AS SEEN ON TV:
BRAND PLACEMENT AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE IDENTITY OF EMERGING ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

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Advertisers’ use of hybrid messages and branded entertainment continues to increase in response to technologies such as the digital video recorder (DVR) and the TiVo which allow audiences to zip past commercial messages. The purpose of this study is to examine how exposure to one type of hybrid message—brand placement—may impact consumers’ identity formation. Three research questions and two hypotheses were proposed in order to gain a better understanding about the role that brand placement in television programming may play in identity formation among 18-25 year-olds, a population known as Emerging Adults. This particular population was selected because during these formative years, emerging adults are shedding their adolescent identities and beginning to develop new ones as they become contributing members of adult society.

The undergraduate student population at a small, Eastern college received a survey containing Russell, Norman, and Heckler’s (2004) Connectedness Scale in order to find individuals who were most likely to be affected by incidents of brand placement in television programs. Those who scored highest on the Connectedness Scale and who indicated they would be willing to participate in follow-up interviews provided the majority of the data analyzed for this project. In order to obtain a contrasting view, those who were least likely to be affected by incidents of brand placement (participants who scored lowest on the Connectedness Scale) were also recruited for follow-up interviews.

The analysis of survey results and interview transcripts indicates that those who are highly connected to a particular television show can have their identity influenced by instances of brand placement. Purchasing objects associated with their favorite shows, incorporating
fashion and personal style brands into their wardrobes, and using products that are placed within the shows, enable emerging adults enact and shape their emerging identities.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The contestants on NBC’s reality weight loss competition *The Biggest Loser* have enjoyed Subway subs and Quaker oatmeal. Loyal “Twi-hards” will tell you that Edward only drives Volvos. Good luck completing a mission in *Call of Duty: Black Ops* without the special edition Jeep Wrangler.

Just exactly how is it that that brand name products end up in the hands of Americans’ favorite characters and permeate our media content? As Shrum (2003) noted, there has been a move toward blurring the lines between promotional content (e.g. brand placement) and entertainment content, but academic research on this trend is still in its early stages. The purpose of this study is to examine the growing trend of brand placement and seek to better understand its potential influence on the American consumer.

**Purpose and Justification**

A review of the literature regarding brand placement reveals that the bulk of academic research focuses on concerns that are of importance to companies that utilize brand placement. As Karrh (1998) notes, the literature is often summed up as examining consumers’ attitudes toward brands, awareness of brands, and placement effectiveness. A number of scholars have also debated the pros and cons of brand placement regulation (Gupta, Balasubramanian, & Klassen, 2000; Hudson, Hudson, & Peloza, 2008; Ong & Meri, 2004; Siegel, 2004; Wenner, 2004).

Some scholars (see Karrh, 1998; Russell & Stern, 2006) have noted the potential for brand placement/character pairings to influence consumers. The goal of this study is to add to that sparse body of research by seeking to understand how the growing phenomenon of brand
placement within television programs could affect formation of a consumer’s identity. The findings from this study not only have implications for scholars interested in brand placement but also for scholars debating the policies surrounding the regulation of brand placement as well as those interested in media literacy.

Of particular importance to this study is the notion of connectedness as proposed by Russell and Puto (1999) and Russell, Norman, and Heckler (2004). The Connectedness Scale measures the relationship a viewer has with television programming including the degree to which characters appear as referent others. These referent others may influence viewers in a number of ways including the formation of one’s identity. It stands to reason that those with higher levels of connectedness may be more open to the influence of a brand/character pairing.

Data collection consisted of two phases. Phase I involved administering a survey to emerging adults (chapter three contains the rationale for selecting this population). Items on the survey gathered demographic information and information about media consumption (questions were based on the work of DeLorme & Reid, 1999; Gould et al, 2000; Gupta et al. 2000; Nebenzahl & Secunda, 1993). More importantly, it also contained Russell, Norman, and Heckler’s (2004) Connectedness Scale. The primary function of the initial survey was to identify potential participants for Phase II, which examined the potential influence of brand placement on consumers’ identity formation. Those with high levels of connectedness were recruited to participate in in-depth interviews to examine the potential influence between brand placement in their favorite television shows and the formation of their identity.

Kleine, Kleine, and Kernan’s (1993) social identity perspective provided guidance in interpreting the findings that emerged from the in-depth interviews. Their social identity perspective notes that people use products to help them enact their various social identities; they
also note that, “we know which products enable which activities [that are complimentary to
portraying certain identities] by observing other people’s behavior” (p. 211).

To better understand these questions and gain some insight into brand placement’s
potential influence on the American consumer’s identity one must first turn to the relevant
literature. An overview of literature relevant to this study can be organized into three distinct
sections. First, it is necessary to understand more about the promotional technique that is
growing in popularity—brand placement. Chapter two examines the academic literature
regarding brand placement including concept of connectedness. Chapter three contains a review
of literature regarding identity formation with a particular focus on how consumption plays a part
in shaping one’s identity. The rationale and explanation of the method utilized in this study are
found in chapter four with the results reported in chapter five. Lastly, chapter six contains a
discussion of results and implications for future research.

Review of Literature

What is Brand Placement?

It has become increasingly difficult to turn on the television, go to a movie or open the
latest best-seller without seeing name-brand products. Even video games no longer provide an
escape from our commodified culture. Occasionally, the creators of content place these products
in mass media for effect or realism. Sometimes companies looking to create brand awareness or
promote their products place them there. Brand appearances that appear as the result of cash,
barter, or some other form of consideration and are supplied from an advertiser to a program’s
creator(s) to be used as promotional tools are known as “product placement” or “brand
placement” (Karrh, 1998). Practitioners in the field often used the term “entertainment
marketing” to refer to the insertion of brands, products, or services into media (Hackley &
“Branded entertainment” or “brand or product integration,” when the brand is specifically incorporated into story a line, are the phrases sometimes used in trade publications such as Television Week. As Pompper and Choo (2008) note, a senior marketing professional in the food/beverage industry “prefers the term product integration over product placement because it means that a film or television show’s major character actually uses the product: ‘[Being] organically integrated with the movie...into the storyline...makes us more effective,’” (p. 62).

“Hybrid messages” are part of a line of new marketing tactics that include brand placement, infomercials, video news releases, and program tie-ins (Balasubramanian, 1994). According to Karrh (1998), a major advertising report included a recommendation to “recognize product placement in movies as a new medium” (p. 31). Although the terms product placement and brand placement are often used interchangeably in both the trade and academic press, several researchers (Babin & Carter 1996; Karrh, 1998; Maynard & Scala, 2006) have explained that the term brand placement is actually more appropriate. “This is because advertising’s purpose is the promotion of brands, as opposed to products. That is, advertisers want target audiences to remember ‘Campbell’s soup,’ and not merely ‘soup,’” (Maynard & Scala, 2006, p. 625).

Throughout this study, the term brand placement will be used as the preferred term; however, the term product placement may be used interchangeably if quoting directly from an original source.

Placement has been defined as “a paid product message aimed at influencing movie (or television) audiences via the planned and unobtrusive entry of a branded product into a movie (or television program)” (Balasubramanian, 1994, p. 31). However, movies and television are not the only medium to feature placements. Radio, video games, novels, and even theater productions have been known to include brand placements. Brand placements are even beginning to appear on the Internet and social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter.
Karrh (1998) argues that, “brand placement is better defined as the paid inclusion of branded products or brand identifiers, through audio and/or visual means, within mass media programming” (p. 33). However, Karrh’s definition is also problematic because the appearance of a brand is not always the result of a paid transaction. While they do occur, according to Wenner (2004), the paid placement “is the exception rather than the rule, accounting for perhaps 10% of product placement transactions,” (p. 104). Typically, a barter or trade agreement arranges for products or service to be provided in exchange for the possible inclusion in media content. Apple was the top brand placed in 2009 movies, appearing in 46% of the year’s most popular films, and they didn’t pay for those placements (“Apple Invades,” 2010). The company simply provides its products and sees the free exposure as form of payment.

