, traditional stereotypes, and gender roles, stereotyped roles by age, sex, race, nationality.”

*Existential instructional philosophy summary.* The phenomenon of Existential Self Actualization instruction of interdisciplinary sociological consumer education focuses on problematizing media messages for the purposes of individualized theoretical identity construction. Emphasis on behavior is minimalized in comparison to an emphasis on developing individualized governing principles. These approaches challenge preconceived and media promoted conceptions of reality and provoke critical self-analysis, while attempting to lay a
moral and ethical foundation for the formation of character attributes that are skeptical of consumer culture.

**Social Reconstructivism: Transformational aspirations of experiential learning.**

So, you know, I think that the movement throughout our country that begins to challenge that notion for the next generation, especially that says your happiness is built upon consumerism … too often, we’re a society that will accept things as being not problematic. As their education grows, they are much more likely to at least see problems being confronted … when, truth be told, most will see and be concerned about it but don’t recognize any role that they really play in helping to address it. (Joseph)

The above quotation captures the complexity of the spirit of the social reconstructivism (S-R) present in the teaching philosophies of six of this study’s instructors because of the prevailing viewpoint of seeing “consumerism as a pressing social problem requiring immediate redress” (McGregor, 2011, p. 7). Of these six instructors, three utilized this teaching approach solely, while the remaining three utilized it as part of McGregor’s (2011) Personal-Global teaching philosophy. This section details the three instructors who utilized this method exclusively.

The S-R instructional approaches displayed by these three instructors contextualized through referencing different versions of individual wellness, the scientific method, research writing and argument analysis/formation, even though this approach had in common with existential self-actualization the confrontation of cultural norms. The existential self-actualization instructor’s focus on media literacy revolved around analyzing the media to see how their students’ conceptions of their identity and lives had been impacted by consumer messages; S-R instructors emphasized media literacy in order to challenge “consumer society and the ideology of consumerism” (McGregor, 2011, p. 6). These instructors utilized several assignments that analyzed how things work, investigated historical contexts for current issues
and developing informed opinions. McGregor (2011) defines this approach as one in which students “are taught to be citizens” by instruction that challenges “consumer society and the ideology of consumerism” (p. 6). The emphasis of this approach was to clarify personal stances on social problems through the systemic research of various social issues.

*Action learning: from “doing differently” to making a difference.* While all instructors interviewed articulated the progressive perception of starting where the students were to ensure relatability, S-R was indicated in part by how the instructors allowed the students to choose lecture and research topics (Joseph), which issues they wanted to debate (Lucy), and which social causes and charities they wanted to get involved in (Patricia). In reference to McGregor’s (2011) theory, this study’s Type III S-R includes different forms of action learning (Madsen, 2007). Students were encouraged to “do differently,” which included analyzing preexisting personal habits, confronting both sides of arguments, and engaging with others outside of previously established comfort zones. This mirrors McGregor’s (2011) theorization that students “study the social problems of the day and are challenged to actively participate in their solution” (p. 6). Type III S-R evolved into Type IV S-R, where larger social impact is researched and evaluated to help students define themselves more clearly in relation to the subject, then work towards mutual social benefits for those involved.

Out of the three, Joseph had only taught the freshmen level IDS courses (1600 and 1610), and had in common with five other instructors of this study that his role in the classroom was to strengthen student media literacy by challenging what society sells citizens in its media messages:

You know, I mean, let’s face it, the media is very sly about giving consumer issues to use without being challenging. So having them recognize how some of that stuff is being sold
to us in ways that might not be enormously direct, but still being sold to us is very important.

Joseph’s facilitation was solely Type III, in that “doing differently” in relation to his anti-media assignments where students were given tasks that challenged the “social barrier”:

You go into the cafeteria and you might see that all females sit together, or all people of the same race or athletes sit together. Would you have the courage to challenge the social barrier and begin a conversation with that group that you don’t know or that is different from you? So, I actually have them go out and do this and report back to class as an exercise.

This exercise is an example of action learning’s experiential learning (Kolb, 1984), as his students were challenged to physically behave differently from the portrayal of behavior in the media messages that had been sold to them during their lives; they were also challenged by their own habits of stereotyping people by those media messages and behaving in adherence to these stereotypes. The first three steps of Kolb’s (1984) four stage model are present in the assignment: students had to evaluate who they gravitated to usually, practice “concrete experience” (Madsen, 2007) physically choose to do different, and utilize “reflective observation” (Madsen, 2007) to report their “CRA – critical reflection of assumptions” (Mezirow, 1998) on the experience to the class and their instructor. The fourth stage of Kolb’s model would be something that students could build themselves throughout their lives as they challenged their behaviors for themselves in the future.

Lucy taught the sophomore level IDS courses. Her instructional approach was also Type III and shared similarities with Joseph in that her behavior challenges were also individualized. But, considering her background as a Health Educator, her goals for “doing differently” were personal habits that included countering media messages aimed at college students about drinking and drugs, as well as countering messages aimed at college athletes about supplements
and energy drinks. All three S-R instructors used the term “transformational,” or articulated the goal of transformational results, but each defined the transformational impact they wanted to achieve differently. Below, Lucy articulated her active learning and active practice goals for her courses:

My teaching philosophy that as far as here is I just want them to be make whatever I show them in the classroom applicable to their lives. I feel this very applicable that they still have skills that they can apply and hopefully get something out of, you know, and I've loved student comes up to me a semester later and said you know, “yeah I've I cut down on my drinking,” you know, or “now I’m doing X and I never really did before because you know you made us do that project and I'm still doing it.” You know that to me is if I can make that connection you know with them that they found what I'm saying it's valuable to apply it to their life then I feel I'm a success. When I hear stories like that.

Lucy and Joseph’s focus on the physical and behavioral transformation is seated in cognitive evolution in the form of “perspective transformation,” which includes issues where students can articulate that they confronted social realities, talked to others about it and did their own research to really determine what they actually thought about a topic. “One of the things I try to pull in is issues of the day, so if they are voters, which, I hope they are, they'll make educated decisions about the social issues that come up on the ballot” (Lucy). In their instructional approaches, each instructor articulated a purposeful and distinctive goal of research assignments. Another of Joseph’s focus on media literacy is how he had students research the media’s tendencies to sell simplistic problems for complex social issues. With his background being in criminal justice, an example of his approach would be countering simplistic notions of “just lock them up” with a research focus on the criminal justice system’s continuing problem of jail overcrowding and over sentencing. Another example of his approach would have students investigate gender and sexual orientation in contrast with media depictions of these communities. This ties into Joseph’s belief that “until they really understand the insightfulness of being
analytical about a given situation, they can’t possibly come up with a response right.” The cognitive objective of his assignments can be described in that he wanted to provide a historical, data driven foundation to create a diverse foundation for students to contextualize their world in. Joseph clearly emphasized his teaching philosophy as one that views the research process as transformational:

I think my role is really see again the understanding of where the students are from the very beginning of the semester and then have them transform. That transformational process is something that they should recognize throughout the semester in regards to “I never considered this in this way,” or “I never really look at the complexity that might be involved in really trying to analyze something” before coming to sort of the simplistic response to recognize their own political lenses that often color their interpretation of how they’re seeing certain type of issues, and to really become what I will always tell them as researchers. Researching something becomes a way that creates a different person in the transformational process from when they first started their college education. So, what should we be doing to collect data and information in order to problem solve that particular issue before we decide on what an appropriate response should be?

In contrast, Lucy’s proposals for active research involved having students choose campus problems (parking, food quality, computer lab issues, etc.) for students to interview people about, present to the class about, and compose letters advocating for change. An example of her utilizing active practice (Madsen, 2007) was Lucy’s classroom debates of various social issues (e.g., marijuana legalization, drinking age, paying sports athletes, and the marketing of pharmaceuticals) where students had to actively research and argue sides they did not always agree with. The cognitive objective of her assignments can be defined in that she prioritized the physical component of acting on research, in that students physically conducted interviews and participated in debates.

Patricia is the third S-R instructor. Her instructional approach is largely Type IV academic service-learning (Madsen, 2007). Patricia’s teaching philosophy incorporates the most
active learning of all the instructors of this study; her approach to the upperclassmen with her transformational goal is community involvement. She described her approach as one that includes active and experiential learning, in that the course matter must be made as “tangible and relatable” to them as possible:

And so, what I have tried to do in the last three or four years is to really focus on experiential learning - get their hands dirty, roll up their sleeves, and get them as much hands-on experience as possible. College students are generally into themselves, and what's important to them, and if you make what you're teaching somehow important to them then they're going to hop right in. Then they're going to be more engaged and they're going to learn more and they're going to be more active with the content and you know active learning is absolutely critical.

The end project for her course encapsulated the S-R approach to sociological consumer education. This project also represents the end goals of the trajectory of the IDS program at the university, in the contextualization from individual identity to social change (from asking the questions, to doing the research, to seeing the complexities of the issues, to acting on the world).

One of the projects we did it's called to make a difference project where they actually had to come up with a need in our society. But, for example, one group was going to provide birthday parties for like low socioeconomic kids, and one chose to do “build a bear” for like this local children's hospital and one was in, so we did all these different projects and they had to be realistic. They had to have an actual population they would serve, and they would have to have a budget and they would have to basically come to the class and pitch this project. And then there was a panel of us that would decide whether or not we would fund a project based on their idea and their proposal.

In the above assignment, Patricia identified both the positive implications and limits of the S-R instructional approach to interdisciplinary consumer education. A positive implication is that local issues and community involvement can be a realistic goal for instructors to have when instructing consumer issues, as she described.

Another gentleman started a non-for-profit repurposed bikes for children that are you know are in the low socioeconomic class and needed a bike. So just seeing students transform in that class and think about how they are as a consumer, and what the
decisions they make impact their environment around them and then to see them make big decisions in term in supporting the environment.

Yet, these results of Patricia’s assignment also become clear since students who could see tangible results with the local environment and community had great success; there was a limitation that global concerns are not tangible unless there happens to be an organization with global outreach that students can access. Otherwise, local impact is the most successful goal to have that students attempt to achieve. She stated that attempting to reach a global impact with a traditional-age college group can create feelings of despair and disconnection that makes students feel like they cannot relate to societies different from them, or comprehend those problems, let alone begin to postulate how they could make a difference. This limitation is an example of some of the barriers instructors of the S-R philosophy indicated.

**S-R Barriers: Citizenship/Voting, the environment, and maturity issues.** All three instructors talked different barriers that impacted their instructional philosophies. An issue with mixed results was the environment. According to McGregor (2011), one of the main points of Type III instructional approaches is an instructional focus on the environment and ethical consumption: “The main focus is to free oneself from the ideological grasp of the marketplace and consumerism so that one can change one’s own lifestyle and become more ecologically responsible (i.e., feel better about themselves while consuming)” (2011, p. 7). All three instructors articulated generally positive results when approaching environmental issues in the class. Personal consumption was described as the most “tangible,” and the most effective topic mentioned was that of waste. Joseph stated: “I actually had a student this semester from England, and we have these discussions about why everything was so much larger in the United States.” He continued to state that students do well with questioning how many pairs of shoes or jeans
they need “just because it (hoarding) is seen as something normal; owning the McMansion and never questioning if you own more than you need.” Buying the latest iPhone, hoarding, irresponsible uses of plastic, food waste, and recycling were listed by all three instructors as being issues that were effective in getting students to evaluate and possibly alter their own habits and personal goals. Environmental issues that were less understood or relatable to students included genetically modified organisms, water rights and conservation, and sustainability, especially when instructors had the task of discussing the impact of these issues on other cultures and countries.

All three S-R instructors articulate that contextualization is an issue in maturity. Lucy stated in her struggle to relate environmental issues that,

I would say that my biggest obstacle is for them to actually care. I mean you bring up the topic and, you know, like I said last semester GMOs came up and some people are really passionate about it and really got into it; this semester they came up and it's like ‘OK, yeah, they take food, and they modify the genetics. It’s OK. now what we do?’ … So, if they're not enjoying the material because it's out of their realm of interest, it is so hard to get them to care about the issue in general. (Lucy)

Lucy is also describing how students struggle with seeing the larger social impact of these issues. She also indicates what Joseph stated earlier about students not seeing themselves as part of the solution. Patricia stated similarly:

They have a hard time seeing the big global picture because they are living in this world of me, and just what sort of directly around me, and they have a hard time seeing, first of all, what's happening globally, but second of all, why should they care. And even when we, you know have a conversation about the giant pile of the garbage that's floating in the ocean, I think they have a hard time grasping how I can effect change and how maybe one person can effect change. I think sometimes, um, again that you have to start local, to begin to start seeing the big picture. You have to see the small wins that you can make in order to start envisioning the big wins that you can make.
The above statement is Patricia’s solution to countering the overwhelmed and disconnected reactions of students who are encountering the enormity of these issues for the first time. Lucy described students’ reactions to learning about the needs of the vulnerable.

Concerning the donation of clothing and cultural norms, Lucy stated:

Well, we went and went to wayside ministry in somebody's noticed a bin that said bras and underwear. And so, they asked about it, so I found a little clip that, you know, that this organization wants people to donate their bras because that's one of the few things that … of all the used clothing that get sent to Africa, that's the one of the most wanted, because there's only one little booth and because the women want it in all its other stuff. And I was like, see there is a need for it, and so then in certain parts of Africa underwear is banned, and it's not because of its useful. It's because they don't want the sexual connotation so anything lacy, stringed, anything like that is not allowed to be sold at those places but there's a black market for it, and so - they went crazy on that. They're like “EWW, I’d never donate my underwear” and I was like you people are getting crazy, I mean, I had people screaming, you know, I'm like I can't get you to say one word all semester and I bring up underwear, and you go off?

The above example is part of the reason why Lucy stated that they’re only interested in issues limited to the college experience and their ages. Patricia stated that they lack a foundation to have the conversation in the first place: “I've taught this class now for this is my 5th year having these conversations with them. They’re not talking about consumerism in high school, and if they are - they might be - they're doing it in the wrong way.” Joseph stated that students struggle with differentiating needs from wants because of their privilege in society. All three instructors state that students have to be made aware of their privilege, and that this realization is not only necessary to their transformation, but also indicative of power dynamics they are in the continual process of recognizing:

I hope at least that that part of the transformational process of the course allows them to understand that this is between consumerism in needs that you know it's really something that becomes more of that privilege rather than something that is necessarily a necessity and the necessity to survive is quite different then the buying into consumerism. (Joseph)
When comparing these maturity barriers to the success these instructors were partially able to achieve towards these consumer and environmental issues, a possible consequence may mean that in reality, McGregor (2010) may be wrong in thinking that there must be a disconnect between personal meaning/significance and solving social problems, since instructors have determined that they have to approach instruction from the foundation of personal applicability to get students motivated at all. This may lead to a redefinition of McGregor’s (2010) previous theories on how maturity impacts environmental awareness, specifically the implications that exist for consumer activism. It may be possible that McGregor is being too ideological as to what kind of maturity is necessary to create a society of responsible citizens who are not consumer robots.

In light of S-R’s citizenship focus, a topic with much less success was voting. Under this teaching approach, voting was framed two ways: voting in an election and voting with your money as you make purchase decisions. Lucy and Patricia had a similar lack of success with getting students to care about the former traditional act of citizenship. Lucy stated that she chooses to cover voting issues to give them a proper fact base to vote off instead of common, often erroneous preconceived notions. She chose the issues that they have already identified as interesting and relatable to them:

I always just state it, “I’m not telling you which way to vote - I’m not telling you, you know, I'm just laying out the whole basis of facts so when you go into that voting booth you have some concrete evidence,” not “marijuana sounds cool so I voted for it.” Or “no that's killing old people so I'm going to vote against it.” I want you to know about the pros and cons of both sides so when you go in you can make an educated, you know, vote versus, you know, just what your buddy said you should be considered for this.