Several other researchers have proposed definitions that are a bit broader and better suited to describe brand placement. Russell and Belch (2005) describe brand placement as incorporating a brand into an entertainment vehicle. While this definition does acknowledge that not all placements are paid for, it is important to note that, brand placements are not restricted specifically to entertaining content. Newell, Salmon, and Chang (2006) note that brand placement is the insertion of a brand or service into mass media with the intent of influencing consumer attitudes or behaviors. The intent to influence consumers is certainly important, however, including it in the definition of brand placement fails to acknowledge that some brands may be placed for creative reasons (i.e. to help establish a character or create a sense of realism). For the purpose of this study, brand placement is defined using a definition created from ones provided by Newell, Salmon, and Chang (2006) and La Ferle and Edwards (2006), brand placement is the intentional insertion of brands or services through audio and/or visual means, within entertainment, educational, or informational content.
Lehu (2007) classifies placements into four categories within visual media, with each providing a different effect: classic placement, institutional placement, evocative placement, and stealth placement. The classic placement features the product or brand within a camera shot, “whatever the brand, whatever the product, whatever the industry, it seems that anything is possible for this form of placement, which makes few demands as to the form,” (Lehu, 2007, p. 9). Benefits of the classic placement include its simplicity and low cost but, as with other types of placements, it may go unnoticed (Lehu, 2007). Institutional placements are a bit riskier and emphasize a brand over a product. Brand names and/or logos are sometimes easier to place within a shot but may easily blend in to the set or scenery. One advantage though, is the fact that while a product may no longer be available on the market, a company brand typically has a longer life span. Frequently this type of placement is seen in the form of billboards or other forms of advertising signage or logos on clothing (Lehu, 2007). Evocative placements are more discreet because the brand does not appear and is not clearly cited onscreen. These types of placements may require some reflection. As an example of an evocative placement, Lehu (2007) cites Robert Zemeckis’s use of “the supposed ‘fruit company’ (Apple) cited in Forrest Gump, only the company’s logo is visible at the head of the letter held in the hands of actor Tom Hanks,” (p. 11) but the placement is one a spectator can easily identify if he or she notices. Lastly, the stealth placements are almost undetectable and often are only detectable because of an appearance in the credits. Items of clothing worn by characters are often stealth placements. Most likely, few viewers were able to identify Richard Gere’s impressive Giorgio Armani wardrobe in the film American Gigolo (Lehu, 2007). Stealth placements are not only visual, as Lehu (2007) explains, in a 2005 episode of CSI:NY, one of the character’s cell phone ringtones was Coldplay’s song Talk. The song was heard because of an agreement between CBS, the
studio producing the series, and Capitol Records. Perhaps the biggest advantage to the stealth placement is also its biggest disadvantage—the placement is usually flawlessly integrated into the story or the scene, thus, it does not appear to be a promotional placement, but this also means that it could go completely undetected.

**What is the Difference between Brand Placement and Advertising?**

“Product placement inserts a brand into the consumer’s experience with an intimacy that conventional promotion cannot match,” (Hackley & Tiwsakul, 2006, p. 64). In contrast to brand placement, advertising messages have a sponsor who is clearly identified and audiences are able to easily identify advertisements, which often leads to channel surfing or engaging in other activities in order to avoid them (Gupta, Balasubramanian, & Klassen, 2000). A brand placement is seldom seen as a company’s attempt to persuade because it is presented in the context of a story and is therefore secondary to the main communication effort, the media content (McCarty, 2004). The 1998 movie, *The Truman Show* exemplified the violation of this subtlety because brand placements were intentionally made explicit within scripted scenes and the commercial intent was intentionally made obvious to viewers, to both the fictional viewers in the movie who were watching *The Truman Show* and the real viewing audience. This lack of subtlety was also the catalyst for the main character’s discovery that his life was, in fact, being broadcast as a television show.

The difference in consumer attitudes toward brand placement and conventional advertising is also distinct. Research has shown that consumers report negative attitudes toward conventional advertising (Gupta, Balasubramanian, & Klassen, 2000; Hackley & Tiwsakul, 2006; Karrh, 1998). However, research has found consumers to be largely accepting of brand placement (d’Astous & Chartier, 2000; DeLorme & Reid, 1999; Gould, Gupta, & Grabner-
Kräuter, 2000; Gupta, Balasubramanian, & Klassen, 2000; Natharius, 2004; Nebenzahl & Secunda, 1993). A more detailed discussion of this acceptance occurs in chapter two.

**Why the Growth in Popularity?**

The media environment is constantly changing and has become a very cluttered. The growth and creation of new media has led to a fragmentation of the audience and this is not just occurring nationally. Globally, consumers have never watched so much television and at the same time, “they have never shunned advertising so much” (Lehu, 2007, p. 31). Advertisers paying to reach their target demographic are predominantly what provide the income necessary for the creation of media content. As a result, to reach their target demographic, advertisers must be present in more places thus increasing the cost of reaching their desired consumer. One might think that a consumer benefit to an increase in corporate spending on advertising would be the creation of more media content, but this is not necessarily the case. With more media content being created, there is increased competition for those advertising dollars. The widespread competitive, distribution of advertising dollars and the steady increase in the cost of production is actually detrimental to the production of content because no dough often means no show.

Russell and Belch (2005) explain that in the past decade technological advances have given consumers more control over the media they consume, in some cases, enabling them to avoid advertising. As a result, the trend has advertisers turning to sponsorships and brand placements. DeLorme and Reid’s study (1999) suggests that brand placement in film is an appropriate way to reach Generation X, because members of that generation feel it contributes to a movie’s realism and provides them with feelings of comfort. Pompper and Choo (2008) note that young people are a difficult demographic because despite the fact that they do watch television, they frequently use technology to avoid watching ads. Media audiences in the U.S.
include 32 million teens, the largest generation ever of this subset, representing $150 billion in annual sales (Dretzin & Goodman; as cited in Pompper & Choo, 2008), clearly, making them a desirable demographic.

The development of the digital video recorder (DVR) and the TiVo has made it possible to avoid advertising when watching television broadcasts. DVRs enable viewers to skip commercials or to zip through them very rapidly. “'Zapping’ commercials with our remote controls and ‘zipping’ through them as we playback prerecorded television programs are just two of the more common responses that citizens have to what has become an increasingly commodified environment” (Wenner, 2004, p. 103). In Steven Spielberg’s War of the Worlds, Dakota Fanning’s character tells her father (played by Tom Cruise) that they need to buy a TiVo (Lehu, 2007). Essentially the same as a DVR, TiVo allows a viewer, who subscribes to the service, to watch a television program pre-recorded and, if they choose, without its advertising content. While not integrated into the War of the Worlds plot very well, it was not the only time references to the technology have appeared on the big screen. The 2003 movie Scary Movie 3 and the 2005 action film Mr. & Mrs. Smith, starring Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie, also featured the technology.

In 2005, Fonda and McDowell reported that 10.1% or 6.4 million U.S. households had at least one DVR. By April of 2010, Nielsen reported that the number had grown to 34% of American households owning a DVR or TiVo. Grover (2006) reported the results of a study that found that “87% of respondents reported, ‘they used the skip function [on the DVR] frequently’” (p. 38). Brand placement has emerged as one way to combat the zapping of commercials.

A major advantage of brand placement over advertising is that one can’t avoid brand placement without avoiding the content in which it is placed. Technology is making it easier for
consumers to avoid advertising, but it is also making it easier for advertisers to place brands in front of the consumer. Virtual product placement technology allows products or images to be added into or even removed from existing programming and replaced with an entirely different brand (Wenner, 2004). Wenner (2004) explains, that one of the systems, “Princeton Video’s L-VIS is the industry’s leading technology, able to put a digital Elvis or a digital ‘anything else’ into film and television programs, while they are being produced or after the fact” (p. 119). The technology, which was first used to insert first down lines into football games and later used to add virtual billboards to baseball telecasts, has been refined over the last decade and essentially can add or replace something that appears on film or on television with something else (Gupta, Balasubramanian, & Klassen, 2000; Wenner, 2004). Warner Brothers has even sold virtual placements for several shows in syndication including *Friends, The Drew Carey Show,* and *Suddenly Susan* (Friedman & Neff, 2001; as cited in Wenner, 2004). In January 2010, Xerox reportedly filed a patent for a system that would take digitally inserting placements a step further and allow companies to alter the placements in media content based on the individual viewer. The technology, developed as part of an increasing interest in “addressable advertising,” would allow portions of television programming to be marked and changed based on individual consumer interests so while one viewer may hear a character reference the department store Macy’s, another viewer who is interested in sports may hear the character refer to sporting goods store Modell’s (“Xerox Patent,” 2010).

Nielsen Media Research began tracking product placement on television on September 5, 2003 (Atkinson & Fine, 2004). During the 2004-2005 season in the United States, the organization counted more than 100,000 appearances of placed products; this was a 28%
increase from the previous season (Lehu, 2007). This $1.5 billion practice (Galician, 2004a) is not confined to movies and television either, it exists in other media content as well.

According to Galician (2004a) approximately 1,000 brand marketers include brand placement in their advertising repertoire. Brand placement has become an established industry independent of traditional advertising and public relations agencies with an estimated value of placement transactions reaching $360 million (McNatt & Olek; as cited in Pompper & Choo, 2008). Lehu (2007) noted that advertisers such as General Motors and Procter & Gamble planned to reduce their investments in classic television advertising in favor of non-traditional advertising and communication methods such as brand placement.

While none of the industry professionals interviewed as part of Pompper and Choo’s study (2008), would specify an exact amount, several respondents “clearly identified increased budget spending in recent years on product placement and predicted that this budget allocation will increase in the future” (p. 60). A consumer electronics corporate communications marketing manager they interviewed noted that she “‘doubled’ film and television placement spending over the past 5 years,” in response to consumers’ ad-editing behaviors (Pompper & Choo, 2008, p. 60). An automotive company’s brand entertainment manager echoed her sentiment explaining that his company was going to change the amount of resources they allocated from television commercials to be able to focus more on brand placement. Lehu (2007) reports that, in 2005, expenditure on brand placements for media other than films and television was estimated at $384.9 million, an increase of 18.1% over 2004.

Sapolsky and Kinney’s (as cited in Karrh, 1998) analysis of the top 25 American movies from 1991 found an average of over 11 brand appearances per film. The top industries that place products are automobiles, beer, and soda (Galician & Bordeau, 2004; Pompper & Choo, 2008).
Clothing and accessories, agricultural products, tourism and leisure, and electronic or technological products are expected to show an increase in investment in brand placement (Lehu, 2007). Karrh (1998) offers several reasons for the increased interest in brand placement:

1. Movies, TV, and other popular media have a “shelf life” of decades because of syndication and the video rental market.
2. Movie theaters are excellent environment for reproducing images and sound so brands are shown in an impressive light.
3. There is growing global market reach.
4. Some viewers interpret the placements as implied celebrity endorsements.
5. Increasing costs of creating media content has led to broader acceptance of the practice among media producers.
6. Brand placement creates potential links to larger integrated promotional arrangements.

How Does Brand Placement Happen?

Gupta, Balasubramanian, and Klassen (2000) explain that there are four ways products may enter movie scripts: companies solicit studios to place their brands in return for a fee; creators approach marketers to use their products; studios may use brands without contacting marketers; or placement deals may be finalized through independent product placement firms.

Internationally, more than 100 companies are in the practice of brand placement (Nelson, 2004a). The Entertainment Resource Marketing Association (ERMA) is the trade association for placement agents, studio representatives, and marketers. Since its founding in 1991, they established a code of ethics and a similar group now exists in the United Kingdom. Generally, placements that occur in films go through one of two intermediaries—placement agents or movie studios (Karrh, 1998). Placement agents can serve as a middleman between advertisers and movie producers, but studios usually have their own brand placement departments. In most cases, there are contracts to ensure studios have the rights, or clearances, to depict registered trademarks in their films (Karrh, 1998).
Often, agencies receive advanced copies of scripts and review them for placement opportunities to offer clients (Russell & Belch, 2005). Norm Marshall and Associates (NMA) reportedly reads 600-800 scripts per year (Marich, 2005). According to NMA president Devery Holmes:

…scripts are evaluated scene by scene to determine where product placement opportunities for natural client integration may exist. ‘Ninety percent of what we do is provide product that simply cuts below-the-line expenditures,’ says Holmes. Below the line is the cost of physical production and excludes the salaries of cast, director, and producers. (Marich, 2008, p. 98)

In order to find placements, agents also meet with set designers and writers to find scenes where products can be placed on the set or written into the dialogue (Avery & Ferraro, 2000). “The ideal state is to be able to work with the producers…working on the creative front and writing your product into the script,” explains a strategic planner for a food/beverage company (Pompper & Choo, 2008, p. 62). Usually prop masters receive a list established by directors, producers, and script writers (or a combination of the three) that notes the places, services, products, and brands that the film needs and it is their job “to find the cheapest and most coherent ‘arrangements’ from the point of view of the script” (Lehu, 2007, p. 37). Russell and Belch’s (2005) research into practitioners’ views of brand placement revealed that, “for a typical movie, there could be 100 to 150 placements in a production that the studio has to obtain just to get the production off the ground” (p. 76).

Brand placement firms can also provide vintage versions of branded products, essentially antique products, as props that may be hard for producers to locate. Placing a brand in a historic setting or period piece allows companies to highlight their brand’s history and taps into nostalgia while many other brands are equally interested in being placed in futuristic films to indicate they having long-term staying power (Lehu, 2007). Steve Ochs, of Hero Product Placement,
commented that, “If a production needs an item, we give it to the production free of charge, that’s standard operating procedure” (Marich, 2008, p. 98).

Additionally, brand placement practitioners can warn clients if their products might be used unfavorably. Even though trademarks are the property of corporations, United States trademark laws allows for “fair use” of brands by media such as news outlets and films, but companies legally may request their branded products be removed from television or film if their product is used in “an unsafe manner,” but if they are not depicted as unsafe or misused, the companies have little legal recourse (Marich, 2005). Non-disparagement clauses, in which creators agree not to denigrate the brand name items of a company, are common in placement agreements (Marich, 2005).

In instances that involve payment as part of the placement agreement, the money goes straight to reducing the physical costs of production (Russell & Belch, 2005). The 2007 summer blockbuster Transformers, that brought to life the 80’s cartoon series featuring alien robots that appear as everyday vehicles and electronic devices, relied heavily on the use of General Motors Hummer, Pontiac, and Chevrolet lines of vehicles. The already high production costs would have been even more so if director Michael Bay had to buy or rent all of the vehicles needed (Lehu, 2007). Audi sought out screen time for its Audi R8; the 2009 sequel, Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen, featured the vehicle as one of the villains. The brand placement agreement also gave the R8 an edge because it was the only vehicle to appear in the Transformers commercial that aired during the Super Bowl (Grover, 2009). Marich (2005) details another instance where placement agreements significantly reduced the cost of production:

The DreamWorks romantic comedy The Terminal starring Tom Hanks is loaded with 40 stores in product placements for its centerpiece airport set. Retail outlets Burger King, Starbucks, the Discovery Store, Borders, Verizon Wireless, Auntie Anne’s Pretzels,
Swatch and Godiva Chocolatier all are highly visible in the film. Each company was responsible for building its own store—at an estimated cost of tens of thousands of dollars each—saving DreamWorks on set construction costs. (p. 82)

When fees are involved, they are often based upon the type of placement. For visual media, “visual exposure is the least expensive, verbal mentions are moderately priced, and character usage is the most costly” (DeLorme & Reid, 1999, p. 71). However, the amount specified by the placement agreement typically is held in an escrow account and payment is made after a movie is finished and going into release to be sure that a branded product is not cut out in final editing. Karrh (1998) notes that, “In many cases, placement deals involving feature films do not survive films’ final cuts; one major marketer estimated its placements fall through in about 30% of cases” (p. 36).

**Advantages and Disadvantages of Brand Placement**

Van der Waldt (2005) wrote that some of the disadvantages of brand placement include the fact that the potential expense of placing a brand may be too high for some companies; exposure does not guarantee the placement will be noticed; sometimes there is little control over when and how a brand is shown; and lastly, the placement may not create a favorable mood for the product. Balasubramanian (1994) adds that when compared to traditional advertising the impact of hybrid messages appears to be less direct and less immediate. Plus, as will be explained when reviewing the academic literature about the effect of brand placements, it is harder to judge the effectiveness in relation to traditional advertising, which already has established methods of evaluation.

Despite the potential disadvantages, there are both artistic and financial reasons cited by both producers of media content and corporations that are increasingly interested in brand placement. As alluded to earlier, one of the advantages of brand placement is the potential to
reduce production costs. Other advantages include the potential to provide a greater reach than traditional advertising; demonstrating brand usage in naturalistic settings; and creating more realistic settings for movies, television programming, and novels (Van der Waldt, 2005).

Through artistic experiences, we view ourselves metaphorically as characters in novels, plays, or movies (Hirschman, 1998; as cited in Russell, 1998). Therefore, placing real brands inside things like television shows, movies, and novels contributes to the perceived realism for the consumer (Gould, Gupta, & Grabner-Kräuter, 2000; Tiwsakul, Hackley, & Szmigin, 2005). Avery and Ferraro (2000) discovered that there were approximately 15 brand appearances per half hour of prime-time television programming and that most of these brand appearances were subtly inserted into portrayals of real-life, part of the plot, and benefited from character interactions. Before becoming an award-winning filmmaker, Samuel A. Turcotte wrote a master’s thesis about brand placement in which he interviewed those in the industry including professionals at studios, independent production companies, and placement agencies along with corporate marketers.

In real life no one says, “Gimme a beer!” [referring to the title of his master’s thesis]. It’s ridiculous not to use a brand in such a case in a movie. Moviemakers used to think that using brand names undermined the artistry of the cinema, but today we know that it undermines reality not to use them when they would be used in real life. There’s a difference between reality and whoring to commercialism. Product placement isn’t about sales; it’s about brand awareness. (Galician, 2004d, p. 224)

Brennan and Babin (2004) explain some of the financial benefits associated with brand placement. Unlike a traditional thirty-second advertising spot that has a limited life span, placements in television and movies get to live on through DVD releases and international distribution. Syndication, rebroadcasting (of movies on television and television programs), and the DVD market all extend the value of a placement (Van der Waldt, 2005).
Given that the majority of placements are the result of barter or trade agreements, they may actually be less expensive than traditional advertising. They also tend to be less obtrusive and looked upon more favorably than advertising (as will be explained in chapter two). Product placements may appear natural to many audience members, because they are often used to enrich the plot and provide information about characters (Russell 2002).