Patricia approached the issue even more in-depth than Lucy.
I did bring in somebody to talk about voting and why voting is important, even though, I know, right? Even though that's a local instead of global, I just, you know, I could not not did bring her in. So, she came, and she was she register all of the students to vote. We looked at all of the different candidates and all of the different issues, and obviously there were some popular opinion questions on the ballot, which were important that we talked about. Then they voted, we came back, and we talked about why less than half of the students actually physically voted, and you know I'm so depressed about it. And so, they, you know, got a lecture for me about that, and then I told them “So I decided for you that this was going to be our candidate for this, and I decided for you this is going to be the decision for the popular vote,” you know trying to emphasize why voting is important.

(Patricia)

In both statements, it is evident that instructors grapple with the issue of underscoring the responsibility inherent in this aspect of citizenship. Evident in this study is the finding that S-R instructors specifically see the importance of physically actively engaging with society. As demonstrated in Patricia’s final project, achieving success with volunteering and community organizations is easier than confronting student malaise concerning our political system.

**Critical theory perspectives.** Of the three instructors, only Patricia had Type IV mutual interest aspirations, but the actualization of that version of reconstructivism was hampered by the complex maturity barriers college age students present. This means that, while the theoretical aspirations for critical theory are well articulated by McGregor (2011), the actualization of these aspirations were realistically less ideal.

With Joseph and Lucy, critical theory was not outright rejected or embraced, but displayed itself in their continual challenging of power dynamics in issues of incarceration, gender and racial stereotypes, historical conflicts, drug testing, affirmative action, and various other voting issues. Joseph explained his purposes:

That the students will recognize the harm of it (consumerism) and the benefit. And, you know, think about it from a business professor's perspective … We still have to run a capitalistic nation it's in the business of profitability so you want people to buy product and in that way of looking at things like quality concerns and selling something, and a big
part of how a lot of people make their living as well, so we can’t only ever teach it in a way that it's all negative.

While Joseph and Lucy stated that their job was to facilitate and encourage a research-based transformation, neither believed that it was their role in the classroom to empower. To problematize and encourage confrontation of consumerism and consumer society did not equate to a need to reject consumer society altogether or deem it immoral or unjust, just to consume more responsibly in it. While this supports the definition of S-R instruction, it rejects many of the proposals of critical theory. In contrast, Patricia, a supporter of critical theory, is the only one of these three to directly comment on the concept of instructor instigated student empowerment. While realistically confronting the results of the instructional approach, she made the most interesting statement of this study about the problematic position of embracing critical theory:

The goal of critical theory cannot be met by one instructor working by themselves. Education becomes the critical lens by which you examine the truths in society, and in turn transforms your views, perhaps ultimately transitioning into social action. I think the key word here is "perhaps." I say that because I literally just left my Global Justice class 45 minutes ago and I am seeing some of my students really "getting it" and others just coasting along, waiting for the semester to end. I spend time in the beginning of class talking about how education can be transformational. How we become educated and develop higher faculties, making us more sensitive to the world around us. Those higher faculties are good, but they come at a price. We become more sensitive (which is the price we pay) but also become more reactive to the world around us. I strive to empower all of my students through this transformation. I just don't think I reach all of my students. So I think I am the "facilitator" of empowerment and transformation, providing them with the tools and opportunities for critical thought leading to social action, but I cannot do it all by myself. (Patricia)

This study’s S-R instructors place value on the empowering nature of transformational experiences. They accomplish several of McGregor’s (2011) concepts concerning critical theory within this instructional philosophy. All three instructors resemble Sally’s earlier statement concerning fostering a process within each student. All three instructors thoroughly challenge the
ideological grasp of consumerism, behavioral aspects are delved in to help students function in their best interests and ecological responsibility is confronted, though problematic in actual impact depending on student maturity. What was discovered in this instructional approach towards critical theory is that issues of “structural violence” and “oppressive power relationships” were addressed in the video instructors of this approach utilized.

**S-R instructional approaches and visual imagery.** This teaching orientation displayed the least variation in kinds of visuals out of all the instructors of this study, with the utilization of documentary film composing the vast majority of their choices. With the instructors in agreement that getting the students to connect to the material generated student interest in the various topics, fact based, non-fiction film dominated the visual choices for this group, with a small amount of advertising composing the rest of the instructional choices. Joseph was the only instructor of this category who utilized advertising in his instructional approach in similar methods to how ESA instructors depicted different versions of gender, race, and religion to counter conceptions of these things that we are sold to support our consumption habits:

What is considered to be successful? What does success look like, and what does being feminine or sexy look like? What does masculine look like and when it defies the stereotype how do we react. Examples I have a group of men that are crying, you know is that acceptable or not? Well they just won the Super Bowl, yeah. … But if they’re crying because they’re very, you know, emotionally involved with a loved one, that’s kind of strange right there then it makes you know confront these feminine traits and what that means.

For the other two instructors, the main differences between the visuals utilized by the aforementioned ESA instructors and those who are S-R and S-R as a part of Personal-Global orientation is the continuing theme of examining and critiquing the materials economy. The materials economy is the cycle of consumer products, from extraction, to production, to
distribution, to consumption, to disposal. Whether in part or as a whole, the visuals unitized by all three of the S-R instructors and the three P-G instructors include an analysis of how this economy has impacted the environment, human quality of life, and redefined the role and need for citizenship.

**The Story of Stuff (2007)** is a 20-minute YouTube documentary that was the first film in what the creators have coined The Story of Stuff Project, which is a coalition of people dedicated to creating and sustaining a global coalition focused on our consumption based economies and our consumption based habits. The format of the film is focused on a woman named Annie Leonard, who is standing in front of an animated white board. In roughly 20 minutes, Leonard articulates what the materials economy is and defines the “crisis” that concerns every inhabitant of the planet. At each of the five steps, she describes unethical choices made by industry and government, human impact of unethical behavior and greed, and the waste intentionally created by business and consumers alike who are part of this cycle. She describes institutional purpose, failure and interconnectedness through policy and through corruption, while, at the same time, discussing how we consume, use, and discard irresponsibly and to the detriment of our quality of life and the planet’s health. The film is structured for impact and the language is structured so that cause, results, and consequences are the front and center for the viewer, and that bias is fact based. Theoretically, the film is succinct and adherent to McGregor’s views of critical theory’s educational responsibility to condemn consumer society and capitalism. Patricia utilizes this brief film and embraces this viewpoint more openly than the other SR instructors. She used this film to lay a foundation for how consumption works in the country and the various aspects of it that are problematic. The end of this documentary introduces a new more sustainable and ethical
cycle of consumption, one of Green Chemistry, Zero Waste, Closed Loop Production, and Renewable Energy. The following films use fiction as well as documentary to emphasize aspects of the analysis, critique, and counterproposals towards the individual, socioeconomic, and global consequences of America’s 20th Century’s materials economy.

Fast Food Nation (2006) is a fictional portrayal of the realities and experiences of three different groups of people who are impacted by America’s fast-food materials economy: the industry’s corporate personnel, the undocumented workers they utilize to work in their factories, and the high school students who are used to work in their chains. The film narrates aspects of the extraction, production, and distribution stages of the production of fast food, with the main focus being on the toll the industry takes on ethical behavior and quality of life. Three aspects of the plot start at the same time and are interwoven throughout the film: one of the marketing executives being sent to investigate the quality of the meat after students find high traces of E. coli bacteria in patties for their newest burger; at the same time, several people are seen crossing the Mexican border and being smuggled into the country; finally, high school students are tampering with food and discussing robberies at other fast food restaurants. When the executive travels to the meat packing plant to investigate the issue, he is taken on a surface tour of the clean areas so that his concerns are dismissed and the presence of E. coli can be dismissed as a rare occurrence. As he keeps asking questions from the people who have worked at the plant, he learns about the dangerous and unsanitary conditions the workers in their factories face and how likely it is that there are contaminants in the food. The high school students have to fight to not be trapped in the job, and are concerned with pleasing their boss, worried about being harmed during a robbery and coworkers who fantasize about robbing the place themselves because of the
inadequate pay. The people smuggled into the country wind up being employed by the meat packing plant. Their working environment for the undocumented workers is the most horrific aspect of the film, with the women being sexually harassed and pressured, the financial exploitation, separated families, drug use, and the dangerous, if not deadly conditions present on the plants “kill floor” for workers who can be transferred there with no training at a moment’s notice. Patricia and Lucy both used this film to spark discussion with their classes about their own employment experiences and “what they are eating and why they should care about that” (Patricia).

**Food inc. (2008)** is the non-fictional portrayal of the materials economy in relation to food production that was included as part of S-R facilitation. The documentary starts with the history of McDonald’s and how that has translated into them being the largest buyers of meat, potatoes, lettuce, and several other items. The workers are replaceable and the food is cheap and popular. The suppliers of meat and vegetables for fast food now overwhelmingly dominate the food market, meaning that uniformity and affordability come at a cost to human and animal quality of life. This film presents this cost in terms of what is hidden and what is visible, what occurs “in the shadow,” if it is seen at all, and what is visible in broad daylight. Representatives for various companies (Perdue, Tyson, Smithfield, Monsanto, etc.) do nor supply statements or want to be seen on camera at all, nor do they allow filming of what is occurring. The relationships between various politicians are also described, but none of them are commenting either. This is juxtaposed with the brightly lit natural products expo, an open organic farm operation, and representatives from the Stonyfield corporation, whose processing utilized more
organic means of production, spoke on camera, gave tours, and talked about their ethical considerations for the environment.

Throughout the film, the farmers are seen as being made afraid to take cameras into the large containments for chicken, pork, and beef, with them being visited by company representatives to have them turn down that kind of exposure to the documentarians. Farmers speak, in one case anonymously and covered in shadow, about being scared of being ruined, being asked to turn on each other by reporting and buying out other farmers, which is destroying their own communities. They experience hired investigators falsely accusing and bankrupting farmers with accusations of theft. And so many of them having to take out loans costing over $500,000, while only making less than $20,000 themselves, the growers drowning in debt while supplying billion-dollar industries. The film also talks in depth to migrant workers and a mother whose child died of E. coli poisoning. That sacrifice and grief are unavoidable consequences of this system is reinforced throughout the film.

What is seen about how the animals are treated appear in videos smuggled out or filmed at night, depicting animals who cannot get fresh air, roam free, see sunlight or live quality lives. Oftentimes sick and disabled animals, made that way by the conditions they are kept in, are processed right along with the healthy ones. “This isn’t farming, this is mass production like an assembly line in a factory,” stated Carole, a poultry farmer for Perdue. Growing the animals quickly using genetically modified feed creates suffering for the animals. Lucy shows this film to her section because of the impact of GMO’s and antibiotics on the farmers themselves and on the food they consume:
I would say that my biggest obstacle is for them to actually care. You know, a twenty-year old doesn't care whether food is genetically modified - Some do, but not a lot. Yeah, OK, you tell me this is what it is, and I'm don't care why.

One thing that is very noticeable about this documentary is that, before the credits begin, the film answers the question of “what can we do about it?” that viewers would have at that point. With “This Land is Your Land” playing in the background, steps are provided to create a demand for a better system, including voting differently, eating differently every day, buying from ethical companies that treat life with respect, choose foods that are in season and buy organic, read labels, making sure farmers markets take food stamps, asking schools to provide healthy lunches, telling Congress to enforce standards, etc.

While these documentaries focused on the materials economy of the United States, Patricia, who embraced critical theory more clearly than the other two S-R instructors also showed a documentary she stated the students loved about making a difference around the world in a way that was possible for them as college students.

**A Small Act (2010)** is a film about a Danish woman who sponsors a Kenyan child throughout his secondary education. This choice of film is the only visual articulated by the S-R instructors that presents the possibility of a global community in that the focus is not invested in Western values. This film provides a narration of several lives impacted by international access to education, and how that access impacts survival and opportunity for people in more dire conditions. Patricia explained:

So, the documentary is actually about this man (Christopher Ndungu Mburu) who is now an ambassador for the U.N. And he was actually the receiver of the twelve dollars a month from the gal and he becomes an adult and ends up going to Harvard and now he's like a U.N. ambassador, um, and then they actually reconnect. He opens a school or back to his hometown and names that after her. So that the students really, really, really
like that one. Because again it's something small and enjoyable that they can grasp and it makes sense.

Because Chris sees Hilde as an “angel” who gave him hope and saved his life, he creates a foundation that would sponsor Kenyan children through their secondary educations. Because the foundation is in its early stages, they are looking for the students who are at the top of their class across ten schools. In describing the life he has now, he states that “I’ve walked all over the world. I never expected to have this life when I was growing up in the village. And if Hilde had not paid for my primary school education, none of this would have happened.”

Woven in the story telling of Chris, his sister Jane, and Hilde are the lives of children currently living in the village where they come from. The children, all of whom come from dire conditions in extreme poverty, illness and homelessness, and the threat of a bleak future where they never escape their conditions, compete to win the scholarships from the foundation, only to be excluded because the educational system of the country is failing the children.

One interesting aspect of the film is that the political climate is discussed by Chris, Hilde and Jane as being one that functions off of the education or lack of education of citizens. Hilde talks about her and other Jewish children being stopped from attending school before her family fled the Nazis. She also talks about her experience of coming to a country where she did not know the language and needing help to survive. Chris and Jane state in describing their work with the UN in several war-torn countries that it is the lack of education that breeds the conflict. Visuals of the crisis in these countries play in the background as Jane stated:

When people are ignorant, when people have little education, they’re so gullible, it’s easy for a politician to just come and mislead them and they take up arms … in the Rwandan genocide we have mobs of youth depending on their neighbors and hacking them to death.
People who have been attacked, killed and are missing limbs are the visuals that are now associated with political manipulation as a result of limited access to education. Chris mirrors this sentiment in stating:

You have so many people that are jobless, that are uneducated who can be paid an insignificant amount of money to carry out heinous crimes. These are the things we are trying to address. Education is not just some process in which you become more knowledgeable or read more books. No, for me education is a life and death issue because where people are not educated, they are easily exploited for political means and that is how we get violence of conflict.

The film depicts how a contested election pitches the same region in Kenya into deadly tribal conflict. While none of the profiled children or their families are hurt, Chris reiterates why this kind of conflict is central to what he is trying to do with the foundation:

Part of the reason why I would like these kids to be educated is because once you have a society that is very ignorant it becomes the breeding ground for violence. It becomes a breeding ground for misinformation. It becomes the breeding ground for intolerance.

As indicative of critical visual pedagogy, Patricia explained how this film provided an international perspective to the intricacies concerning how gender roles, poverty, and political circumstances impact educational access:

We talk a lot about education, and how education should be a human right and how education, a lack of education is intensely of intentionally oppressive and so how education, a lack of education can breed ignorance and violence, and then it becomes this continuous cycle. Um, so we talk about how education is so, so important worldwide. They just they just they kept going back to this film, it was something we watched kind of in the beginning of this semester and they were constantly referring back to. And then you know that I would ask them at certain points this semester of like, you know, what were the highlights (of the course). They always wrote that as like one of the highlights. That was one that definitely stuck with them.

**S-R instructional philosophy summary.** The phenomenon of Social Reconstructivist consumer instruction can be defined as expanding the realms of possibility and facilitating a
maturity through growth. This section detailed Social Reconstructivism by instructors who used this approach by itself as their facilitation. Because Social Reconstructivism is also the end state of the final instructional orientation for this study (Personal-Global), this study’s Social Reconstructivism presents to McGregor’s theory challenges based on what instructors believe to be achievable and how goals should be conceptualized: does the global context provide a barrier or an opportunity? This is the primary difference between this study’s Social Reconstructivist instructors and its Personal Global facilitators.