As mentioned earlier, placements are sometimes used to obtain props at no charge but sometimes, placement agreements are used to gain a source of marketing support (Karrh, 1998). In order to be featured in the final media product, sometimes companies will agree help promote whatever it is in which they appear. Reportedly, Chevrolet spent $10 million to help promote *Days of Thunder* and BMW invested $20 million to promote the launch of its Z23 roadster that was prominently placed in the James Bond film *GoldenEye* (Einsten 1997; as cited in Karrh, 1998).

Unfortunately, the financial benefits are for those in the industry, not necessarily the consumer. Any savings to the industry in the form of lower production costs have not been passed on to the consumer in terms of lower movie ticket prices or fewer commercials on television (Gupta, Balasubramanian, & Klassen, 2000; Wenner 2004). For now, it appears that this “new face of advertising” will continue to increase because of ad-zapping technologies and audience fragmentation (Pompper & Choo, 2008). But, where did this “new face of advertising” originate?

**History of Brand Placement**

Newell, Salmon, and Chang (2006) explain that regardless of whether producers sought to reduce production costs, studios sought to gain additional marketing resources, or early radio and television program staffers sought outside income, the business of brand placement has been
an integral to mass media for more than a century. The next portion of this chapter will provide a look at the history of placement as it developed in various genres.

**Brand Placement in Novels**

Brand placement is one tool writers can use to help develop their character, it can also aid description, and work to develop a reader’s mental image to support the story. The author can avoid long pages of description that may risk alienating the reader or causing one to lose track of the chain of events within the story (Lehu, 2007). “In the United States alone, the PQ Media firm estimates that investment in brand or product name placements in books is worth $26.6 million,” (Lehu, 2007, p.167). Similar to brand placements in movies and television, authors and publishers are not required to disclose whether they have received anything in exchange for a reference to a brand in a book (Brennan, 2008).

Newell, Salmon, and Chang (2006) note that Dickens’s *The Pickwick Papers* can be considered an early form of product placement. A London-to-Bath carriage line of Dickens’s time provided the Pickwick name. The carriage line makes an appearance in the story, when the title character is riding in a carriage with his name painted on the outside. A furor erupted because the illustrator included a partly seen logo for Guinness Dublin Stout in a pub scene causing other merchants to request to be included in future drawings (Wicke, 1988; as cited in Newell, Salmon, & Chang, 2006). Charles Dickens’ *Pavilionstone* also features brand placements (Nelson, 2004). Lehu (2007) points out other early brand placements in literature including Oscar Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest*, which mentions the Grand Hotel in Paris and has a scene where the one character (Jack) explains to another character (Lady Bracknell) how her nephew lied, pretended to be his brother, and drank a full bottle of champagne, but not any old champagne--it was Perrier-Jouet brut, vintage 1889. These example
show that brand placement has been present in literature for over 100 years. The 1958 Truman Capote novel *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* is another early example of literary brand placement (Lehu, 2007).

In a content analysis of best-selling novels since World War II, Friedman (1985) found the frequency of brand names appearing in a sample of popular novels increased over 500% between 1946 and 1975 and argued that it was a reflection of increase in commercial content in American language. A total of 507 brand name varieties were found in the sample of 31 novels, with automobiles accounting for roughly one-fourth of the brands. Notably, Coca-Cola was most frequent brand mentioned, a total of 59 times in 18 of the 31 books (Friedman, 1985).

More recently, one particular novel generated quite a bit of criticism for its use of brand placement. *The Bulgari Connection*, a 2001 novel by Weldon, became the subject of debate after it was revealed that she was paid to write it (Nelson 2004). Weldon explained that the original intention was for it to be limited to 750 copies that were to be given away as part of a gala dinner to celebrate the opening of a Bulgari store; she referred to it as a “sponsored novel” (Nelson, 2004, p. 206). An earlier work, *Power City* by Beth Ann Herman, featured a Maserati in its tale of the Hollywood public relations community and in return for this publicity, a Maserati dealership threw a party for the author that attracted nationwide coverage (Karrh, 1998). The strategy worked well, for writer Bill Fitzhugh when he got Seagram’s to pay him in whiskey for mentions of their products within his “comic thriller” *Cross Dressing*, landing him a paperback contract with HarperTorch (Nelson, 2004). Lehu (2007) explains that even best-selling authors use brand placement. Dan Brown included the brands Mercedes, BMW, Audi, Rolls-Royce, Aston Martin, Porsche, Ferrari, Smirnoff, and the Ritz Hotel, in *The Da Vinci Code* and John Grisham featured Ford, Mercedes, Jack Daniel’s, and McDonald’s in *The Last Juror*. 
Adults are not the only ones increasingly exposed to placed brands within their reading material. The publishing of children’s pre-school activity and math books such as *The Cheerios Counting Book* and *The Hershey's Milk Chocolate Multiplication Book* are an ominous sign of placement growth within the industry (Nelson, 2004). In the late 1990’s a controversy arose when it was discovered that high-consumption product brands had been integrated into school textbooks:

In its 1999 revised version, *Mathematics: Applications and Connections* (McGraw-Hill) contained, for example, different mathematical problems based on brands such as Disneyland, Sony, Nike, Barbie, Kellogg’s, Spalding, Burger King, McDonald’s, and Gatorade. The editor explained that no money had been received and that these products had been mentioned only to facilitate learning in mathematics. The companies had not made any payment: they had only been asked for authorization to reproduce logos, which had, of course, been granted without difficulty. Students were asked to calculate the number of weeks they must save their pocket money to afford a new pair of Nikes, or to take into account the diameter of Oreo cookies to work out a simple fraction. (Lehu, 2007, p. 138)

Surprisingly, the education commissions of 15 states approved the book. Parents’ associations were not so supportive. In November of 2009, Chevrolet launched a placement campaign for the Chevy Volt in the popular school publication *Weekly Reader*. Teachers were able to receive lesson plans featuring the auto maker’s electric car, “‘Today’s middle school students are tomorrow’s leaders, so Chevrolet is teaming up with *Weekly Reader* to provide a fun yet educational experienced themed around electricity,’ explained Maria Rohrer, a representative from Chevrolet,” (“Chevrolet Launches,” 2009).

In an effort to reach the adolescent market, *Cathy’s Book* aimed at teenage girls includes products such as Cover Girl’s Shimmering Onyx and Metallic Rose eye shadow and in return for Procter & Gamble’s help promoting it (Hudson, Hudson, & Peloza, 2008). Ann Brashares best-selling novel, *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants* was adapted for the screen in 2005. A pair
of “magical” jeans, unites four adolescent girls, and in an opportunity exploited by the Warner Brothers and Alcon Entertainment, Levi’s used its distributing partner Sears to help promote the film despite the fact that the Levi’s brand is not mentioned in the original book (Lehu, 2007). The film’s poster even made it possible identify the brand, through the characteristic, small red Levi’s label. Stephanie Meyer’s vampire-themed Twilight series of novels (and then movies) featured a placement that had an interesting result. Lead character Bella Swan refers to Emily Bronte’s Wuthering Heights and even compares other Twilight characters to ones in Bronte’s novel. Sales for Bronte’s work spiked suddenly in 2008 reportedly due to the Twilight placement, “I don’t think a vampire’s recommendation has ever sent a book to number one before,” commented Simon Robertson, a buyer for a major book seller (“Twilight Product Placement,” 2009). HarperCollins attempted to cash in on the phenomenon by investing in new cover art for Bronte’s novel that is similar to artwork on Twilight’s cover. This placement example also provide a nice segue to another medium where placement has been a practice for over 100 years—film.

**Brand Placement in Film**

Brand placement in the film industry began with the first appearances of brands in the Lumiére films in 1896. It made its way to the United States with Thomas Edison’s help, slowly began developing as an industry in the 1920’s, and soared to new heights in the 1980’s when a little boy befriended a space alien with the help of some candy.

Newell, Salmon, and Chang (2006) demonstrated that brand placement was “fully integrated into the making and marketing of mass media content as early as the 1920s” (p. 575). However, in the movies, it first surfaced as the result of a business connection between Swiss businessman Francois-Henri Lavanchy-Clarke, United Kingdom soap makers Lever Brothers,
and the creators of the Cinématograph the Lumières (Newell, Salmon, & Chang, 2006). In May 1896, at Lavanchy-Clarke’s home in Geneva, the Lumières shot a film featuring two women hand-washing tubs of laundry, in front of the tubs were two cases of Lever Brothers soap, one with the French branding and the other with the German; the film was titled *Washing Day in Switzerland* and in June of 1896, it debuted in New York (Newell, Salmon, & Chang, 2006).

While the Lumiére Brothers may have been the first to place a brand, Thomas Edison is the one who, “turned product placement into an ongoing business that provided twin benefits of reducing out-of-pocket production expenses while providing promotional services for customers of his industrial businesses” (Newell, Salmon, & Chang, 2006, p. 580). In order to transport his film crews, Edison used the rail lines that purchased railroad equipment from his manufacturing division and, in turn, promoted the purchase of passenger tickets from those railroad companies (Newell, Salmon, & Chang, 2006). As the idea of placement and the new medium of film grew in the 1920s, International Harvester, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the YMCA all had films produced for them; from 1914 to 1921, the Ford Motor Company created a series of newsreels titled *Ford Animated Weekly* and *Ford Educational Weekly* (Newell, Salmon, & Chang, 2006). Newell, Salmon, and Chang (2006) note that consumer goods were not the only thing to be placed on screen, “Some of the earliest, and certainly most subtle, product placements were for California real estate,” (p. 582).

Another rationale for brand placement also became popular during this time. Manufacturers and moviemakers felt it was “a winning arrangement for both parties” if on-screen brand placements and/or star endorsements were traded for advertising and promotion (Schmoll, Hafner, Hilt, & Riley, 2006). McKechnie and Thou (2003) note that this was particularly popular with Tobacco companies. As early as the 1930s, MGM Studios maintained
a placement office (Karrh, 1998). However, as Newell, Salmon, and Chang (2006) explain, “the term product placement did not come into scholarly or trade use until the 1980s,” prior to that the terms used included *exploitation, tie-ups, and tie-ins* (p. 576).

*Exploitation* was differentiated from both paid advertising and press relations and referred to any sort of publicity that might generate movie attendance, it could even include contests (Newell, Salmon, & Chang, 2006). With the 1970s, came the use of the terms *tie-ups* and *tie-ins*, the terms were interchangeable and referred to a partnership between a media producer and manufacturer, which resulted in on-screen exposure of a product, endorsement by an actor, or a combination of the two (Newell, Salmon, & Chang, 2006). The Mickey Mouse Club even targeted children encouraging them to sign up at their local department store’s toy section before heading to the theater to catch the latest Disney film release (Newell, Salmon, & Chang, 2006).

When the 1960s and 70s arrived, Hollywood began to try to emphasize realism so props needed to be visible, familiar brands (Marich, 2005). In the 1962 film, *Dr. No*, when James Bond ordered a martini with vodka—shaken, not stirred—the liquor industry said the scene was “a catalyst for a wholesale consumer shift away from gin” (Marich, 2005, p. 104). Decades later film audiences would again be exposed to the Bond franchise’s preference for placement.

One of the general consensuses in the literature regarding brand placement is that Steven Spielberg’s 1982 film *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* was a milestone in placement (Karrh, 1998, Lehu, 2007; Maynard & Scala, 2006; Newell, Salmon, & Chang, 2006; Pompper & Choo, 2008 are among the numerous studies that mention this milestone). The script called for Elliot, the main human character, to leave a trail of candy—originally M&Ms—as a gesture of friendship for a frightened E.T., but when the Mars Company backed out, Hershey’s provided Reese’s
Pieces as a substitute (Maynard & Scala, 2006). During a last minute, daylong session with film production already started, E.T. co-producer Kathleen Kennedy and Hershey marketing executive Jack Dowd negotiated the rights to use Reese’s Pieces in return for Hershey’s agreeing to spend $1 million on promotion and advertising featuring posters and stickers to promote Reese’s Pieces as E.T.’s favorite candy (Newell, Salmon, & Chang, 2006). Even though it was not the only brand placed in the film (Coors beer, Reynolds Wrap, Coke, Skippy, and Pizza Hut all appear), according to Hershey’s executive Jack Dowd, the placement was, “the biggest marketing coup in history. We got immediate recognition for our product, the kind of recognition we would normally have to pay fifteen or twenty million bucks for. It ended up as a cheap ride” (Brenner, 1999). Hershey’s never paid Universal Pictures or vice versa, the money was spent simply on promotional items and joint advertising but Hershey’s experienced a 65% increase in sales (Karrh, 1998; Newell, Salmon, & Chang, 2006).

Following the Reese’s Pieces success, brand placement in Hollywood became a full-blown industry (McKechnie & Thou, 2003). Galician and Bordeau (2004) examined brand placement in the 15 top-grossing motion pictures from 1977, 1987, and 1997. While they caution that their findings should not necessarily be used to confirm any particular trends, they noticed some interesting results. Their study found an increase in the number of individual brands embedded in Hollywood’s 15 most popular films during 1977, 1987, and 1997 with the use of individual brands increasing 32% from 1977 (117 brands) through 1987 (131 brands) and into 1997 (154 brands) (Galician & Bordeau, 2004, p. 24). Similar to Friedman’s (1985) analysis of novels, Galician and Bordeau noticed that “Automobiles were the most dominant type of product appearing during each year studied. Of the 546 product appearances observed, 21% (104 appearances) featured automobiles, 14% (73 appearances) featured beer, and 11% (60
appearances) featured soda,” (p. 22). Also, as Friedman discovered, with 44 appearances in 20 films over the course of a 20-year span, Coca-Cola was the most frequently observed brand.

As part of the increase in the number of brand placements in film over years, audiences have also witnessed an increasing number of brands becoming an essential part of a movie’s plot. The 1998 movie, *You’ve Got Mail* featured AOL Internet Service prominently. The familiar phrase “you’ve got mail,” was heard throughout the movie when the characters signed on and subsequently used AOL to communicate with each other for most of the movie (McCarty, 2004). Two years later, another Tom Hanks picture, *Cast Away*, received some criticism for its prominent placement of FedEx brand. Multiple film critics commented on the fact that the character played by Hanks worked for the company as a pilot and FedEx boxes washing ashore played a major part in the movie after he was stranded on an island when his cargo plane went down (Friedman, 2004). According to Friedman (2004), on the film’s DVD commentary track, Director Robert Zemeckis explained that inclusion of FedEx was not a paid placement:

> We weren’t paid by anybody to place products in the movie. I did that in the past, and it wasn’t worth the little bit of money that they gave you, because then you end up with another creative partner, which you don’t need. However, it just seemed to me that the whole integrity of the movie would be compromised if it was some phony trans-global letter delivery service, with some fake Hollywood logo and all that. It wouldn’t seem like it was real. So very simply, we asked Federal Express for their permission to use their logo, and they could’ve said no. (Friedman, 2004, p. 173)

The total on-screen exposure time for FedEx was roughly just over 15 minutes (Maynard & Scala, 2006). FedEx supplied airplanes, trucks, uniforms, and packages for the movie (Friedman, 2004) and the amount of screen time was roughly the equivalent of 21 standard length commercials (30 seconds in duration) with 37 audible brand mentions (Maynard & Scala, 2006). FedEx’s Director of Global Brand Management commented that “the company agreed to participate because they saw FedEx as a character within the movie,” (Friedman, 2004, p. 173).
Whether it was by coincidence or not, the movie’s opening minutes are strikingly similar to an ad campaign that company ran several years prior to *Cast Away*’s release (Friedman, 2004).

Reportedly, no money was exchanged for Hanks’ famous round co-star “Wilson,” the film’s other notable placement; Wilson Sporting Goods provided the film with more than 60 volleyballs and benefited from an incredible amount of exposure (Friedman, 2004; Maynard & Scala, 2006). Over the course of the film, “Wilson” transforms from a mere volleyball to Hanks’ lone companion after he notices his bloody hand print on the surface and then draws eyes and a mouth on the ball. Subsequently, Hanks conveys the importance of this “character” through his sorrow when Wilson becomes lost at sea during Hanks’ attempt to get back to civilization. Due to Wilson’s popularity following the movie release, Wilson Sporting Goods and Twentieth Century Fox created full-sized replicas of “Wilson the Volleyball,” complete with handprint and face, as a product tie-in in conjunction with the DVD release of the movie (Maynard & Scala, 2006). Wilson (the volleyball) even managed to earn an impressive group of awards for its acting debut. The Broadcast Film Critics Association created an award exclusively for Wilson in 2001, it received the sixth annual Critics Choice Award for Best Inanimate Object in a Motion Picture, and the Wilson/Hanks duo was nominated for Best On-screen Team at the MTV Movie Awards (Maynard & Scala, 2006). Chapter two contains a discussion of research highlighting the implications of brands being placed in interactions with characters (Russell 2002; Russell, 2006; Yang & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2007).

American Airlines played an important part in the George Clooney film *Up in the Air* and the placement did not cost the company a penny (American Airlines Scores, 2010). All the company had to provide was help with the TSA (Transportation Safety Administration), and
access to planes, employees, and uniforms. In return the company received exposure and even references to their AAdvantage Miles program.