**Personal-Global.** These three instructors include the two foreign born faculty members who participated in this study; two of these instructors have also had religious training and educational backgrounds. All three instructors are student-centered, they all supported teaching students to vote with their money, and all three utilized a form of transformational learning, although their approaches supported Freirian Emancipatory transformation (Taylor, 1998) instead of Meizrow’s (1998). All three Personal-Global approaches entailed what the Existential Self-Actualization and exclusive Social Reconstructivism did not: global environmental stewardship, detailed and in-depth conversations of the social impact of power dynamics, and a strong focus on international conflict and struggle. This orientation is described as an “integration of cognitive, self-actualization and social reconstructivism” (McGregor, 2011, p. 7). All three instructors demonstrate different, interesting, and multifaceted Type 4 Empowerment for Mutual Interest approaches in which “People would learn to think beyond their private, materialistic sphere and embrace an abiding concern for the commons (other human beings, species and the planet) (McGregor, 2011, p. 7). In contrast to some of the more idealistic goals of McGregor’s theory, this quote encapsulates a goal that this study’s instructors of Personal-Global
(P-G) facilitation realized. They also have different opinions and approaches to the maturity conflicts the exclusive S-R instructors were facing. The following sections detail the three P-G instructors as unique snapshots of the different forms Personal-Global sociological consumer education can take. Each section will describe how they uniquely integrate the three areas of P-G instruction (cognitive, self-actualization, and social reconstructivism), the instructor’s viewpoint of their role in the classroom and critical theory, their use of visual imagery, and their management of student resistance and maturity issues.

**Lena: Critical, traditional age P-G.** Lena taught the freshmen level (1600 and 1610) IDS sections. Her courses were discussion based, with her main assignment format being one of written essays. Her topic choice differed from those previously mentioned in the study that she breaks from the other courses’ explorations of different philosophical viewpoints and existential investigation. Her approaches to self-actualization were not combined with meaning of life analysis. Instead, her syllabus details how “systemic evil” and “the interconnection of worldviews” were combined with aligning “the good” with individual rights and associating freedom with community betterment. Lena told her class at the beginning of the semester: “What I said was, you know, ‘first of all, know that you’re safe to disagree with me, but you have to have some valid factual support for your opinion.’” Her syllabus informs students: “You will have to articulate and test your views, engage with what we have read and experienced, and offer an argument in support of what it is you have figured out.” It also stated that they are to respond to questions and “form their own,” not absorb and reflect her viewpoint. She described in the interview a rejection of what Freire (1970) called “banking education”:

> My teaching philosophy is that first the student should be doing more work than me, so they should be doing more of the thinking, more of the learning, not that I don't think and
learn, but if I think I'm going to dump it all into them that's going to be problematic. So first and foremost, I believe students bring something to the equation and then I believe that it's their job to do a lot of the work in the learning, rather than mine in putting it into them.

She begins her course in finding out where the students are and what they would like to do with their educations. While this would, in the other instructional approaches, be a simpler conversation in self-actualization, her approach demonstrates how the P-G self-actualization differs. While she is also “very much trying to make it connected to them,” she also gave the following example:

I believe they all have a choice and they all have a voice and some of them want to be, you know, accountants and C.E.O.’s and run their own businesses. And I say to them “great when you're a C.E.O. you get to make a choice: Do we pollute the cement in this neighborhood. If we do what are the consequences, and just because you get to drive away and go live somewhere else doesn't mean you aren't affecting somebody’s life. If that’s your company, they are a recipient of your waste.”

In the above example, instead of steering students to think on different philosophical viewpoints of good and evil, she looks at their goals and describes ethical responsibilities and issues they may encounter when they reach them. Through discussion and readings, she engaged issues that are moral and ethical dilemmas in current events. Social responsibility and community betterment were tied to students not only achieving their goals in life, but in also creating ethical and moral individuals who understand the power their goals may give them, and that they have a responsibility towards environmental stewardship. She continued below:

So, for example we talked about fracking, and a lot of them didn't even know what it was, and I said well, so here’s, you know, here’s some talk (TED) about it and this is what it does. There have been some people who live on land where it’s been fracked who say they can’t drink the water anymore and they give you examples they can light it on fire or they can drink it in and they all got sick. So, I’d say “well what I want to know is if a C.E.O. says, ‘well this is going to raise your gas price lower your gas prices right because we can now frack – we all have our own energy and will all be energy independent,’ I want to say what is the cost to you for that cheap gas. So, if it means you get to drive you
know for cheaper, but people are dying of cancer or whatever else is that cost worth incurring?”

The above is only one example of how all the instructors of the P-G philosophy made environmental issues large and unavoidable portions of their courses, which is reflective of P-G’s social reconstructivist goals (McGregor, 2011). It is also reflective of another finding of P-G instructional approaches, that instructors utilized visual imagery in order to contextualize current events, demonstrate larger global impact and provide visual references on different ways to live in a global consumer context.

Towards the beginning of her course, Lena presented environmental issues as directly influenced by political choices, and a matter of survival that all students should be cognizant of:

I want you to know that no matter what your party and what your platform is, if you want to pollute my water, my air, or my food, or my land, that I will have an issue with you. “Do you believe that about me?” And they said, “yeah we believe that,” so, I said. “well, it doesn't matter if you're Republican/ Democrat/ liberal/conservative if you want to do those things, we're going to go at it.”

The stressing of the responsibility of determining dire consequences for others is foundational to the P-G approach. Basic issues of survival were tied to power structures. This is an example of how Lena’s instructional approach towards cognitive development sought to teach students to recognize and challenge hegemony (Brookfield, 2005), and view themselves as being influenced by the politics of our country (McGregor, 2011). Because this approach is tied to complications and ethical dilemmas that could frame their goals as socially consequential, she described some student resistance to her approach. Specifically, when asked her greatest challenge as an instructor of these issues, she stated: “that people don't want to know, because then they'd have to do something. That kids don't want to look at it, especially some don’t want you, you know, want you pooping on their parade.” Lena also framed her approaches to
environmental issues and American daily life by investigating the policies and practices of our government:

I think they should have basic knowledge about what's happening to their food, because all of that nothing - the jeans you wear, the clothes you wear, the phone, the car - none of that matters if you've got cancer and you're dying, or if the people that you love are in pain or suffering. So, I think ultimately that a lot of things lead to that, right? So consuming food, consuming water, and consuming our air. To me I wish everybody had a foundation. In fact, I just saw, I was looking up to my activism this morning at a cafe because I had a little me time - I said if, if, if terrorists were polluting our water, our air, or our land, we would be attacking them. But we let politicians and businesses do it.

In her above framing of the environment, the power dynamics of hegemonic forces were emphasized in two ways: 1) American power dynamics were made unavoidable, because political choices were presented as having an impact on daily life, and 2) her views of consumer culture are such that she believes that it has supplanted issues that American citizens do not talk about or monitor, which means that our citizenship and ability to hold standards for our own quality of life has been weakened through the distraction of acquisition.

Another important aspect of her instruction is her practice of what critical theory calls “overcoming alienation” (Brookfield, 2006). She attempted this with her teaching in the materials that she used and through class discussions. Like the above examples where she started with where students are, she gave an example of how a student who worked at Walmart described about how they would limit his work hours to prevent him from achieving full-time status and thus receiving benefits. He also described the food drives that the store would have for employees they do not compensate properly. She replied to them that this could be an example where they vote with their money, but her focus was different from previous instructors, in that her focus was not on simply supporting business practices they agree with or buying American. Lena recounted that she told her students:
So, if you don't like someone's policies and don't believe in the way they treat their employees don't shop there. And it has to be a real concentrated effort. But if you know that Wal-Mart is rude to their employees and takes advantage of them, and you cannot contribute if you're ethical and you believe that then you really have to vote with your dollars and you need to say I'm not going there.

She also shared that she stated this to make clear that consumption with more than acquiring what you want, that students could make demands “of the people who create the products them consume.” A similar conversation occurred with her students concerning the problematic nature of Thanksgiving evening and earlier Black Friday sales that year, especially for those who were employed in jobs that would require them to leave Thanksgiving to work.

The active learning of these discussions engaged students in their own experiences and attempts to analyze feelings, problem solve, and empower themselves. Along with these discussions is another instance in which they read a book called *Into the Wild* (1997), in which a young man gives up his trust fund to live in the Alaskan wilderness as his way of rejecting society. In each of these instances, her approach confronts the powerlessness students and consumers feel when dealing with social realities they do not agree with by telling them that they can withhold consumption and participation as a way to confront social practices that are beneath their own standards. These things are an example of Freireian emancipatory transformational learning, in which students are encouraged to behaviorally respond to these situations as integrated subjects (Freire, 1970). In the above examples during her conversations, and embodied as an example in a course text, students are engaged about their realities to contextualize power dynamics, in that students are encouraged to consider the way “biography intersects with the social structure, and the privilege and oppressions of persons based on power” (Taylor, 1998, p. 18). In this vein, Lena was also the only instructor to discuss the divesting of universities from dirty energy.
pollution, stating that was another example of how “we talk about their responsibility to be informed and their responsibility to hold those institutions accountable for their behavior, especially since they pay into it.”

Lena’s utilization of visual imagery was mostly non-fictional, although she did utilize the film Gattaca (1997) for largely the same reasons as Phil, in that she too focused on the ethical dilemmas of a society with the ability to have choices and veto power over lives in order to only produce the ideal citizen. Her fictional choices included this film and various advertising, which is how she fueled discussions concerning gender and race. The one nonfiction visual she chose concerning cultural realities was a presentation of video covering “Stand Down” events for homeless veterans. These events are associated with the federal government and other organizations. They occur multiple times a year in states all around the country and show the state of veterans who come back scarred from serving in the military and for a variety of reasons, wind up homeless. Veterans can get and are shown receiving health screenings, haircuts, judicial hearings, food, clothing, counseling, and treatment. The viewing of these visuals is a strong combination of social struggle combined with an indictment of our government, in that students see that our nation has failed its Veterans. Lena described her students’ reactions: “And that you know my students did not realize we have homeless vets. They assume that the government will take care of them” (Lena). She used this as an example that while Veterans Day is observed and people make a habit to move on, the reality of the situation is much more dire and deserves attention every day. She was combatting a media and educational system that has trained Americans to observe our holidays with varying success and then quickly refocus on our own
lives, moving from the meaning of the holiday and the people involved with it without knowing the current crises involved or knowing the history of the event.

She used non-fictional videos like TED talks and documentary clips to deal with the environmental issues of fracking, pollution, and plastic bags: “The kids care about that stuff. Visual images of what are we consuming and how is it affecting our environment. You have to be really we need to be much more selective because they are so bombarded with images.” One of the TED talks she shows is a presentation by a man named Andy Keller titled “I Am a Bag Monster” (2012). A man who has made an outfit out of 500 plastic bags comes on stage to talk to Americans about plastic waste and the environmental impact. The ridiculousness of the visual works to get the audience to understand the impact one person can make, specifically, not only that choices have consequences, but that we have been conditioned to consume in such a way that we have created habits where waste is unquestioned in our daily lives. As he stands in the suit, he shows the impact that plastic is having on our oceans, water supply, and food chain.

Lena’s instructional approach was one that embraced McGregor’s critical approach to curriculum through Freire’s transformational pedagogy. She combines this with a P-G approach to consumer education, to approach students as responsible citizens who should take their goals seriously and realistically engage with the world they will inherit as they enter the workforce. Of the three P-G instructors and of this study’s instructors, she is the most vocally supportive and pedagogically demonstrative of the tenets of critical theory. Her Type IV approach well achieves McGregor’s (2011) goal of “always questioning what it means to live in a consumer society and of knowing deep inside that there are alternatives” (p. 7). Her alternative focused primarily on power dynamics and stewardship. Oliver’s alternative focused more on peace and justice.
**Oliver: Progressive fellowship P-G.** Oliver also taught the Freshman level (1600 and 1610) IDS courses. He goals are behaviors of altruism, community service, and volunteerism that are meant to counter a society in which we have been trained to be insular, self-absorbed consumers. He began his courses with lived experiences, movies, and news stories to hang the theoretical and philosophical on a “hook” for them to grasp. His courses were also discussion based, with his main assignment format being one of written essays and journaling. He also articulated a rejection of “banking education”:

> I don't think it's just about filling their heads with information; it's about forming them as, you know, thoughtful, cogent, articulate citizens as well who don't just swallow the party line on everything, but think things through carefully.

Unlike Lena, Oliver’s philosophy and religion backgrounds lent his courses a highly theoretical component that combined various existential arguments with social identity development. An example of McGregor’s (2011) progressivism can be seen in his teaching philosophy, in which he repeated the familiar theme throughout this study of student-centered instruction, primarily because of the possible confusion towards the subject matter. “I teach religion and history, and sometimes the real challenge of that is to make connections to their own experience, which when their 18 or 19 is quite limited through no fault of their own.” The written assignments were mostly reflections, with the exception of the course final, which was a “paper and presentation of a case study on an ethical or moral dilemma, illustrating the world view(s) which are informing the actors involved, and reasoning through how that view is reflected in their actions.” This is another example of Oliver’s strong undercurrent of progressivism and his approach to active learning, because students were required to interview others and research foundations for the issues before their case study’s theoretical lens could be
determined. As an example of this progressivism in his philosophy is his support for the radical simplicity of the following:

Buddha, Jesus, and St. Francis of Assisi … Really any kind of involvement with the market system or with wealth is toxic to the human condition. So, this kind of extreme emphasis that we just kind of avoid consumerism in order not to be sucked into the machine.

In the above quotation, Oliver also positioned himself in alignment with McGregor’s (2011) critical theoretical approaches; yet, at the same time, he articulated a discomfort with seeing his role in the classroom as one of an emancipator. He viewed himself as being on the fence about embracing critical theory, stating: “I think it might be a false choice to make. I mean we do have to provide information. We have to help students acquire tools and skills of critical thinking and careful analysis, and the ability to weigh claims to truth.” First in his support of his basic role to provide cognitive development, he weighed his purpose with the foundational needs of his students. But he then continued:

I think it’s an empowerment thing to it certainly, that we help them to make good choices, informed choices, rational choices, educated choices, critical choices, analytical choices, in the light that hopefully we will also expose them to a range of centric ways of understanding what it means to be human beings and what the what human life is for.

In the above statements, Oliver did not choose whether instructors empower students or facilitate a process in which they learn to empower themselves. It is interesting that he proposes no division, as these things may happen simultaneously as part of the instructional process. Because his instructional approach harshly criticized the assumed necessity of consumerism in American society, his approach was critical even though he may see his role as one of guiding instead of empowering. What is clear is that, in his role as guide, he did not view himself as an emancipator. Also, what is interesting in the above statement is that he implicated McGregor
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(2011) existentialism, in that students are presented with responsibility tied to their freedom of choice – what she called “the free exercise of moral decisions” (p. 7). Oliver argued that consumerism has caused harm concerning how human beings divine their purpose, stating that “there is a very significant disadvantage to that in terms of the kinds of people that teaches us to be, and I think you know we grow up kind of thinking that’s the only way to be” (Oliver). But this contradicts McGregor’s definitions of self-actualization, not existentialism, being part of the P-G approach. In light of this study’s earlier finding that four instructors could not distinguish between the two, Oliver was unique in that his theoretical and religious underpinnings have seemingly replaced most, but not all, of self-actualization of this philosophy with existential framework analysis. He stated that his use of theoretical frameworks is meant to help students “understand reality better,” but in his approach, that reality implied the global citizenship of students towards crises that are plaguing the world. “How then will I live my life that there is to be some outcome? Don’t define the outcome. That’s up to them.” Specifically, his version of P-G facilitation would have students determine who they are in light of their moral frameworks and social power dynamics (existential global citizenship), not considerations of self-interest.

Furthermore, Oliver seemed to have this existentialism be combined with cognitive and S-R as his students utilize Freire’s emancipatory transformation to confront social problems and then act towards the common good. Of the three P-G instructors, he is the most focused on the global context and problems of poverty and persecution. He judged our inability to focus on these various global crises as a product of what consumerism has done to our sense of humanity, stating that we “don’t see beyond the point of sale about what’s going on.” He continued on to state:
I think it was the Pope that said, you know, why... why are the news bulletins every night of the fact that the stock market lost two points, but the fact that thousands of children died of hunger in the world today isn't really a matter of concern. You know our consumerism blinds us to really big global questions, and I think for me if a student graduates from here more aware of global issues and global context in which they live as a global citizen, not just a citizen of the wealthy affluent US, that I think would be central to me.

In the above quotation, his approach ensures that American privilege is unavoidable, that his course did not allow college students to escape the fact that their American lives were ones of a first world opportunity that the majority of the planet does not enjoy. His course paired a strong focus on environmentalism with global cycles of poverty and various humanitarian crises, stating that a holistic understanding of the environment is what everyone should know about living in a consumer society. He stated that the course’s examination concerning “why the poor parts of the world stay poor” occurs because climate change has a disproportionate negative impact on poor communities. The S-R emphasis of his course included environmental and poverty related issues in the course’s involvement with mission trips and the campus initiative. Also, although he is unclear on his exact role in relation to critical theory, his main emphasis throughout the course detail consciousness-raising efforts to combat the ideological messages of consumerism and challenging the hegemonic pressure to not examine how our environmental behavior takes a larger toll on our nation and the global community.

He supports the universal P-G tenet that students must learn how to vote with their money. For him, this includes how students spend their money in protest of immoral practices that include human fair-trade products and animal rights conversations, in which they investigate what the American consumption of eggs and meat creates exploitation and lowers the quality of life for the animals involved. Another example he confronted in class discussion is the prevalent
arguments concerning gun control in the United States, because of the issue partly being a consumer issue tied to conversations of freedom and national identity. He stated: “The only power we have sometimes is the way we spend our money. We are consumers, and, you know, sometimes the only influence we have in the world of things is to put our money somewhere different.”

He utilized various religious texts, including the Christian Bible, the Quran, and Hindu scriptures to lay an ethical foundation for the examination of global news stories and the texts of the course. Considering his readings, he chose a text titled *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (Appiah, 2006) to investigate the history behind current issues and our responsibility to each other within a global community, and *Half the Sky* (Kristof & Wudunn, 2008) to present issues of the subjugation of women around the world. His experience being a prison Chaplain spurs him to include conversations on criminal justice reform and the barriers to humane treatment of people society judges for being criminals.

In comparison to the resistance Lena described from students, Oliver stated that they are more overwhelmed than depressed concerning the gravity of the conversations being had: “Well, I think the difficulty, which is the difficulty for all of us, is the difference between grasping it intellectually and doing something about it practically.” Yet, Oliver recounted areas of success in how students described volunteering at a homeless shelter, church mission trips, protesting, sponsoring children, and other activities that indicated their social awareness concerning the experiences of humanity instead of consumer society. In attempting to grasp the world’s poverty, he stated that they are more shocked by the inequity most of the world lives with. And while they struggle with what solutions could look like for the problems, Oliver stated that they are able to
grasp the various issues. “I think they realize that there's a need to deal with them that they're really compelling questions especially for, you know, you know young Americans citizens. They have to be grappled with and dealt with.” Also, he stated in that creating an understanding of global issues and their human impact: “I think visual things are the best ways to convey information.”

His use of visuals made relatable to students the various global situations the course encountered through the semester. Along with showing No Impact Man (2009), two important visuals used by Oliver to present the impact of global consumption and the poverty of various countries around the world were Ghandi (1982) and a TED talk presentation by Van Jones (2011) about the human suffering that accompanies the environmental toll of plastic.

In the format of a basic, professional TED talk, Van Jones discusses the existence of a place called “Cancer Alley” in the Gulf of Mexico, and how human suffering occurs in that location because of the petrochemical industry and the profitable industries that use plastic. The materials economy is confronted again as Jones makes the argument that our teaching of disposability has impacted people as well, creating a situation in which we have to fight our treatment of human beings along with fighting our abuse of the environment. Instead of the environment being a conservation paradigm that seems to be isolated, in Jones reminding us that we have two arms and can choose to embrace the planet and embrace humanity, he supports the argument that the expendability of one will eventually lead to taking risks with the other. Of all the visuals utilized in this study, this brief video well emphasizes the social justice paradigm that McGregor (2011) argues for in stating that consumerism needs to be condemned as “unsustainable, unethical, irresponsible and even immoral” (p. 7).
Gandhi (1982) is a biographical drama that chronicles Mahatma Gandhi’s life-changing leadership in countering discriminatory practices and colonial rule concerning Indian and British relations in Africa and India. In describing his choice of the film in his course, Oliver stated:

I use the movie Gandhi quite a bit, you know, sections of it that relates to consumerism and … because, you know, the Indians squalor. Being preyed upon by the British in a sense, and we show sections of the video where Gandhi is leading these marches to the sea and so protesting at unfair taxes.

Unavoidable in the film is the inextricable ties between racism and subjugation. The repeated use of racial slurs targeted at Africans, Indians in Africa and India, and specifically Indians who were part of the “untouchable” caste of Indian society who were born into poverty to do the tasks that were seen to be beneath the other Indian social classes. The use of the terms is rife throughout the film, from English youths in Africa to the late Winston Churchill himself, and is meant to frighten and demean Black and brown people into staying in their place and not questioning British rule. Several aspects of this film implicate how a successful Indian lawyer turned himself into a change agent for his people: in focusing on the man himself, you see him change his appearance from a replication of British establishment clothing of suits and living in a nice home with a nanny for his children, to intentionally and visually identifying with the men who worked the mines and were arrested in Africa. There and in India, he chooses to establish and live in an ashram where everyone did their own share or work. When he returns to India and tours the rural and impoverished areas of the country, he shaves his head and changes his dress again to identify with those who were taken advantage of. A specific example in the film is an unfair arrangement between staving farmers and British landlords, who, in this case, made their crops worthless through trade, demanded cash rent and utilized beatings, illegal seizures, and the denial of water. It was revealed that the rent on the poor was raised to finance a hunting
expedition, which highlights how optional choices of excess for the powerful are funded by the subjugation, sacrifice, and death of the poor. In a unsuccessful attempt to justify these choices, the British landlord stated that he had to do all of that “in order to get these people to work.”

The shifts in clothing and environment are best identified by the use of color, specifically that the dress of prisoners is drab and in worn and soiled beige clothing. The majority of people in Gandhi’s ashram were also not arrayed in many colors, and their houses were not variations of marble and stone, with middle classed furnishings and servants. Gandhi made his own clothes. In contrast, the British elite and the Indian politicians both had Indian servants and traveled in cars, passing by poorer people in the streets. Gandhi shows his discomfort early with being served, paraded, and waited on, and insisted that no one be seen as “untouchable,” and that no difference be made between Hindus and Muslims of Indian decent because they were brothers fighting for the same freedom.

Throughout the film, part of the reasons for his various arrests are his rejections of British trade goods at the expense of Indians supporting their own skills and trades, which would create their own economic independence. His nonviolent, peaceful protests were meant to underscore their dignity and equality of the British, in that the people would not lower themselves to violence to meet the British with war but would instead insist on their own self-worth in the face of racist and unjust colonialism. The strongest statements Gandhi makes in the entire film that identify his conceptions of consumer society is this:

Happiness does not come with things. Even 20th century things. It can come from work and pride in what you do. India lives in her villages. The terrible poverty there can only be removed if their local skills can be revived. Poverty is the worst form of violence. A constructive program is the only nonviolent solution to India’s agony. It will not necessarily be progress for India if she simply imports the unhappiness of the west … You must make injustice visible and be prepared to die like a soldier to do so.
In watching Gandhi recreate himself to live a life in alignment with his principles and inspire others to get rid of the social status arguments that divide societies from its common humanity, we see a man who is not scared to face violence, be jailed, or die for his cause and for those who need someone to be their voice. Gandhi’s discomfort at importing the happiness of those who would colonize people and deprive them of their dignity provides Oliver with a strong foundation for imparting that students should question and define themselves in such a way as to confront social inequity and suffering in whatever way they can. Considering McGregor’s (2011) social justice paradigm of condemning consumerism, this film is as close as instructors of this study get to viewing consumerism as “immoral” (p. 7).

Oliver’s instructional approach reinforces this study’s limited redefinition of supporting critical theory in that he and other instructors embrace a role of guidance and are uncomfortable with the role of emancipator. Oliver’s instructional approach lays a foundation for humanitarianism towards a global community, in that students are asked to keep in mind issues of privilege and the welfare of the poor in light of their status as Americans. Yet, his actual instructional approach also entails aspects of Freire’s transformational pedagogy, in that students are existentially prompted to ethically and morally identify themselves and structure a life to create an impact on these social justice concerns as they see fit. Furthermore, their action learning of his approach entails activities that strengthen their identity as interconnected citizens instead of consumer behaviors. Of the three P-G instructors and of this study’s instructors, he is the most vocally supportive and pedagogically demonstrative of holistic understandings of environmental and social justice. Concerning McGregor’s (2011) Type IV approach, Oliver well achieves McGregor’s (2011) concept of “assuming that the world is everyone’s home and that
social structures that are created by people can change so that they serve the people” (p. 7). Oliver alternative focused primarily on poverty and humanitarianism. Marcie provided an interesting snapshot of teaching issues similar to both Lena and Oliver with adult students.

Marcie: Adult Education P-G. Marcie taught the 1610 and 2000 Adult Degree Completion (ADC) sections of the IDS curriculum. The ADC Program allows adults with previous college courses and relevant life experience to take night courses to complete their BA degrees for a small selection of majors. The courses would be completed within eight weeks instead of 16. Because of this format and the age of the students, Marcie stated that she strived to “focus more on the students and their learning and less on me and my teaching. So, I got way more student-centered, and I think that that’s something that I continue to work on a lot of creative ways.” For instance, when asked if they could tell the difference between a need and a want, Marcie replied:

“Um, you know probably not, because as Americans most of us can’t, although I will say, I think my adult students have a little more insight into that than the traditional undergrad does because as adult students who are paying for school, working probably fairly low paying jobs and, if not, support or supporting themselves and probably children as well. They’ve already had to do some prioritizing about their spending.

Indicated here, as reflective of the other instructors of this study, is her intentional awareness to utilize the age and experiences of her ADC (Adult Degree Completion) students as the starting point for her instructional approaches per semester. Her goal in her instruction is that she wanted them to question everything, which indicates her view of instructing adults as one in which they are not lectured to, but asked to share, reconsider, and build upon experiences they already have. Marcie’s general approach to instructing adult students is discussion based, in that she chose readings to prompt them to analyze the content and while reflecting and sharing their own
experiences. This indicates a similarity to the other two P-G instructors in their rejection of what Freire (1970) called “banking education,” while embracing the active learning’s synthesis and integration to create new meaning of their lives (Madsen, 2007). In this, she embraced the processual nature of self-actualization in adult students, while demonstrating that her approach is classic self-actualization and is divorced from existential characteristics noted in the instructional approaches of other participants of this study. She described the rest of the approach to the subject matter as “broad” in that she wanted them to be reflective in thinking about some of these issues like consumerism, like environmental issues, etc. with the broad stroke being “let's just think critically about all this stuff.” Also, her goals in the classroom were to provide “practical and applied” experiences for students to learn from, so that they could have something from the course that was applicable to their lives.

Her assignment format prioritized attendance considering the short semester length and utilized online discussion forums that would occur during the week out of class. As an example of her focus on developing cognitive skills, along with the collaborative nature of her instructional approach, students would also use the forums to post news stories and other information they found that they could contribute to the subjects being discussed in the course. In class meetings, she would include discussions and analysis of readings, visuals and subject matter. Along with a term paper, they were also required to analyze a website that was dedicated to an area of wellness (spiritual, social, environmental, economic, physical, mental, or cultural) and present the website to the class as a group project. Another cognitive assignment included a field trip the class took had them go to the supermarket, split into groups, and attempt to feed a family of four on $10 for an entire day. These various assignments served the purpose of action
learning’s active practice and experiential learning in the building of a skill base through researching topics to contribute to course perspectives, and the practice of experiencing financial struggles on their own (Madsen, 2007).

In comparison to both Lena and Oliver, Marcie’s section was void of much of the theoretical and philosophical nature that Oliver’s course incorporated, even though Marcie’s highest degree is in theology. Although she did not focus on religious philosophy, her global impact focus was similar to Oliver’s in that she wanted students to consider the impact of irresponsible consumption habits on the rest of the world:

And then as a religious person who you know and again it doesn't have to be overtly religious, but I think everyone should be aware of some of the costs of consumerism. So, this can be everything from global warming, to you know people in Indonesia dying in factory fires so that you get have a $3 T-shirt from Walmart.

This is an example of how she tied the humanitarian aspect of consuming to privilege, stating that students have issues grasping it, sometimes because of a lack of empathy, but mostly because they “don’t think beyond their own worlds.” This is similar to the exploring of privilege that all instructors who, at least in part, utilize the S-R instructional approach. She also presented an audio documentary titled Children of Sodom and Gomorrah (2011) about poor children who disassemble computer equipment from first world countries to attempt to sell the metal for money but wind up developing illnesses like cancer because they are dealing with toxic materials while just trying to survive. She articulated her goal with global contextualization by encapsulating her S-R are of her P-G approach this way: “the idea that you have to also be politically and socially active in a way that maybe changes structures in addition to your own personal choices.” But Marcie described this as something else students grapple with because:
I think you have to break through the cynicism of, you know, I've given you this information and here's a problem in the world but you can actually do something about it aside from like choosing this toilet paper over that toilet paper. If you got together with a bunch of people, you could affect government and you could change how our world is. Most people I don't think are too idealistic that way.

In the above quotation, she indicated the same overwhelmed nature that other instructors have indicated in the S-R and P-G instructional approaches; yet, unlike the other instructors, she argued that her students actually are open to discussing and have a stronger understanding of social class struggles, including poverty. But countering privilege through global contextualization is not her only goal with her use of visual imagery. Similar to Lena’s course, Marcie’s focus was more on the social condition rather than the theoretical, but similar to Kato, who also taught in the field of Communication, Marcie’s underlying theme was critical thinking, primarily the development of media literacy skills:

I always weave media literacy into any course I teach. So as a journalist I'm someone who's very sensitive to the fact that there is a lot of misinformation, poor information, outright garbage being transmitted through the media. And I'm shocked at how as a culture Americans are very poorly educated to consume media. So, one of my themes is always media literacy how to be a discerning consumer of media.

Specifically, in her view of the Wellness and Social Responsibility course (2000), she viewed media literacy to have an impact on at least five of the seven areas of wellness (spiritual, social, environmental, physical, and mental). Similar to the other P-G instructors, the majority of the visuals shown for the course were documentary film, including No Impact Man (2009), King Korn (2007), Fast Food Nation (2006), and Unnatural Causes (2008).

For instance, King Korn (2007) presents a sometimes humorous but disturbing investigation into exactly how much corn the average American consumes in their daily diet.
Two guys who just graduated college learn that their generation was going to have a shorter life span than their parents because of how Americans consume corn. One of the most interesting visuals of the film is when they walked through a supermarket and picked up items that regular consumers would never associate with corn and found corn byproducts in everything. All those different kinds of items, brands, packing, and locations to insinuate variety when in fact everything is infused with corn at some point. Because of this, the two gentlemen wrote the head of the Corn Farmers Association and asked if they could grow an acre of corn themselves on his land so that they could learn about corn. They moved from Boston to Iowa and felt comfortable doing so because both men’s grandfathers came from Iowa. They viewed the town’s elevator, which is where the corn from the town for that year was stored until it could be shipped out to be processed. They were startled to see the towns centuries old elevator being demolished because it was not obsolete; the 1970s concrete elevator was full with a huge amount of surplus. As the documentary details how growing other crops became less prevalent in preference to growing corn, and the use of chemicals from a company called Liberty, which genetically modifies the corn seed and creates the weed killer used only on that seed, it becomes apparent that the large amounts of land utilized to grow the crop meant that the small family farm was no longer truly as anyone would envision it. The houses of families that moved are demolished to create more land to grow corn on. The weeds targeted are hemp, which has numerous sustainable uses but is seen as a pest in the way of industry and profit. To explain the priorities of industry and its use of the land, author Michael Pollan explained:

If you’re standing in a field in Iowa, there’s an immense amount of corn being grown, none of it edible. The commodity corn no one can eat: it must be processed before we can eat it. It’s a raw materials. It’s a feed stock for all these other processes. And the irony is that an Iowa farmer can no longer feed himself.
What is being fed to cattle and people alike is disturbing. It is in this film that the viewer learns that half of grown corn is used to feed cattle who cannot live longer than four months on that diet without getting very sick, needing antibiotics and suffering in confinements that raise the fat content in the meat they become. That fat content is eaten by people and had greatly increased the amount of fat content Americans consume. Furthermore, the increase in the ingestion of high fructose corn syrup has made the number of people suffering from diseases like Type II diabetes skyrocket. The farmers state that they know that they are growing “crap,” they do not eat it themselves, and because their cost to produce is more than what they make, they wind up losing money. From such a huge industry, the people who farm it are still not benefiting financially unless they generate huge amounts of corn and are part of the government subsidy system to survive. The subsidy system rewards the over production of cheap corn. This is for the purpose of creating an economic system where you do not have to spend the majority of your income on food but can have a much higher percentage of your paycheck as disposable income. At the end of the film, the two experimental farmers see another family farm close down and decide to keep their acre of land to not grow anything on. Emphasized towards the end of the film is that this current system started in the 70’s and is not half century old, and that since we created this system, we can create a better one. What to do is not explicated, but that something needs to be done is evident. Marcie stated that this film is part of how “we talk about corporate responsibility with or even larger at large organizations, we talk about you know mostly national government decisions, about certainly about environmental things, but also about poverty.”