As previously mentioned, the James Bond film franchise is no stranger to brand placement. Heineken, Smirnoff, BMW, Visa, and Ericsson, all together in a cross-promotional partnership, spent an estimated $98 million in ads highlighting their brands in use by 007 in the 1997 film *Tomorrow Never Dies* (Karrh, 1998). The movie contained more than 22 minutes worth of on-screen brand appearances (Galician & Bordeau, 2004). However, the placements associated with *Tomorrow Never Dies* pale in comparison to another Bond movie. Galician and Bordeau (2004) report that *Die Another Day*, released in 2002, is often presented as the all-time record-holder for costs associated with brand placement, in both placement fees and in advertising support; between $120 million and $160 million was obtained from the associated brands for the 20 or so placements surrounding the well-known spy.

In February of 2010, SKYY vodka announced an agreement with Warner Brothers Entertainment that made the brand “the official vodka” of the *Sex and the City* sequel (“SKYY Vodka Partners,” 2010). As part of the agreement, the company presented a global marketing campaign and limited edition bottles designed by the film’s costumer, Patricia Fields.

One might think that animated films would be safe from the practice of brand placement, but that is a faulty assumption. The appearance of magazine *Life* in *The Incredibles* was a real brand in the animated feature (Lehu, 2007). Beetle, BMW, Cadillac, Chevrolet, Corvette, Dodge, Ferrari, Fiat, Hudson, Hummer, Jaguar, Jeep, Lincoln, Mack, Maserati, Mercury, Peterbilt, Plymouth, Porsche, and Volkswagen appeared in the 2006 animated movie *Cars*. The 2011 sequel, *Cars 2*, continued the trend. These were no ordinary cars, they were alive and had names so giving them a real brand name helped to create realism (Lehu, 2007).
Brand placement is not a phenomenon confined to American film either. Kirpalani’s article (2006) traces the rise of the practice in Bollywood film. The article explains that fans are drawn to emulate their screen heroes, who have long been considered trendsetters, in dress, speech and behavior—brand placement has only fueled this emulation in the 21st century. Thanks to several Bollywood weddings, a new trend of hosting elaborate weddings began in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Kirpalani, 2006). “The demand for this type of film-inspired wedding has spawned a whole industry, particularly in the cities. Wedding parlors cater to preparing the bride from head to toe, on her wedding day. Bookings are made long in advance, and brides spend a good part of their wedding day being dressed and primed for the occasion,” (Kirpalani, 2006, p. 201).

Once again audiences saw Coca-Cola present as an integral part of the plot and development of characters in the 1999 movie Taal and 2001’s Kabhie Khushi Kabhie Gham has so many placements that Kirpalani notes it is impossible to spot them all. In the portion of the movie that takes place in London, viewers see the shop fronts of Dolce & Gabbana; Armani; Max Mara; advertisements for Cats, Chicago, and Les Miserables; Burger King; and Starbucks, in addition to the young fashion-conscious character with a number of women’s magazines, including Elle and Vogue, in her room. A deal with Yashraj Films saw the placement of Suzuki Motor’s Swift in Bunty Aur Babli, a 2005 Bollywood mega-hit that was strategically released within the same week as the car to keep excitement levels high around the product launch (Kirpalani, 2006). Kirpalani also notes that Indian film Kaho Na Pyar Hai is reportedly responsible for almost doubling Indian tourism to New Zealand.

Virtually all screenplays can be subject to brand placement, the rare exception being ones such as distant historical pieces (i.e. 300 or Troy) or ones that take place in an imaginary world.
such as the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. While brand placement enjoys a relatively unregulated existence within the world of film, the sponsored nature of radio and television in the United States created a different type of environment (Newell, Salmon, & Chang, 2006).

**Brand Placement on Radio and in Music**

Brand placements were heard in radio programs as early as the 1920s (Schmoll et al., 2006). In the early days of radio, sponsors often controlled all aspects of programs from writing, to casting, to selecting other products within the program (Turner, 2004). During broadcasts, it was common for talent to shift roles from entertainers to pitchmen for their sponsor’s products (Newell, Salmon, & Chang, 2006). When radio first hit the air, programming departments created most programming then sought sponsors to support it. However, by the 1930s, advertising agencies were producing radio content with the J. Walter Thompson Company, one of the largest and most active agencies, producing more than sixty hours of airtime per week (Kretchmer, 2004).

By 1929, advertisers and ad agencies not only paid for but also created 55% of the programs on radio (Turner, 2004). As Russell and Belch (2005) explain, this practice was instrumental to the creation of the “soap opera” genre. Detergent companies, notably Procter & Gamble blended the creation of advertising for their soap products and radio programming to create a style of show that continues to this day on network television (Hackley & Tiwsakul, 2006). The soap opera played a key role in encouraging mass consumption because housewives across the nation faithfully tuned in to daily episodes of programming that depicted “real life” families who overcame adversity and successfully attained the American Dream of middle class well-being and happiness (Lavin, 1995). Advertisers were quick to recognize women as the primary purchaser of consumer goods so they became increasingly involved in the development
of programs that would suit the needs of their clients. Because they took on the home maintenance and child rearing responsibilities, housewives spent the majority of their daytime hours at home, often isolated from social contact with other adults, so they listened to the radio (Allen, 1985, as cited in Lavin). Lavin (1995) explained that networks and independent producers regained control of the airwaves from the advertising agencies following the quiz show scandals of the 1950s.

However, radio programming was, and still is, not the only way for consumers to hear brand placements. From 1946-1980, brand names were increasingly mentioned in top 10 songs, with the most mentions occurring between 1970 and 1980 (Karrh, 1998). Janis Joplin asked God to buy her a Mercedes-Benz because her friends all drove Porsches on the 1971 album *Pearl*. Wilson Pickett sang about *Mustang Sally*; country artist Alan Jackson had the *Mercury Blues*; and more recently Outkast encouraged us to “shake it, yeah—shake it like a Polaroid picture,” (Outkast, 2003, Track 9). Even the 2010 Grammy awards featured a placement when host comedian Steven Colbert joked, “Jay-Z did you not get one of these in your gift bag?” as he held up an Apple iPad (“iPad Gets Product Placement,” 2010).

A fan of the early days of rap/hip-hop might remember the 1979 hit “Rapper’s Delight,” by The Sugarhill Gang featured a Lincoln Continental and a sunroof Cadillac in the lyrics, plus the fact that “everybody go hotel motel Holiday Inn” is in the chorus. There is also “My Adidas,” the third track of *Raising Hell* by Run DMC, mentioning the brand 22 times in the song (Lehu, 2007, p. 171). Supposedly, the idea came from record mogul Russell Simmons (brother of Joseph ‘Run’ Simmons) because the group wore Adidas trainers (Lehu, 2007).

Lehu (2007) explains that it is common for brands to be “borrowed” or “dropped” by certain singers, particularly hip-hop artists. Placing brands in song lyrics ties them to society
and consumption in the real world, “in the United States alone, the PQ Media firm estimated that $30.4 million are invested in placement of product or brand names into songs,” (Lehu, 2007, 173). Schemer, Matthes, Wirth, and Textor (2008) found that rap videos are a unique environment for marketers because performers often drop brand names without any agreement with manufacturers. Regardless of this, brands can profit highly from these placements as exemplified by the benefits for Tommy Hilfiger’s clothing line when Grand Puba inserted the brand into their songs and wore the clothes on the stage (Lehu, 2007). Dire Strait’s 1985 song “Money for Nothing” began and ended with a demand that was a famous refrain for teenagers in the 1980s: “I want my…I want my MTV” (Lehu, 2007). Interestingly, it was MTV that provided a unique bridge for brand placement in music and television when music videos hit the airwaves in the 1980’s.

**Brand Placement in Music Videos**

Music videos are sometimes forgotten about as a forum for brand placement. However, RC Cola appeared in a video for country star Louise Mandrell and her sister Barbara Mandrell released “No Nonsense” made with the financial support of the pantyhose manufacturer (Englis, Solomon, & Olofsson 1993; Karrh, 1998). Lehu (2007) notes that placements can also help rejuvenate a brand, as it did for Cadillac at the beginning of 2000: “In just a few months, the Escalade SUV model (purchase price: $54,000 on average) proved especially popular with rappers, and the average age of the Cadillac owner fell by 12 years! The model quickly became a ‘must-have’ and also a ‘must-mention,’ in order to avoid being ‘out of it’” (p. 174). In 2002, artists Busta Rhymes and Puff Daddy (aka P.Diddy or Sean Combs) released a song and music video with the title “Pass the Courvoisier, Part Two,” which lead to another brand rejuvenation, the company’s sales for Courvoisier cognac jumped 20% (Schemer, Matthes, & Textor, 2008).
Courvoisier tried to capitalize on this rejuvenation by sponsoring events with P. Diddy, Missy Elliott, and Lil’ Kim (Lehu, 2007). Alcohol brands are commonly placed in hip-hop lyrics, usually not at the request of the company (Englis, Solomon, & Olofsson 1993). However, some brands actually call on artists. Reebok worked with 50 Cent to make an advertising film and indicated that sales of its RBK brand increased with the placement in 2003 (Lehu, 2007). Lehu also points out that it is noticeable that brand names are often truncated or adapted to the particular style of rap/hip-hop (for example, Cris’ for the champagne Cristal or Remi’ for Remy Martin cognac) removing part of the commercial character of the placement, and enabling it to sound more natural to the listener and possibly making them more open to the brand.

In recent years, MTV has moved away from playing music videos, but they continue to thrive online on web sites dedicated to music videos such as Vevo. The low-budget, Grammy winning video featuring Ok Go band members dancing on treadmills has had over 50 million views (“Music Videos,” 2010). In fact, “Of the ‘Top 10 Most Viewed Videos Online Ever’- as compiled by Visible Measures- six are music videos,” with Soulja Boy’s Crank That coming in at number one, followed by Beyonce’s Single Ladies (number two), Michael Jackson’s Thriller (number three) and the remaining videos being ones by Mariah Carey, Timbaland featuring One Republic, and Lady Gaga (“Music Videos,” 2010). “Lady Gaga’s music video Telephone sets the standard for music video product placements” by featuring brands such as Virgin Mobile, Heartbeats headphones, and Polaroid (“Going Gaga, 2010). Her earlier video for the single Bad Romance also featured placements from Neimoff vodka, Ninetendo Wii, Burberry, Safari sunglasses and an HP envy laptop (Turner, 2009). With album sales continuing to drop and artists and producers needing to generate revenue, music video placements are an emerging trend (Turner, 2009).
Some academic research has even examined brand placements in music videos. Providing the same advantages for music videos they do for movies and television, placement deals can reduce production costs, have a longer shelf life compared to advertising spots, and can strategically target specific demographics, most often adolescents (Karrh, 1998; Schemer et al., 2008). Englis, Solomon, and Olofsson (1993) found that 38.9% of the music videos in a sample from the U.S. contained brand mentions, but only 14.9% in a similar Swedish sample contained brand mentions. They also noted that 73% of all videos sampled contained some reference to consumption, with rap videos standing out as the genre with the greatest proportion of consumption and the greatest use of a combination of verbal and visual consumption imagery.

Embedding brands in hip-hop videos is an efficient way to target adolescent consumers but some videos in which brands appear may be characterized by questionable behavior (Schemer et al., 2008). Englis, Solomon, and Olofsson’s (1993) content analysis found that rap videos contain more weapons and drug-related products than any other genre. Similarly, Martin and Collins (2002) found that the products that appeared most often in violent video scenes were weapons, but the videos also included sunglasses, telephones, tobacco, and cars. However, as Schemer et al. (2008) articulate, the subjective perception of the viewer is what determines whether or not the placement in the video negatively impacts the brand. “When, for example, the delinquent behavior of a rap performer in a music video is perceived positively, then the transferal of negative meaning from the actor to the embedded brand is unlikely,” (Schemer et al., 2008, p. 925).

With musical genres so varied and music even more accessible via digital downloads, placement in a song or even a music video, which is also usually available through a digital download, can be an excellent vehicle for reaching a specific target audience. This enables
companies who engage in brand placements in music-related mediums to specifically target the perfect consumers for their products.

**Brand Placement on Television**

With interactive television that is just around the corner, consumers will be able to “click” on virtual placements and buy the products in one fell swoop. This may run the gamut from buying a jersey of a star player when a goal has been scored to ordering a pizza when a scene triggers hunger. (Wenner, 2004, p.120)

While it assumes a “hands-off” approach to brand placement in films, The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is far more restrictive and has sponsorship identification rules regarding brand placement television. Sponsorship identification rules apply to incidents involving paid brand placements or placements where other barter arrangements are involved, as a result, usually unpaid, special waivers are granted for movies that are rebroadcast on television (Ferraro & Avery, 2000; Karrh, 1998). Because of these regulations, manufacturers will often provide products completely free of charge to directors to circumvent the FCC sponsorship identification guidelines (Avery & Ferraro, 2000). However, due to the restrictions on violence, nudity, and language in program content offered by major U.S. networks, companies may find more flexibility in choice and a more socially acceptable environment for placing their brands (Ong, 2004). Supporters argue that for viewers to become fully absorbed in a story, programs must simulate a real-world situation as closely as possible, so if certain brands are seen in everyday life, it would be natural to see characters in television programs using and talking about them (Avery & Ferraro, 2000).

As K.J. Turner (2004) notes, when television emerged in the late 1940s and early 1950s, it drew much from radio. Brand placements were often “under-the-table arrangements” between promoters and program talent and/or scriptwriters in which on-screen appearances were traded for cash payments (Newell, Salmon, & Chang, 2006, p. 585). The arrangement in television was
similar to those of the early days of radio when sponsors often controlled all elements of programs (Turner, 2004). Maynard and Scala (2006) note that writers of *The Burns and Allen Show* sometimes actually worked the sponsor into the plots; in one example, audiences listened to George and Gracie sincerely discussing who would go to the store to buy more Carnation Evaporated Milk. This typical 1950s placement arrangement between advertisers and companies that produced consumer goods was even later mimicked in the 1998 movie *The Truman Show*, where the title character played by Jim Carey, unknowingly lives most of his life in a television show. Interestingly, the character only begins to suspect something is out-of-the-ordinary when the brand placements in the “show” begin to increase and become incongruent with his life (Wise, 2002).

Program titles used to be billboards for their sponsors, *The Texaco Star Theater, Lucky Strike Hit Parade, Gillette Cavalcade of Sports, Maxwell House Hour, General Motors Family Party, Firestone Orchestra, Goodyear Television Playhouse, Kraft Television Theater, U.S. Steel Hour, Colgate Comedy Hour, Pepsi-Cola Playhouse, and Schlitz Playhouse of Stars* were only a few of the programs available to early television audiences (Kretchmer, 2004; Maynard & Scala, 2006). Sponsors’ identities were often on stage during the show; Dodge and Geritol were prominently displayed above the orchestra on *The Lawrence Welk Show* (Maynard & Scala, 2006).

Routinely, advertisers would censor dialogue and manipulate programming to their advantage, as Kretchmer (2004) explains:

Premiering in 1949, *Man Against Crime* provides a useful illustration of how the system functioned. Sponsored by camel cigarettes, the show’s writing and direction were correspondingly carefully controlled, with written directions distributed to the production team. Cigarettes were never to be associated with “bad” or disagreeable characters or plots; cigarettes were to be smoked gracefully and there was to be no suggestion of a
narcotic effect; arson and fires were never to be mentioned, as they could be linked in the viewer’s mind to cigarettes; no one was allowed to cough; and, since there were rumors of a forthcoming report on the health effects of smoking…the fictional depiction of doctor characters were to be avoided but, if absolutely necessary, they had to be portrayed in the most admirable light. (p. 43)

Similarly, on The Camel News Caravan news films could never show shots of “no smoking” signs or shots of anyone smoking a cigar, except Winston Churchill (Kretchmer, 2004).

As with soap operas that originated on radio, television soap opera plot lines were often written in conjunction with sponsors and functioned as subtle promotional vehicles assumed to make the audience more receptive to advertisements for mass-produced packaged goods (Hirschman & Thompson, 1997; Lavin 1995). Soap operas today continue this trend. On the ABC soap All My Children, Revlon was able to weave their cosmetics company into an ongoing plot as a rival to lead character Erica Kane’s Enchantment Cosmetics company because of a deal with the network (Schmoll et al, 2006). Brand placement also is found in the Brazilian version of the soap opera, the telenovela. La Pastina (2001) found placements of consumer durables and perishables, such as clothing and food, in his ethnographic study. He writes that, “From its first insertion (1968-1969), Brazilian telenovelas developed a sophisticated system of using product placement to increase revenue,” and “the networks can also circumvent Brazilian regulations that limit commercials to fifteen minute per hour, thus increasing potential revenue per hour of production,” (La Pastina, 2001, p. 547). The networks’ commercial departments even produce promotional materials including list of products along with an explanation of how they could be placed in the telenovelas. Products on the list include everything from agricultural machinery, automobiles, prepared food, and a bus company, to promotions of rural events (La Pastina, 2001).
Brand placement began falling out of network-accepted practices when it began infringing on advertising revenue (Newell, Salmon, & Chang, 2006). K.J. Turner (2004) explained that in 1953, Pat Weaver’s appointment as President of NBC led to major changes. Programs went from 15 minutes to 30 or 60 minutes in length and he pushed the idea of multiple sponsors for a show so the advertising spots could be controlled by the network (Turner, 2004). Shortly after this, the practice of placing brands into television programs seemed to taper off. However, as mentioned earlier, the impact of new technologies over the years including the creation of cable television, the VCR, and now the DVR have led to resurgence in the practice.