In support of her belief that “people should be aware of that there are accurate and there are inaccurate media,” Marcie chose a PBS documentary about the origins of the Iraq War and
the media’s failure in their responsibility to investigate the government’s claims before
supporting the government’s arguments:

I think that's important for students to know, I mean we can't have a functioning
democracy unless we have an educated populace, who can discern when media is the
difference between journalism and propaganda, which is a real problem in our culture
today. So, that's to me is an essential concept.

The visual imagery above describes the P-G trajectory: 1) media literacy – a cognitive
skill- during class discussions that may confront previously unquestioned self-actualization
beliefs, 2) visuals that confront institutional power concerning food production and sale, and 3)
visuals that connect personal buying choices to national and global consequences for powerless
and voiceless people.

Children of Sodom and Gomorrah (2011) is an audio documentary concerning the
voiceless and the powerless. The documentary details life for impoverished children in Ghana,
Africa. This is the documentary that Marcie uses to educate her students, adult and traditional
age, about children who are living in a slum called Sodom and Gomorrah, in Accra, Ghana. The
slum is settled in an electronic garbage dump that their government uses to employ the children
as labor to turn electronic waste from European countries into scrap. The narration involves the
voices of children and the documented experiences of a reporter who goes to visit the site and
talks with the locals there. This documentary is the most jarring and serious of the ones analyzed
in this study, because, as with audio documentaries, your mind builds the visuals for the tragic,
daily lives of these children who are risking their health and physical safety just to make enough
money to eat that day. The electronics are smuggled into the country illegally and against the
rules of environmental disposal and protection established by the European union. A telling
exchange from the documentary is these statements made by customs personnel:
Oh... no, normally, what is supposed to happen is: these things are handed over to the disposal companies – and they are actually required to show that they really do meet the provisions of waste law and environment law and – um – undertake the proper disposal – and I... well, it would make my hair stand on end, really it would... to think PCs like that were being exported and that they were being taken apart by children somewhere... But who is going to look into that carefully? - a country in Central Europe doesn’t get to be world champion in exports by giving every container leaving the territory a detailed once-over. (Jarisch, 2011)

These children are sent from home and told to go make enough money to eventually marry and come back. They never wind up going back to their families. Other desperate children tell of their fathers dying and mothers being unable to support the family; of parents being killed and their land taken from them by the villages they belonged to. They come to Sodom and Gomorrah because they are told that there is money there, the location of the soot and ash covered slum where electronics are processed for scrap metal, iron, copper and anything else they can sell. The rest is burned on that location. There are no police there, and dangers for the children from opportunists and criminals are abundant. Yet, reporters are kept out of the area by the area’s security force. It is a conversation between the security force and the reporter who is being told why he is not allowed to record audio there that explains how the government knows of these horrific conditions:

Because the reporter would never have guessed that the entire desperate, self-destructive struggle for survival at Sodom and Gomorrah was structured along the well-organized lines of a commercial enterprise, that the procedures had been strategically devised, and that the hordes of children had been factored in as units of labor. While the reporter is still busy thinking about this, his gaze wanders along the endless rows of files against the wall. They are files of the kind that any office might have, but something about them catches his eye, until the reporter realizes what he's actually looking at: In these shelves there are dozens, perhaps nearly a hundred files, stretching across several rows: and they all bear the same label: Hamburg. (Jarisch, 2011)

The children dream of escaping to Europe, some with goals of crossing the Sahara to do so, but only one in 1,000 make it there and the border control of nations that belong to the
European Union is not invested in helping people claim asylum or become refugees. The last part of the narration describes a Black, foreign teenager not being allowed into Amsterdam as he himself is welcomed home. This is the kind of critical media literacy that a P-G instructor who attempts to raise awareness concerning the life and death consequences that are part of the global impact of consumerism. This is a form of media that strongly supports McGregor’s lens of the need to judge consumerism as detrimental to the environment and survival of mankind.

Marcie’s objectives of strengthening media literacy skills have garnered positive and negative reactions. Positively, she believed that their skills are already somewhat developed:

I think they're I think they're pretty open to media literacy I mean that's one thing it's easy. Oh yeah the media - they’re horrible. A lot of you know, like that's, that's not that hard to get people to jump on that bandwagon. So, they’re open to that especially I think when a member of the media stands up there and said let’s be critical of the media. I have that influence.

Here, she indicates that in reaction to media literacy, the foundation of media skepticism amongst traditional and adult students is a fertile ground for her to build on. Yet, she clarified that she chose these visuals within the context of media literacy to have students primarily focus on “government regulation, corporatization” and media “conglomerates,” not just topics like health insurance coverage. Furthermore, she used the term of “consciousness raising” (Freire, 1970) to describe her approach to documentary portrayal of institutional dysfunction and irresponsibility.

This is because of her positionality, not just as a member of the media, but as a liberal leaning journalist, as she explained:

And also, I do think sometimes I have some fear knowing that our student body is probably more conservative than I am politically, about coming off as a flaming liberal professor. So, the complicating thing too is that as a writer, I’m published as a flaming liberal all over the Internet. So, if anyone wanted to prove that I have a bias, they could
find it: I’m an opinion writer with my opinions all over. So, I try to be kind of cautious when presenting that side of it.

Above she acknowledged how the modern stereotypes of being a college instructor have impacted how she approaches the instruction of her courses. Nevertheless, she does not attempt to portray herself as anything different than what she is. As a result of her positionality and the critical lens towards power dynamics, she stated that “a quarter to a fifth of them” have looked at the topic already, and “probably half of them are opening to at least having their consciousness raised so that they have some awareness.” A specific example she talked about concerning reaction from her adult students follows:

When a student tells me you know “can you recommend some other good documentaries on these topics that I can watch when this class is over,” I feel like now I have a discerning critical thinker who will pursue this when the class is over, and wants to be educated about the issues that affect, you know, him or her and his or her world. To me that's a success.

Above, she articulated what S-R impacts she has experienced and wants to have in students of her courses. To spark an interest, prompt further investigation, and possibly consider acting on that knowledge is what Marcie strived for when attempting to foster discernment of power dynamics with consumer issues and the media. While the intentionality of her institutional emphasis is one she readily admits to, she articulated that it did prompt student resistance towards her philosophical embrace of critical theory. She acknowledged that there is always a portion of her adult students who are “stubbornly resistant” on questioning any previously held conceptions of “success” because they equate success with “material success.” In light of the obvious nature of their reasons for returning to complete their degree, the first being so that they can find a better job or receive a promotion/higher pay, it would be reasonable to understand how a rejection of the conversation may be due to the fact that financial betterment is their
primary reason for finishing their degrees in the first place. In discussing students who have this view, Marcie explained her understanding of their viewpoint:

> Who am I to argue with that? If your grandpa was a poor farmer in Mexico and you think the only way to show that you’ve made it is to have an expansive purse and a flashy car, I mean, who am I to be like “hey you should think about what that’s doing to the environment and what about for people in Africa.” So, I’d say there’s a portion who are kind of like, you know, not open to learning it. And again, that's adult students.

Above, she indicates her lack of judgment concerning the rejection of the critical analysis these documentaries present. This is interesting, in that, out of the other instructors in the study, she articulated best a balance between developing a critical lens towards institutional behavior and global consequences with an understanding towards the motivation behind embracing the depiction of consumption as a rejection of financial struggle. The other instructors of this study articulated the need and struggle to get traditional age students to contextualize and consider an existence not measured by consumer social identity, partially because traditional age students lack lived experience. Marcie argued to the contrary that even her adult students can reflect on their lived experiences and still have a valid need to create goals that embrace what success is to them using traditional consumer concepts.

Along with the critical lens and student resistance, Marcie described what she considers to be the greatest challenge to any instructor of consumer issues:

> Well, I mean I do think the largest challenge is the culture out there that is screening the other message. So, I mean even as a university we are part of that broader culture. But … to me the one that really strikes me is how to raise these issues without coming across as a political activist. To me that's a pretty big challenge that quite honestly I could use some help with because all I've heard is just kind of warnings to be careful not to be too screeching in classes and you know I think that's fair warning, but on the other hand you know these are issues we need to raise and how can we do that without being labeled and then dismissed, you know.
Marcie is the only instructor of this study to discuss how the larger culture of anti-intellectualism towards scientific experts and higher education complicates what she attempts to achieve in the classroom. A *Salon* news article stated that Republican voters view college with more disdain than they view the media (Tesfaye, 2017). It goes on to describe that, while 72% of Democrats have a high opinion of higher education, almost 60% of Republican voters view college as something that has detrimental effects on the country. Marcie’s S-R goals for her classroom were to hopefully instill a shrewdness and skepticism concerning the behaviors of powerful institutions in society. Yet, she describes confronting the accusation of the larger culture, that to criticize America and social institutions in the country that employ Americans is to hate and criticize America itself. Furthermore, while embracing the S-R goals of P-G instructional philosophy wholeheartedly, she was the only instructor of this study who described discomfort of using that approach because of student resistance. Marcie explained:

> When it comes to media literacy, I definitely do talk about the you know, the need for government regulation of media, and you know the problem of media conglomerate and corporatization of media, and you know at the same time focusing on the importance of individual choices to consume alternative media. I would say I probably don't do as much as I would like to because of the time but also you know the compression but also because of the concern about sounding too activist.

A complication is here in that visual imagery is vital to students’ understanding the global contextualization of teaching philosophies that are S-R involved; it is also vital to creating students who can visualize for themselves what they could possibly do about social issues. At the same time, the credibility of the media and the perceived media bias repels students, as does perceived instructional bias. Adults are more experienced, but not less sensitive about media issues. Marcie stated that adult students “don’t believe that’s what they’re in college for,” in response to criticism of institutional practices and global impact. She also stated that traditional
age students, do not want to be told how to react and do not want to bother outside of what they need to focus on at the time. In short, Marcie stated that imparting institutional and global citizenship and media literacy is hampered not only by maturity issues in traditional age students, but by resistance created by the larger society’s polarizing persuasive messages in adult students.

Marcie’s instructional approach was one that strongly embraced McGregor’s critical approach to curriculum through Freire’s (1970) transformational pedagogy. She did not shy from terms like “consciousness-raising” or “emancipation,” and combined her critical lens with a P-G approach to consumer education that encourages input from their own experiences and viewpoints. Her goals of critical thinking and media literacy provides this study with a snapshot of the complexities of attempting to strengthen media analysis skills in rhetorically sensitive students who grapple with social messages that falsely equate critical thinking with political bias. Of the three P-G instructors and of this study’s instructors, she provides the most information concerning student resistance from both age groups and the current political climate that McGregor’s (2011) critical goals attempt to find their bearings in.

**P-G instructional philosophy summary.** The phenomenon of Personal Global consumer instruction can be defined as a visually reliant, global contextualization that is meant to create students who prioritize humanitarian goals in the face of the world’s disconnected debasing of human value. This section detailed three different approaches to Personal Global teaching by instructors who used this manner of facilitation. Striking differences exist amongst all three instructors, in their student engagement (self-actualization or existentialist), their comfort with and application of critical theory, their process of developing cognitive strengths and their contextualization themes. Similarities relied strongly in the S-R results of their P-G approaches,
including the study’s prevailing theme of meeting students where they are, the growing emphasis on action and transformational learning, and the increasing reliance on visual imagery to contextualize, as well as counter, traditional consumer training.

**Predominant themes of this study.**

A discourse of academics as teachers revealed that prior life experiences, including upbringing, travel, and religious orientation had an impact on how they formed their counter cultural stances towards consumer society. They all stated that they viewed social media and the commodification of pursuing a college degree to be current concerns indicative of an invasive consumer mindset. Influenced by their backgrounds and their environments, they defined their roles in the classroom as provocateurs and instigators of critical thought; furthermore, they experienced sociological consumer education’s purpose as being “to counter socialization and media cultivation through identity and behavior reevaluation.”

Within this purpose, and according to McGregor’s (2011) theorization, the ten instructors of this study pedagogically broke into groups that focused on individualized self-analysis (Existential Self-Actualization), action learning and local outreach (Social Reconstructivism) and transformational holistic contextualization as global citizenship (Personal-Global). While varying theologically and philosophically, each instructor sought to meet students in their own goals and experiences, but to impart transformational reflection and contextualization to assist students in developing a strong self in light of and in challenge to the pressures of consumer society.
Summary of Program and Facilitations

This chapter presented the data driven findings of this study. Participant interpretations and rhetorical analysis supported the themes of the phenomena of consumer education within the interdisciplinary program, the experiences of teaching interdisciplinary consumer education, and the individual instructional approaches of each participant of this study. The following chapter will delve into the implications of these findings for theory, research, and practice, as well as any implications for future research of this ongoing and increasingly salient issue.
DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to describe the instructional methodology and visual pedagogy of university faculty teaching sociological consumer education within an interdisciplinary general education program. In addressing the purpose of this study, two multifaceted questions were pursued through phenomenological and rhetorical qualitative methods. The first set of questions were: What forms of visual imagery do instructors select and/or create when teaching consumer education in general education courses? How do participants describe the instructional philosophies that inform their approach towards the topic of consumption and their choices of visual imagery? And from what sources do they select visual imagery (printed materials, video sources, the Internet, etc.)? A second group of questions were: What issues are covered as a part of a sociological consumer education program, and how are these courses structured? How do instructors view consumer society and what facets of it do they believe college students should understand? What experiences do participants have in relation to teaching consumption in a general education format, and according to participants, how does interdisciplinarity impact their experiences and approaches? How do the experiences and viewpoints of teaching sociological consumer education support, problematize, and reject McGregor’s calls for critical education pedagogies?

This chapter discusses the phenomenological themes of the study in reference to the existing literature. This chapter will describe implications for practice and theory related to the
subject matter. Lastly, the chapter will also include suggestions for future research and a brief summary.

Phenomenological Themes

Sociological consumer education within this general education program presented itself through the following themes of this study: (a) Program and course structure is important to the successes and complications of facilitating interdisciplinary consumer education courses, and emotions of approval and frustration were articulated concerning structure evolution. (b) Instructor teaching philosophies and instructional approaches were influenced by previous life experience. (c) The prevailing educational theme presenting itself in this study was that instructors of sociological consumer education within this program saw their role as instructors of these issues as being one “to counter socialization and media cultivation through identity and behavior reevaluation.” The dual focus instructors sought to counter were the commodification of human life and consumer society’s prevailing focus on acquisition. (d) Four of McGregor’s (2011) instructional approaches describe the instructional approaches that were utilized by instructors of this study, and visual imagery is vital to the facilitation of instructors who focus on consumer issues. Furthermore, all approaches within this study include visual pedagogies that are not included in McGregor’s or Selby’s (2010) theorizations of consumer education. Each of these findings are described in the following sections.

Connections to the Literature

Concerning Boyer’s (1990) Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), this study’s program was described by Phil, the chair of general education at this university, as a multidisciplinary program in which the subject matter was multifaceted in theme (culture,
diversity, wellness, etc.) and presented as complex subject matter to be investigated by students who reevaluated their identities and goals in life throughout the process. The courses in this program composed the interdisciplinary general education courses for the entire university and utilized a variety of different themes. This is in contrast to previous interdisciplinary trends of having the courses focus on defining or comparing disciplinary boundaries in the investigation of one particular theme, such as sustainability or recycling (Eisen et al., 2009; Keebaugh et al., 2009; Kurland, 2010). The courses identified in this study thoroughly engaged in issues of culture, science, history, justice, wellness, and identity formation through philosophical, theological or social impact lenses. In comparison to these aforementioned studies, the courses included a large existential analysis concerning how we identify ourselves as consumers and what we are sold about a myriad of issues in American society.

An evident conclusion of this study could advise the design of program structure and course structure of interdisciplinary consumer education. The Broad Interdisciplinary theoretical nature of this study’s prior program created an environment where instructors felt free to assert their fields and instructional philosophies as they chose to. The alteration in course structure under this broad ID shifted the program from being one that would confront consumer society to one that less effectively did so, according to the instructors. Previously, the investigation of the issue of the “wellness” of our consumer society for analysis was given, being that it was a required aspect of one of the program’s courses and viewed by at least three of the instructors here as having a bearing on several of the other aspects of collective wellness. Therefore, to encapsulate the previous state of the program, a multidisciplinary group of instructors under a broad theoretical interdisciplinary umbrella were required to approach, in their own ways, a
consumer society framed within the ethic of wellness. As articulated by the instructors of this study, this curriculum structure was functional and promising. The point of this description is to identify a theoretical interdisciplinary continuity that translated into an environment of educational opportunity and creativity for the instructors of the program.

Yet, the evolution of the program and course structures limited the availability of the investigation of consumer society by no longer requiring a broad confrontation of the issue in any of the new courses and replacing this former requirement with an optional campus initiative. This curriculum evolution was not embraced by all of the faculty involved in the study, which is evident in the minimal participation in the campus initiative by participants of this study. Yet, in comparison to Keebaugh et al. (2009), aspects of content overlap, the instruction of research methods and visual imagery were similar aspects of this program as well. The content overlap of both programs lay within the formation of cognitive analytical and research writing skills; the instructor supplied content overlap was existential in foundation, being that interests, goals, and social outreach was supplied by the students of the course. Relatability and growth were dual priorities in both the old and new programs.

In reference to Problem Based Learning (PBL), the prior Broad ID format allowed instructors to confront this as they chose to, according to their particular disciplines. An example of difference within the new format was that a new sophomore level course instructed students to disassemble technological items in order to research where the parts originated from. Some instructors described this new assignment as tedious but did articulate the assignment as an opportunity for students to directly investigate their consumption of technology. This scientific natured consumption assignment replaced a required investigation into the impact of consumer
society on our identity in the new course formats, though the ten instructors of this study chose to include that kind of subject matter on their own. The PBL assignments they included at the underclassmen level were more experiential in nature, in that they were focused on questioning individual assumptions and confronting habitual behaviors. In comparison of these two PBL learning strategies, the mixed reaction to the technology assignment may have come from an instructor viewpoint that the assignment was compulsory instead of starting where that particular course’s students were; also, there was mixed reactions that the assignment would have been too removed from personal relevance by sophomore students whose level of maturity prioritizes their own personal assumptions and habits. While analyzing the parts of a technological gadget will broaden contexts of consumption, the assignment may not have immediate salience, especially if that gadget is viewed as necessary for them to purchase in their daily lives, no matter where the parts originated from.

According to instructors of this study, PBL in the new program’s upper-level courses was structured as almost always accompanying action learning. These instructors reported positive results and success in engaging the surrounding community to assist various charities and organizations. The goals of the new program’s upper-level courses attempting to impart understanding towards global impact on undergraduates with varying degrees of maturity were criticized by instructors of this study as being too ideological and not truly obtainable due to student barriers of empathy, student detachment and leaving some students feeling overwhelmed. The results of this study provide that these issues have a bearing on how program and course structure impact interdisciplinary consumer education.
Another salient interdisciplinary issue is that the new program’s requiring of a preselected book for all sections and predetermined mandatory assignments. These requirements left at least three of the instructors of this study feeling overwhelmed and less confident in their teaching because of them having to research out of their fields in order to teach issues in the text. Two of the five instructors mirrored the critique of Cavigla-Harris (2003) of losing time and student focus in having to worry about catching non majors up on discipline specific terminology. In reference to Keebaugh et al. (2009), whose research detailed the creation of a science course, their findings of needing to orient students to discipline specific language and learner guidance for novices seemed to mirror the experiences of instructors in this study who had to introduce themselves and then their students to discipline specific terminology that they themselves were not trained in beforehand.

This study occurred on the campus a year after the new courses were put into place. Yet, in spite of the broad consumer society course being previously compulsory and also articulated in this study’s outreach as a matter of interest, only ten instructors volunteered for participation in this study. Those instructors were all now teaching in a program in which the general course related requirement had been replaced with a strict assignment, mandated textbook(s), and an optional initiative that limited the availability of investigation of the topic by traditional students and practically eliminated the participation of nontraditional students.

**Theoretical implications for practice.**

Implied in these findings are illuminations on what can work depending on the goals of a university’s utilization of interdisciplinary sociological consumer education. Admirable in its availability is an interdisciplinary general education program and its dedication to provide a
foundation for knowledge and skill training that is required for all students of the university, as well as an investigation into quality of life issues associated with consumer society. The instructors who were part of this study did not mention any discomfort about working within a multidisciplinary group of instructors to facilitate this comprehensive program. Neither did they mention concerns about the theoretical and broad interdisciplinary nature of the program. The previous iterations of the program corresponded to these general and encompassing interdisciplinary aspects. Specifically, the broad natures of those two courses, IDS Culture, Diversity and Expression, and IDS Wellness and Social Responsibility, allowed instructors to engage the subject matter themselves as they saw fit concerning reading materials and assignment format. Also, the required aspects of those courses were more accessible to the multidisciplinary faculty, since the training and reinforcement of writing and analytical skills is germane to most educational disciplines.

The more specified requirements of the new courses, IDS Science and Society, and IDS Global Justice, garnered mixed responses from participants in the study in that instructors felt required to be able to teach aspects of issues that they only had a vague understanding of or, in the worse cases, were foreign to them. While the instructors of this study still structured the engagement of subject matter within the course individually, the required text(s) and required specific assignments were received with mixed enthusiasm. Also, this new structure within a multidisciplinary course offering seemed an odd fit that added unnecessary complexity and anxiety for the instructors. While these courses in particular seemed to add more structure to the goals of the upperclassmen courses, in that the broadening of contextualization aligned with what McGregor (2011) would define as a Personal – Global instructional orientation, it was brought
into question whether those goals were attainable in light of student capacity to grasp the gravity of global circumstances. This questioning determined the difference between this study’s classifications of S-R and P-G instructors: S-R instructors perceived immense limitations in student ability to grasp global impact and consequences, while P-G instructors embraced that challenge and saw that aspect of broad contextualization as a significant portion of how their course addressed the issue. Similar to Stuhlfaut and Farell (2009), conceptualizations of what is possible is a difference that matters in the facilitation of the subject.

To add to the body of knowledge concerning the curriculum of sociological consumer education in a university’s interdisciplinary general education program, it is a suggestion of this study for future practice that the ambition of program structure cannot supersede what is felt to be instructionally attainable by the range of the teachers of that program’s courses; also, that a multidisciplinary, broad theoretical program should be cautious that the courses within it provide an open framework flexibility to mirror that theory. Keebaugh et al. (2009) documented the necessity of meetings to familiarize his interdisciplinary group of instructors with the different disciplinary terminology involved. While PBL would be recommended as the format for a general education program with social concerns instead of discipline specific orientation as the focus of the instructors, similar flexibility matters, in that program structure should be reevaluated continuously in the light of instructor feedback to maintain the PBL nature of the courses from not hitting disciplinary roadblocks. Instructors should be able to grasp, alter, and mold into their own instructional progressions for their similarly multidisciplinary students. The results of this study suggest that the most successful kinds of frameworks for instructors to assert themselves most effectively resembles one of a conceptual interdisciplinary and/or
transdisciplinary nature (Lattuca, Voight, & Fath, 2001), where requirements are more geared
towards sociological and cultural concerns (e.g., identity, culture, wellness), rather than a
requirement of more technical, scientific, and economic terminology that may overwhelm both
students and instructors. Meckley’s (2005/2006) findings that instructors who are experts in their
own disciplines demonstrate more comfort in teaching interdisciplinary are reinforced in this
study. Specifically, instructors in this study did not have issues with discomfort in teaching an
interdisciplinary course. They had complications with being told how they should do so,
reinforcing Dezure’s (2010) findings that they would rather arrive at their own synthesis of
concepts than be compelled through requirement concepts they are unfamiliar with. This study
recommends transdisciplinary and conceptual ID under a multidisciplinary and Broad ID
umbrella towards the facilitation of sociological consumer education within an interdisciplinary
course offering.

Teaching Sociological Consumer Education = To Counter.

This overall theme was discerned through statements concerning their conceptualizations
of consumer society, as well as their chosen instructional approach to the subject matter in the
classroom. This theme of “to counter socialization and media cultivation through identity and
behavior reevaluation” means that the instructors of this study saw their role in the classroom
towards consumer society as a countercultural role of confrontation, in which they foster
existential and behavioral reflection and societal interrogation. Unlike Stuhlfaut and Farell
(2009), this pedagogical mission was clear amongst all ten instructors with three main
pedagogical approaches, as defined by McGregor (2011), discovered amongst the participants.
The following two findings from this study are influenced by this theme.
Personal experience. In relation to Crebbin’s (1997) concept of “academics-as-teachers,” participants of this study directly implicated prior countercultural experiences that influenced their skeptical problematizing and rejection of consumer culture. While several sources call for more culturally based approaches to the instruction of sociological consumer education, and many of those sources embrace the confrontation of consumer culture through the embrace of critical pedagogy, the justifications provided in those sources mirror what McGregor (2011) and Selby (2010) cited as either fact-based argumentation concerning the state of the environment, or the presentation of harmful stereotypes and identify formation among citizens. No source indicated how instructors were to develop those dispositions, or what influences are necessary to empower the instructors to embrace those instructional approaches: That all instructors in this study indicated previous life experiences as being instrumental in their formation of countercultural personal beliefs and critical pedagogical stances is enlightening. That the instructors indicated that experiences of poverty in their formative years, economic struggle in their young adulthood, travel, and religious affiliation helped them formulate their countercultural stance begs a question concerning sociological consumer education: is it wise to expect instructors who did not have these kinds of experiences in their backgrounds to be able to challenge consumer society in their teaching philosophy and instructional approaches, let alone embrace critical theory’s condemnation of consumer society? Furthermore, two participants still articulated a support for consumer society because of the appeal of the American dream or the support of the economy; since these two people did not fully abandon consumer society, yet were well versed in countering it, it becomes clear that critical theory’s condemnation of consumer society as unjust and immoral does not negate the need for consumer society in the minds of
instructors. These aspects of teaching-as-an-expression-of-the-person were strongly implied in the findings of this study and would be an interesting focus for future research.

**The discovery of media literacy and critical media literacy.** Directly implied in this theme is the finding of this study that media literacy and/or, in the case of many of the instructors, critical media literacy, was viewed by all of these instructors as being part of their role in the classroom. Media literacy may be defined as:

> The ability to access, analyze and evaluate the power of images, sounds and messages which we are now being confronted with on a daily basis and are an important part of our contemporary culture, as well as to communicate competently in media available on a personal basis. ([http://ec.europa.eu/avpolicy/media_literacy/index_en.htm#what](http://ec.europa.eu/avpolicy/media_literacy/index_en.htm#what))

Funk, Kellner, and Share (2019) describe critical media pedagogy as a transformational pedagogical approach, empowering “them to act as responsible citizens with the skills and social consciousness to challenge injustice” (p. 14). Yet, before we focus on the media pedagogy utilized by the participants of this study, it would be best to reference current research to identify the term “critical” as it applies to the educational approaches in general. While McGregor (2011) indicates thoroughly that critical consumer instruction would create individuals who reject consumer society in place of a more humanistic and ecologically responsible ways of being, the particulars of what this entails in each of her approaches are vague. Therefore, to attempt to lend clarity towards the articulation the criticality implied in the instructional approaches of the instructors of this study, the following sections utilize what Brookfield (2005) calls the “learning tasks” of critical theory. In light of the fact that Selby’s (2010) and McGregor’s (2011) instructional approaches are without mention of the use of visuals or the inclusion of media messages, this study provides insight on how instructors actualize previously conceptualized
instructional philosophies, and the intricacies of their interpretations of critical theory, including unspecified, yet vital, visual pedagogies. This study finds that critical media literacy was the universal design of critical pedagogy utilized by all of the participants involved. The following sections describe how Brookfield’s learning tasks were implicated by the three main instructional approaches found by this study, and how these tasks utilized media literacy.

Existential self-actualization: To counter means to ethically underpin the self; purpose and governance. Langrehr and Mason’s (1977) postmodern societal perspective was indicated by instructors who articulated their teaching philosophy to be one of McGregor’s (2011) existential self-actualization. ESA instructors saw their purpose in the classroom as being one of identity investigation, where students analyzed how they conceptualized their views of themselves in relation to larger society. This is one of the few areas of the study where the instructional methods mirrored what was theoretically proposed by Selby (2010) instead of McGregor (2011).

The critical nature of their instructional approaches was two-fold. The first aspect of their critical nature would be their demonstration of what Brookfield (2005) terms as challenging ideology for the purposes of “overcoming alienation” (p. 148). Citing philosopher Erich Fromm, Brookfield defines his learning task of overcoming alienation as one of attempting to ground individual identity and separate it from commodities and the commodification of language that has served to alienate people from themselves and their roles as citizens. For example, Kato, who articulated an embrace of critical theory’s influence on his role as an educator, would investigate how television shows like the “Bachelor/Bachelorette” illustrate how people “sell” themselves as companions and potential soulmates worthy of being “invested” in. He also mentioned how
students are taught to market themselves for future employment, as well as mentioning how our political candidates are sold to us using a relationship framework that undercuts both our duty of citizenship and a true investigation of the candidates’ merit to hold political office. His confrontational approach is the example of McGregor’s (2011) ESA theorization in practice, and a good example of CML in practice.

Another aspect of overcoming alienation that the ESA instructors embraced included an intentional rejection of defining success and happiness by the acquisition of objects, prioritizing personal experiences, time utilization, and relationships instead; all of these concepts are alternative approaches to redefining what a good life is apart from utilizing acquisition (Selby, 2010). This instruction was to counter three realities of consumer culture: that students are, for the most part, need driven, outer directed consumers, meaning that they are struggling with basic needs while, at the same time, wanting to belong and emulate others (Berger, 2015). This is due to the pastiche of consumer culture and illusion in the postmodern era (Baudrillard, 1988; Berger, 2015; Bocock, 1993) that functions through the following concepts of brand communities and subcultures of consumption. Also, that students belong to several brand communities, which means that they belong to several “specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand” (Muñiz & O’Guinn, 2001, p. 412), which has been made easier with the various, popular social media sites. Lastly, brand communities are examples of only one kind of a subculture of consumption, which is “an identifiable, hierarchical social structure [based on status]; a unique ethos; ... and unique jargon, rituals, and modes of symbolic expression [to facilitate shared meanings in consumer goods and activities]” (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995, p. 43). Phil provided evidence
of this as he mentioned how students would attempt to help him comparison shop for a cell phone. ESA instructors talked the most about teaching to combat and counter this multifaceted and layered behavior that so strongly ties consumption to identity.

Phil and Jeff thoroughly investigated moral foundations of happiness and the good life, instead equating these concepts with the ethical treatment and prioritization of human relationships. Specifically, instead of the traditional critical theory approach of decrying the capitalist system as evil, training in quality-of-life evaluation took the form of focusing on maintaining connections, planning togetherness, restoring community, creativity, and self-determination. The most important aspect of ESA instructors is that they reinforce a rarely held conversation to investigate what a satisfying life is apart from obtaining markers of middle and upper class living. They encompass Selby’s (2010) conversation concerning voluntary simplicity in that they emphasize a balance and frugality that is ethically structured in defining a self that is individuated, connected, and ethically, morally, and spiritually developed.

The second aspect of their critical nature was in their choices of visual imagery to achieve the purpose of Brookfield’s overcoming of alienation by questioning society’s presentations of various cultural and economic aspects of identity. According to Stuart Hall (1981), “Ideology functions through “common sense” assumptions about what is considered “normal” as compared to all else that becomes the “other” (p. 90). He continues to state that “Ideologies tend to disappear from view into the taken for granted, naturalized world” (p. 90). In spite of this group presenting the most varied utilization of visual imagery, their most critical behavior, even though the majority of them did not strongly or enthusiastically embrace critical theory, was their direct confrontation of normativity. That consumption was an unquestionable
way of life was directly challenged through the various forms of visual imagery utilized by this group. Identity formation, deconstructing normalcy, and alternative philosophical viewpoints were utilized heavily in the group’s choice of visuals. From Waking Life (2001) to Babette’s Feast (1987) to music videos, Gene Kelly, and “The Bachelorette”, gender performance, time utilization and the meaning of life were proposed to students in interesting, countercultural ways.

The ESA instructors of this study contributed to theory and practice by their combining of McGregor’s (2011) existential and self-actualization pedagogical approaches, and by demonstrating how critical media literacy functions in connection with that pedagogical approach. Evident in their approach to creating the curriculum, future ESA instructors of sociological consumer education may benefit from these instructors’ approach, that questioning normativity instead of directly condemning consumer society as unethical and immoral may be the best avenue to have people start with themselves and reconsider the prioritized role that acquisition plays in an American citizen’s life.

Social Reconstructivism: To counter means to contextualize personally; acting on identity and habitual reassessment. Langrehr and Mason’s (1977) life goals perspective was primarily evident in the facilitation of instructors who articulated their teaching philosophy to be one of McGregor’s (2011) social reconstructivism. S-R instructors saw their purpose in the classroom as leading students in evaluating whether their previously unquestioned habits both aligned with their values, and actually served to help or hinder them in achieving their goals. The critical aspect of the S-R instructors is what Brookfield (2005) calls challenging ideology and learning democracy. Gramsci (1971) argues that everyone’s first consciousness is not critically questioned and creates people who are passive in their relation to the rest of the world.
Without referencing or utilizing ESA’s theoretical or philosophical foundations, S-R instructors set about questioning the “customary” and “habitual” ways of thinking and acting that individuals tend to not question themselves about (Brookfield, 1991, p. 1).

It was a finding of this study that the prioritization of action learning and PBL as part of this pedagogical approach was demonstrated as invaluable in having students attempt to reevaluate, practice, and possibly envision a more certain version of themselves that is in alignment with who they currently are. Students are given small assignments in which they learn that they can question, alter, and improve themselves through active exposure to religions different from theirs, groups of people they would not normally associate with, and the structured opportunity to reevaluate their own daily behaviors. Furthermore, as they receive a solid foundation concerning how the world functions, they reconsider previously accepted easy solutions to what they find to be very complicated issues (incarceration, recycling, etc.). As they learn to act upon themselves and inform themselves about the reality of the world they live in, they learn “to resist ideological manipulation.” (Brookfield, 2005, p. 40). The most evolved approach to this was Patricia, who had them research local issues that affected them or fellow citizens in the communities around them.

In establishing one’s identity through consumer products, S-R instructors attempted to lay a foundation of questioning individual choices; Patricia especially focused on what students buy, what they wear, and where their consumer products come from. These critical concepts are engaged through the asking of “What do you think about …?” Investigation, argumentation, and local outreach are the primary classroom conversations, debates, and research assignments utilized by the S-R instructors in this study. For instance, Joseph’s instructional focus strongly
challenged the centering of the “North American, Caucasian lifeworld” to introduce and center African American, female, LGBTQ narratives instead (Brookfield, 2005). Of the three instructors, he was the one that radicalized and gendered criticality the most often. In contrast, Lucy’s utilization of debate and research, especially in asking them to argue sides of an issue they do not agree with, allowed students to confront and generate their past conceptions about the world and attempt to build more accurate ones. She also wanted students to evaluate whether their aforementioned unanalyzed personal habits are still working for them: their sleep patterns, their hygiene, the quality of their food choices and their consumption of water. Therefore, the S-R instruction determined in this study was part of a maturation process in which students were led to reestablish themselves, grow as individuals, and start determining the social issues they cared about.

The critical visual literacy approaches of this group combined what was theoretically proposed in the environmental prioritization of both Selby (2010) and of McGregor (2011). This literacy was grounded in an analysis of the materials economy, laying the foundation of being informed about how social institutions really work. Also, this literacy problematized social institutions in highlighting the demands that they fill and the harm they can cause. While erasing a void of ignorance concerning how these institutions function, this critical literacy included what Brookfield (2001) defines as ideology critique, the benefits of which are explained as the following:

Doing ideology critique involves adults in becoming aware of how ideology lives within them as well as understanding how it buttresses the structures of the outside world that works against them. What strikes us as the normal order of things is suddenly revealed through ideology critique as a constructed reality that protects the interests of the powerful. (Brookfield, 2001, p. 16).
The “normal order of things” was investigated using documentary film which established a fact base for students to personally relate to, situate themselves in, investigate unquestioned realities, and create local relationships of meaning. Specifically, S-R instructors used a mix of observational and participatory documentary, meaning that the narratives of the films switched between observational footage that demonstrated working conditions, animal cruelty, poverty and economic struggle, and participatory interaction with the filmmaker as their narration and physical presence interviews, accompanies or otherwise engages with other participants (Nichols, 2001). One of the most noticeable aspects of the documentaries used by these instructors is that institutional analysis and the relationships between corporations, the government, and those who are employed by industry are revealed to have a significant impact on average consumers that are trained by consumer culture to participate in but not analyze or attempt to alter the materials economy. Furthermore, conversation and direction concerning how regular citizens can attempt to have an impact on the materials economy was one of the ways these instructors reinforced the importance of citizenship and community. Their approach to this kind of critical visual literacy is a strong example of Brookfield’s (2005) challenging ideology and learning democracy.

The S-R instructors of this study contributed to theory and practice by demonstrating their use of action and PBL in their facilitation of McGregor’s (2011) social reconstructivist pedagogical approach, and by demonstrating how critical media literacy functions in connection with that pedagogical approach. Future S-R instructors of sociological consumer education may benefit from this approach by situating research-based investigation where the students were in their lives and tying it to issues they wanted to know more about, and an investigation of their
own habits and beliefs. In this, S-R instructors underpinning of what McGregor (2011) defined as progressivism kept the curriculum situated in the interests, habits, beliefs, concerns, and goals of the students of that particular course at that time.

**Personal - Global: To counter means to humanize the global context and impart social responsibility.** Langrehr and Mason’s (1977) societal perspective was combined with their life goals perspective in the facilitation of instructors who articulated their teaching philosophy to be one of McGregor’s (2011) personal-global orientation. This is primarily because instructors strongly adhered to starting where the students were and combined their PBL approaches with action learning. P-G instructors saw their purpose in the classroom as reinforcing that students achieve their future goals in a socially aware and responsible manner. The critical aspect of the S-R instructors is what Brookfield (2005) calls contesting hegemony and unmasking power. Furthermore, these three very different instructors still demonstrated a commitment to Brookfield’s (2005) learning liberation. Therefore, one thing that obviously contributes to theory and practice is that the goals of this orientation are such that very different instructional approaches can be brought to bear on engaging issues of “social change, global citizenship and stewardship” (McGregor, 2011, p. 6) as part of the instruction of sociological consumer education. This provides many different avenues that instructors of this orientation could take.

For instance, Lena’s approach to the unmasking of power concerning issues that could be misconstrued as overly political was to start where the students were by referencing the ethical and moral issues their life goals may include in the future, and how their handling of these issues would impact others. Another aspect of facilitation that all three instructors shared in their own
ways was to lay a foundation of simplicity that was clear enough to be construed as evident instead of ideological. According to all three instructors, clean water, clean air and food that is available and is not poisoned are things that everyone can agree on as positive; furthermore, the majority of students, especially upperclassmen, responded that these three issues were human rights issues. In analyzing different current and historic international conflicts and struggles, instructors made apparent that Western values and lifestyles were very different from the daily lives of the majority of the world, and that the prevailing political structures and wars played a huge impact on what was possible for people in those situations. In both of these examples, environmental issues and survival are tied to the power structures involved. For example, Oliver’s altruism and volunteering was tied directly to existential considerations of how students constructed their identity, redefining in his practice McGregor’s (2011) proposition that self-actualization be the foundation for this orientation. His tying of existentialist theological and philosophical thought instead of self-actualization ties his action learning to a sense of identity, which is an example of both of Brookfield’s (2005) learning liberation and contesting hegemony in that automation conformity is eschewed in favor of an active foundation of ethos that drives local and global citizenship.

Participatory, observational, and performative documentary were utilized by instructors of this orientation, with local and global environments presented as creating striking, complicated and tragic realities for individuals who are powerless in those societies (Nichols, 2001). Marcie viewed her attempts to educate her students about this as consciousness raising. Extreme government corruption and neglect (Children of Sodom and Gomorrah), the failure of American patriotism (struggling veterans) and how much change one person can create (Gandhi)
highlighted a concept that was only hinted at in the previous S-R facilitation: what Giroux (2006) calls the “politics of disposability,” which is where irresponsible power structures become disconnected from populations that are now considered disposable, “an unnecessary burden on state coffers, and consigned to fend for themselves.” (p. 174). Instructors of this orientation utilized media literacy to shed light on how this occurs around the world, and how what occurs around the world also occurs in the United States.

The P-G instructors of this study contributed to theory and practice by tying volunteerism and social change to goal-oriented responsibility and existential thought in their facilitation of McGregor’s (2011) personal-global pedagogical approach, and by demonstrating how critical media literacy functions in connection with that pedagogical approach. Evident in their approach to creating the curriculum, future P-G instructors of sociological consumer education may benefit from these instructors’ approaches by possibly getting around issues of resistance or anti-intellectualism by focusing instead on different groups of people in their own communities and around the world who are negatively impacted by irresponsibility and corruption. By doing this, instructors focused on a humanity and common wellbeing that is stronger than ideological statements about fairness during intellectual debates that can be dismissed as political bias or indoctrination.

**Practical Implications for Practice**

In light of the success instructors of this study had with PBL and action learning, transdisciplinary and conceptual interdisciplinary courses about sociological consumer education should have requirements concerning action learning and community involvement, instead of requirements concerning textbooks and topic choice. Furthermore, these requirements should
concern the existence of action learning and community involvement, not the exact structure of these learning formats in each course. What was successful in this study is that required involvement in various organizations or even rudimentary tasks such as grocery shopping with a budget provided assignment formats that were less ideological and more applied and creative. Action research assignments, such as assessing the needs of the homeless or investigating campus problems, directly confront possible student detachment and empathy barriers by providing real world experiences to derive meaning from. Assignments such as technological restriction and students intentionally exposing themselves to people of different cultural groups provided students with the task of reevaluating their own habits and viewpoints in tangible ways that require reflection and engagement. Whether instructors combine classes or course sections for field trips or various assignments, or choose to tackle these assignments individually, a grounding in experience may shift the focus from ideological and political arguments that reinforce unexamined beliefs instead of having students critically question them.

This study finds that critical media literacy is invaluable to the facilitation of sociological consumer education. This study finds that the “how” aspect of attempting to live differently in relation to consumer society is answered in the visual depictions of various possibilities utilized by instructors of sociological consumer education. ESA instructors of sociological consumer education could focus on visuals that deemphasize middle class American striving and acquisition in favor of a broadening approach that abandons normativity through various multicultural presentations of gender, culture, religion, and social class. Furthermore, assignments investigating the meaning of life and how it is differently constructed among
different groups of people could create an environment where students situate themselves one amongst many instead of the “right” conceptualization of middle classed America.

S-R instructors, whether sole S-R instructors of Personal-Global instructors, supplement their PBL and action learning with visuals that contextualize past American culture to inform on how social institutions of industry and government function, dysfunction, and otherwise impact larger society. The problematizing of power structures is a key facet of how critical theory is embodied in McGregor’s practice of media theory within these instructional approaches. Furthermore, the invaluable nature of documentary film in contextualizing how social structures impact quality of life and the ecological environment in America and around the world provides a practical foundation for classroom discussion and research opportunities to build on and update documentary findings. Grounding assignments on student habits and lifegoals will create an environment of constant reevaluation that worked in this study to increase student engagement in their own development and the needs of the communities to which they belong.

The utilization of PBL and action learning, along with the invaluable nature of critical media literacy serve to redefine and situate in practice what McGregor’s framework looks like in the classroom, especially her criticality. Her Type I approaches are non-existent in that the instructors of this study all defined themselves as countercultural. With the exclusion of the 4 ESA instructors, six of the ten instructors of this study have S-R as their background and strongly utilized the PBL and action learning approaches, with the difference heavily blurring the lines between her Type III and Type IV approaches because the contextualization is rooted in starting where the students are. This creates a continual circular relationship between the habits, interests, and goals of the students and the families, communities, and larger societies in which
they want to make an impact. The criticality is muted in the instructor’s condemnation of consumer society and amplified in the visualization of a broader society than students are used to analyzing. The presentation of an alternative means of constructing their self-image and continual self-reflection replaces negative judgments of consumer society and goals of an instructor’s role as emancipator for most of the instructors. The one thing that is intact is that there are instructor approaches toward conversations about marginalization and oppression, but at the foundation of those conversations are generally agreed issues of human rights and survival. Furthermore, engagement with the global context is prevalent only in three of the ten instructors because of concerns about student maturity and apathy. Basically, her theoretical framework in practice is that of establishing a relationship of reevaluation and action in reference to student identity and student activism in their own community.

**Potential Future Research**

My study occurred at a relatively small private university in which the IDS curriculum was required for all students as part of their general education requirement; furthermore, the majority of instructors within the division of Arts and Sciences were required to teach as part of that curriculum. Also, the environment of the study as the courses evolved framed the topic within the culture of the instructional body as somewhat controversial amongst the faculty and the limited the number of participants. Lastly, only one participant in this study was a person of color, and no person of color who was an American citizen participated in this study. It is a recommendation that this study be repeated at larger, even public institutions that may have a more diverse teaching staff and a sociological consumptive component to their general education curriculum. Instructional pedagogy is an extremely important facet of Boyer’s (SoTL), and
adding to the body of knowledge about how instructors view, approach, and visualize their instruction may help other instructors who are grappling with the same issues of student resistance, interdisciplinary classroom approach, and the possibly complicated requirements their program may have in offering the courses.

While these aforementioned pedagogical approaches proposed by McGregor (2011) were greatly illuminated in how they would be approached, not all of her instructional approaches were utilized. Furthermore, her approaches were combined and altered in interesting ways that contribute to understanding how instructors would attempt those approaches in reality. There is room for the discovery of other instructional combinations and/or alternative approaches. Hinted at with two instructors of this study is a seeming lack of comfort in denouncing the American Dream as a reason for attending college while also viewing consumer society as problematic. The prevalence of this ideological conflict could be researched to more clearly articulate how many instructors wrestle with this issue and if they can reconcile the two viewpoints and how they may attempt to do so.

An opportunity for further research from this could also be the use of campus initiatives concerning sociological consumer education and how those initiatives could be more available and useful for non-traditional and adult students. Whether or not these initiatives have been largely abandoned for students who are not available during those hours is not something prevalent in the research. How interdisciplinary courses and initiatives can better serve more experienced learners is an area for research that remains underdeveloped.

Also, while this study was completed roughly a year before Trump became President and the increase in ideological sensitivity and academic criticisms of indoctrination, PBL, and action
learning worked in this study to create learning that each student could learn from while countering student resistance. Future research is needed in ascertaining the more recent combinations of McGregor’s approaches and whether or not PBL and action learning were part of those combinations. Also, more research is needed about instructor’s current issues concerning student resistance and their experiences of instructing sociological consumer education in a more political climate, especially with adult and non-traditional students.

Lastly, the instructor’s embodiment of critical theory is twofold in that it is questioned conceptually by instructors who still utilized aspects of it in practice, especially through the use of critical media literacy. Data supports Selby’s (2010) assertion that “anti-consumerism education has, then, the twin goal of protecting the ecosphere and the ethnosphere, while liberating the individual from the thrall of consumerism for a journey of self-discovery and self-growth (p. 44). Future study is needed to provide new applications and combinations of her instructional approaches towards the topic, including presenting more applications of media literacy using social media and more traditional facets of visualization, especially since the issue of climate change has grown significantly more dire during the 21st century.

Conclusion

An underlying curiosity of mine that prompted the formation of this study was to discover whether other instructors of interdisciplinary general education saw the issue of consumer society as an unavoidable topic. The data from this study answers this question with a resounding yes, and then references the instructor’s tacit knowledge to explicate how they structured and attempted facilitation towards this important topic. Their experiences in actualizing sociological consumer education for a diverse student body presented in reality what
is possible in self-assessment, community involvement, and creating understanding towards how power dynamics impact everyone. Furthermore, their experiences also presented the complicated and tenuous realizations of critical theory in response to facilitation that may not be beneficial to students because of their lack of exposure and maturity. Work needs to be done in light of the nation’s shift to anti-intellectualism (Tesfaye, 2017) and the teaching of adult students, whose resistance was driven by political partisanship. How to attempt to drive self-evaluation in older individuals is a problem unanswered by this study.

Data shed light on the aspects of the structure of interdisciplinary programs that are beneficial, as well as frustrating for college instructors. Furthermore, in the institutional attempts to offer instruction on the issue, data indicated that a requirement be present to include an instructor framed investigation during classes that students must attend to make sure the issue is not intentionally or inadvertently missed due to schedule conflicts, such as work and family obligations. Lastly, data supporting critical media literacy is encouraging, because research has been needed that focused more on sociological offerings and interdisciplinary frameworks in an increasingly visual society. While obvious visualization exists in abundance in society, contextualization and reassessment tend to be the most salient aspects of sociological consumer education for the students of these instructors. Institutions that openly require investigation into the topic and trust their instructors to approach it their way may have successful results in creating students who can rise to our nation’s and our world’s future challenges.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT EMAIL
Appendix A:  
Participant Recruitment Email

Dear (name),

Hello. My name is Giselle L. Betts and I am adjunct faculty here at the University in the Communication department. I am also a doctoral candidate in Northern Illinois University’s Adult and Higher Education Dept. I am conducting a research project about the experiences of faculty who teach as part of the IDS curriculum. Specifically, I am interested in examining your experiences with and perspectives on consumer society. I am also interested in what you think students should learn about consumer behavior in general and how you plan your course to accomplish those goals. My study will attempt to understand the teaching philosophies, instructional approaches, instructional technology and visual media utilized by college instructors who include consumer culture, consumer education, consumption or even consumerism as part of your general education course. The following definitions of these concepts have been included below for your convenience:

- **Consumer education**, which is the preparation of an individual through skills, concepts and understanding that are required for everyday living to achieve maximum satisfaction and utilization of his resources. There are four types of consumer education: “consumer information, protection and advocacy; individual critique for self-interest; critical approach for self-interest; and empowerment approach for mutual interest.”
- **Consumer behavior**, which is “The study of individuals, groups, or organizations and the processes they use to select, secure, use, and dispose of products, services, experiences, or ideas to satisfy needs and the impacts that these processes have on the consumer and society.”
- **Consumption**, which is the utilization of economic goods in the satisfaction of wants or in the process of production resulting chiefly in their destruction, deterioration, or transformation.
- **Consumer culture**, which is a system in which consumption, a set of behaviors found in all times and places, is dominated by the consumption of commercial products.
- **Consumerism**, which is either the protection or promotion of the interests of consumers, or a derogatory term for the preoccupation of society with the acquisition of consumer goods.

I am writing to faculty who has taught the IDS courses before, whether or not you are teaching the courses this semester. I would be interested in interviewing instructors of the former IDS 2000, as well as instructors of the current IDS courses: IDS 1610, IDS 2020, IDS 2030, IDS 2040, and IDS 3040. You would qualify for participation in this study if you include in your particular course section issues involving consuming food, technology, resources, and/or consumer behavior and the environment, recycling, waste, sustainability, social status, the poor, the American dream, any protest involving these issues, any political stances or social policy arguments and legislation around these issues, any ethical or moral responsibilities of consumer behavior, or any human or global consequences of our choices as consumers. I am writing this
email to ask for your help in this research project. If you agree to participate, we will arrange a convenient location (your office or elsewhere) for an interview that will take approximately 45 - 60 minutes of your time. For those participants who are willing and teaching the course at the time, one classroom observation would be sought of your instructional approach to the topic. No classroom observations are required for participation in the study. Please indicate whether you are interested in participating in this research by contacting me by email or phone at the contact information listed below. I look forward to hearing from you and to the opportunity to learn from you.

Sincerely,

Giselle L. Betts
Doctoral Candidate,
Northern Illinois University

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM
Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

Dear Participant:

You are invited to participate in a research study by Giselle L. Betts, a doctoral candidate at Northern Illinois University in the Adult and Higher Education Department. This study will attempt to understand the teaching philosophies, instructional approaches, instructional technology and visual media utilized by college instructors who discuss consumption/consumerism as part of a general education course (IDS curriculum). The following information is provided in order to detail your involvement in the study.

Dissertation Topic: A Semiotic Phenomenology of Consumptive Pedagogy by College Instructors within a General Education Program

Purpose of the project: This study will attempt to add to the body of knowledge concerning how faculty members with varied educational backgrounds approach and facilitate consumer education within a general education program.

Procedures: You would meet face-to-face with Ms. Betts for a 45-60 minute interview and agree to have the interview digitally audio recorded for later transcription. You also may be contacted for a follow-up interview. You may be asked to consent to one classroom observation if you are teaching the course at the time of this study, and only if you consent to one classroom observation and are teaching the course at the time of this study will you be asked for a classroom observation. Ms. Betts will be taking field notes during the classroom observation, and my observations will concern only your instructional approach to the topic, what visuals you use to teach the topic, and how you refer to larger society in your teaching of the topic. The location and time of the interviews and possible observations will be determined according to your convenience. You will also be asked to provide access to syllabi, relevant assignment sheets and the visual imagery (films, ads, websites, etc.) that you utilize in their classroom facilitation of consumer society for semiotic analysis.

Risks: There is minimal risk associated with this research. Ms. Betts is an adjunct instructor who has no influence over hiring or promotions.

After the interviews are completed, Ms. Betts will transcribe all interviews. All data collected including audio recordings, transcriptions, field-notes, data analyses and consent forms will be kept under lock and key at Ms. Betts residence for 3 years and will be destroyed thereafter. Furthermore, your identities will remain confidential and known only to Ms. Betts. In the completed dissertation and any subsequent publications or presentations, you will be referred to by a first-name pseudonym.

Your participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time without penalty or prejudice; furthermore, interviews will be discontinued if any discomfort arises. Questions may be directed
to Ms. Giselle L. Betts at (630) 204-4385 or gbetts@aurora.edu / glbetts@comcast.net. Further information regarding the rights of research subjects may be obtained at the Office of Research Compliance at Northern Illinois University at (815) 753-8588.

Please understand that Northern Illinois University does not provide compensation for your participation. Furthermore, understand that your participation does not constitute a waiver of legal rights or redress you have as a result of your participation.

This form provides Ms. Betts with permission to use the data obtained in the manners described above in her research.

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent, have had all of my questions answered, and hereby consent to participate in this study.

Signature ___________________________  Initials ___________________

Date _____________________________

By signing below, I consent to be digitally audio-recorded during the interviews.

Signature ___________________________

Date _____________________________

Ms. Betts’ advisor’s name is Dr. Laura Ruth Johnson of the Educational, Technology, Research and Assessment Department at Northern Illinois University, and her contact number is (815) 743-5494.
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW FIELD NOTE PROTOCOL
Appendix C:
Interview Observation Protocol

Instructor & Dept.: _
Date: _

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<th>Observation</th>
<th>Reflection</th>
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APPENDIX D:

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION PROTOCOL
Instructor & Dept.: _  Date: _
Time: _  Visual(s): _

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APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW QUESTION PROTOCOL
Appendix E:

Interview Question Protocol

1. What is your educational background and how did you get into your field?
2. What is your professional background?
3. Describe your teaching philosophy
4. Describe what it means to you to be in a consumer society.
5. Are there any experiences in your life that shape your views of consumer culture?
6. Describe your perspective towards creating general education curriculum.
7. Describe your overall approach to your structuring of IDS 2000 content.
8. How do you view consumption related issues as part of that approach?
9. Describe important concepts within a consumer society that people should focus on or know.
10. As part of general curriculum, what issues involving consumerism do you think should be basic and required knowledge for all students?
11. Describe any memorable experiences in covering the issue of consumption as part of your IDS course.
12. What books/materials do you use when approaching the subject in the classroom?
13. What visual imagery (films, video, advertisements, internet sites) do you use when approaching the subject in the classroom? Why did you choose that visual? How do you use that visual in your class?
14. Have you ever chosen a visual for a consumption related topic that you hadn’t planned on using, but chose in reaction to that semester’s student reaction to the topic?
15. What issues do you cover that focus on individual behavior and choices?

16. What issues do you cover that focus on government or institutional involvement?

17. What issues do you cover that focus on basic consumption? (needs and survival)

18. What course content do you select that would build up to or follow your coverage of consumption, and how do you choose it?

19. From your experience, how would you describe student competency concerning consumer skills or consumer society?

20. Describe your students’ reactions to the content of your course.

21. What consumption related concepts do you think are difficult for students to understand?

22. How would you judge your students’ desire or ability to tie social class to consumption?

23. How would you judge your students’ ability to contextualize consumption within the larger society?

24. How would you judge your students’ ability to analyze and critically approach visual messages?

25. Please provide an example of when your students exhibited a larger social awareness concerning consumption or issues related to your IDS class?

26. What do you believe to be the greatest challenge to any instructor who would instruct consumption related issues as part of general education?
APPENDIX F

RESEARCH TO INTERVIEW QUESTION MATRIX
## Appendix F:

### Research to Interview Question Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. What forms of visual imagery do instructors select and/or create when teaching consumer education in general education courses? How do participants describe the instructional philosophies that inform their approach towards the topic of consumption and their choices of visual imagery? And from what sources do they select visual imagery (printed materials, video sources, the Internet, etc.)?</td>
<td>Interview Questions #12, #13, #14 &amp; #18</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. What issues are covered as a part of a sociological consumer education program, and how are these courses structured? How do instructors view consumer society and what facets of it do they believe college students should understand? What experiences do participants have in relation to teaching consumption in a general education format, and according to participants, how does interdisciplinarity impact their experiences and approaches? How do the experiences and viewpoints of teaching sociological consumer education support, problematize and reject McGregor’s calls for critical education pedagogies?</td>
<td>Interview Questions #1-11; #15-26</td>
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APPENDIX G

SOCIOLOGICAL RHETORICAL ANALYSIS FORM
Sociological Rhetorical Analysis Form

Media: _ No Impact Man _  
Participant(s): _ Marcie & Oliver _  

Course: _ IDS 1610 (one ADC) _  

Quote(s) from participant(s) about choice and usage:

- Oliver: “The other one is No Impact Man. Yes, there's a great documentary. I think the guys try to live for year you know minimal use for resources for years. No Impact Man. It's interesting documentary and the book is pretty campy.”

- Marcie: “So that documentary: the guy with his wife who they didn't consume anything for a whole year or something. And what a couple people who are more interested in kind of, you know, chemicals on her food and that kind of stuff. But when we got to the consumerism thing there were a couple students who I think were moved by some of the documentaries that we listened to or watched. And you know when a student says “wow I didn't know this was happening,” at least I feel like I have raises their own awareness, because my goal isn't to change their values necessarily but just to say, I don't want you living in the dark, I want you to at least know what's going on out there and then you can take your value system and apply that in a way that seems right for you.”

Possible aspect(s) present in the media:

Linkages: biological, cultural, religious, work-related, intimate, various responsibilities.
- Identification: who do people identify with; how do they determine their own identity.

Reciprocity: involves power dynamics.
- Towards subordinates: from ruler to people or parent to child.
- Subordinated can make demands of rulers who do have responsibilities.
- When differences are constructed as important, it is hard to remove the focus from differences to similarities. How we define “them” and “us”.

Roles and Rules:
- Socially defined positions and patterns of behavior which are characterized by specific sets of rules, norms and expectations, which serve to orientate and regulate the interactions, conduct and practices of individuals in social situations.
- All formed through discourses: behavior through expectation and behavior through the shaping of future aspirations.
- Race, class and Gender: historically framed inferiority creates preexisting expectations that have to constantly be confronted.
Write up:

- Discourse extremely helpful in identifying numerous issues involving power dynamics, demands made in the relationship, shifts in identity and differing perspectives on expectations, honesty and discomfort.

- Huge issues with reciprocity and understanding from both parties. Refer to timecodes.
APPENDIX H

IDEOLOGICAL RHETORICAL ANALYSIS FORM
Ideological Rhetorical Analysis Form

Media: No Impact Man

Participant(s): Marcie & Oliver

Course: IDS 1610 (one ADC)

Quote(s) from participant(s) about choice and usage:

- Oliver: “The other one is No Impact Man. Yes, there's a great documentary. I think the guys try to live for year you know minimal use for resources for years. No Impact Man. It's interesting documentary and the book is pretty campy.”
- Marcie: “So that documentary: the guy with his wife who they didn't consume anything for a whole year or something. And what a couple people who are more interested in kind of, you know, chemicals on her food and that kind of stuff. But when we got to the consumerism thing there were a couple students who I think were moved by some of the documentaries that we listened to or watched. And you know when a student says “wow I didn't know this was happening,” at least I feel like I have raises their own awareness, because my goal isn't to change their values necessarily but just to say, I don't want you living in the dark, I want you to at least know what's going on out there and then you can take your value system and apply that in a way that seems right for you.”

Possible aspect(s) present in the media:

Concerned with power dynamics and domination:
Ideology: the ways in which meaning serves to sustain relations of domination.
- Power: No Impact Man demonstrates all 3 kinds.
  - Political: influence through rule or statute
  - Social: influence through social hierarchies
  - Relational: influence through negotiated contact and personal relationships.

Hegemony: Study of subjugation:
- Liberation: to free from false mindsets instilled by the dominant culture.
- Empowerment: to get people to take power in their own lives.
- Has many different ways to focus on a social phenomenon of domination and worldviews that help or hinder freedom:
  - Biography: lives of the filmmaker and his family throughout the year.
  - Institutional Power: meeting with politicians and activists, TV interviews.
  - Commodification: wife varying usage of designer clothes and logos for identity.
  - Structuration: how to be the supportive spouse under the media lens.
  - Race-class-gender studies: the filmmaker relationship evolution and end.

Write up:
- Strong use of semiotics to make visual arguments concerning ideology.
  - Piles of garbage larger than people; trash being processed in different and poorer neighborhoods.
Write up:
- Strong use of semiotics to make visual arguments concerning ideology.
  - Piles of garbage larger than people; trash being processed in different and poorer neighborhoods.
  - Varying levels of signification: Reference timecodes.