Ferraro and Avery (2000) published a content analysis of 112 hours of prime-time television (7 to 11 p.m.) on ABC, NBC, CBS, and FOX from April 2-8, 1997, that found a total of 2,945 brand appearances, with NBC having the highest mean number of brand appearances per 30-minute segment (18.41 appearances), followed by ABC (16.33 appearances), FOX (15.97 appearances) and CBS with only 7.49 appearances per 30-minute segment. La Ferle and Edwards (2006) built upon Ferraro and Avery’s study and analyzed 105 hours of prime-time TV from ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox, and The WB recorded beginning week of Jan. 14, 2002. Their results showed 1,992 placements in 98 programs, mostly occurring in situation comedies, and NBC once again had the most brand appearances, followed by The WB, Fox, CBS, and ABC (La Ferle & Edwards, 2006). The authors also noted “an explosion since 2002 with advertisers experimenting with a host of new techniques to place their products in television shows,” (La Ferle & Edwards, 2006, p. 81)

One of the genres of programming cited for the increase in brand placement on television is the reality show. Given their target audience and the flexibility of integration for brands, reality shows are a sought-after forum for brand placement (Lehu, 2007). Deery (2004)
suggested that reality television has helped deepen the symbiotic relationship between advertising and entertainment due to the low-risk nature of the programming going into syndication and the push to maximize revenue per episode. MTV’s *Real World* franchise has promoted everything from Apple computers to Fruitopia. “So serious are its producers about rewarding its advertisers that they systematically blur out logos for companies that aren’t under contract, a practice that one could argue reduces the environment’s realism by creating a more artificially selective display of brands that is generally found in real life” (Deery, 2004, p. 11).

Fledgling airline Virgin America was the big beneficiary of a deal with the CW network surrounding the reality show *Fly Girls*, which featured Virgin America flight attendants, all in their 20s as they live, work, and play. The company did not pay for the brand placement but provided free airfare for the production crew while shooting (Stanley, 2010). However, Virgin America did more than just provide airfare; the company was a collaborator on the show and reportedly helped select cast members at open auditions, educated the crew about airline regulations, and they provided notes to the producers regarding the show’s episodes.

The game show format is another popular culture phenomenon blurring the line between entertainment and promotion because brands are often intrinsic to game shows as the subject of contests of knowledge (e.g., naming prices) and/or prizes (Gould & Gupta, 2006). On game shows such as *The Price is Right* (first airing in 1956) brands not only appear but also are demonstrated in most cases and have added value if they are awarded as prizes (Deery, 2004). According to Deery (2004), brand placement success on *Survivor* paved the way for placement on other reality television game shows. In one instance on *Survivor II* (aired April 19, 2001), which occurred in the Australian outback, players were allowed to sit at a computer terminals and email friends and relatives. Then, players were allowed to shop online using a Visa card;
Visa, of course, was one of the show’s sponsors (Deer, 2004). Deery describes the benefit a company can receive by placing their brand on the show:

…contestants are almost guaranteed to drool over prizes, like pets kept hungry to ensure they lap up dog food on TV commercials. The urgency created by the competition mirrors the urgency of advertising rhetoric and the players’ intense desire for the object becomes a dramatic element in the narrative….When players are rewarded, it is not with soda but with Mountain Dew, not beer but Budweiser, not snacks but Doritos. In other words, it is not the products generic function that is being highlighted, but carefully differentiated brands, brands that are greeted by contestants as familiar and even celebrated elements of their culture. (Deery, 2004, p. 12)

For seasons eight through ten of Survivor, the Procter & Gamble group signed a contract enabling the placement of 20 of its brands, and becoming one of the show’s four biggest advertisers (Lehu, 2007). Jon Nesvig, President of Sales for Fox Broadcasting, revealed that Fox decided product placement would work in American Idol after seeing its success on Survivor (Deery, 2004). According to several Nielsen Media Research reports (2006, 2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2009), American Idol is consistently ranked among the top three programs in terms of the “Top 10 Programs with Product Placement Activity, Broadcast Network TV.” As was the case in Friedman’s (1985) content analysis of brand placements in novels and Galician and Bordeau’s (2004) study of brands in films, Coca-Cola was highly visible throughout several seasons of the reality singing competition (Lehu, 2007).

NBC’s The Apprentice also routinely featured brands at the center of tasks assigned to contestants on the show. The participants have worked on a Home Depot project and created a jingle for Burger King among other things; the show was also used to launch Procter & Gamble’s Refreshing Vanilla Mint Crest toothpaste in 2004 (Lehu, 2007). The Crest web site logged more than 4.7 million hits—80,000 of which were counted in less than two hours generating more than 40,000 requests for samples reported Lehu. The Celebrity Apprentice is no exception, it ranked fifth among network television shows featuring product placement in 2009
(Nielsen, 2009). After three season of involvement with the show, Kodak’s Vice-President of Brand Marketing Lesley Dance noted, “It’s a platform that produces for us,” (“Kodak Product Placement,” 2010.)

Subway has also successfully ventured into the product placement arena on the television show with the second highest number of placements in 2009, The Biggest Loser (Nielsen, 2009). “Subway’s product placement in The Biggest Loser seems like a seamless fit. Subway way promotes a healthy lifestyle, while The Biggest Loser contestants are looking to lose weight” (“Subway Scores,” 2010).

Even brands that might seem difficult to place on television, such as pharmaceutical products, were found in network broadcasts (Turner, 2004). Ta and Frosch (2008) noticed the NuvaRing contraceptive on the comedy Scrubs, along with posters for medical products, and mentions of drug brands on medical-themed television shows in a sample during a four-week period in fall 2005. There was an average of six verbal mentions of medical brands per episode with one very interesting placement example:

Lupron (TAP Pharmaceuticals) was mentioned on four occasions in an episode of House. Of particular interest is that the doctors were using this product to treat hypogonadism, which is not an FDA-approved indication for this medicine. Indeed, Lupron is traditionally used to suppress testosterone production as a treatment for prostate cancer. However, it is also interesting to note that a newer pulse-dosed Lupron is currently being evaluated as a treatment for hypogonadism in an FDA-registered clinical trial. The off-label use for the product in this show and the concurrent FDA trial appear more than coincidental. Public relations both at TAP and Fox were contacted to discuss this issue but declined to comment. (Ta and Frosch, 2008, p.100).

Brand Placement in Video and Computer Games

From the advertising banners in early arcade games during the 1980s through to today’s latest video game titles, gamers, just like other consumers, are exposed to brand placements.
Advertisers frequently target loyal game players because while they are playing on their consoles they cannot be exposed to television advertising (Lehu, 2007). Roughly 150 million people, approximately 63% of the population of the United States, play video games (McClellan, 2005) and economically, the game industry has surpassed the movie industry (Nelson, 2002). Schmoll et al. (2006) explains that brand placement in video games can be beneficial because the average individual engages with a video game for 30 hours, allowing for greater exposure to a target audience than through a placement in a television sitcom, music video, or even film. A video game allows for concentrated repetition and provides the flexibility of insertion in a wholly created graphic universe (Lehu, 2007). Half of the top 25 video games from 2000 feature a licensed player or branded product (Nelson, 2002).

Brand placement also has financial benefits for game producers similar to those it provides for producers in other areas. Skyrocketing production costs have led game producers to seek out various methods for subsidizing their projects, including the placement of brands within the gaming environment (Schneider & Cornwell, 2005). Companies such as Adidas, Coca-Cola, and Midland Bank PLC now use video games as brand placement vehicles (Karrh, 1998). Game producers of Transworld Surfing were allowed to demonstrate the game at Quicksilver surfing competitions in exchange for placing banners and clothing within the game (Schneider & Cornwell, 2005). Other placements include oil brand Castrol in the game Need for Speed Most Wanted; the Staples Center ring and Everlast boxing equipment in Fight Night; Jeep and Quicksilver accompany the professional skater Tony Hawk in the series of games that bear his name; Intel and McDonald’s are present in The Sims Online; and in EverQuest II, players even have the opportunity to order Pizza Hut during the game (Lehu, 2007).
Each new generation of consoles allows for a more realistic, multi-sensory game with the characters from games inspired by television series such as CSI or 24, or those inspired by films, looking more and more like the real actors who portray them (Lehu 2007; Nelson, 2002). Sports games now feature real professionals such as basketball players Tony Parker and Shaquille O’Neal (NBA LIVE 06); skateboarder Tony Hawk (Pro Skater), racecar driver Michael Schumacher (World Kart Tour 2004) and even Tiger Woods (PGA Tour) (Nelson, 2002).

In addition to licensing, developers can include brands within games from passive background props like advertising banners to active forms such as equipment and characters (Nelson, 2002; Lehu 2007). Technology even allows for the prevention of placement intrusion if the placements are associated with an interactivity algorithm that modifies their appearance, and even their shape, from one round to the next (Lehu, 2007). Lehu explains that “the academic research carried out on this subject shows that placements in video games can be effective, particularly when they target adolescents and young men, because they allow a relatively good memorization of brands placed, and that they can contribute to improving preference for the brand,” (2007, p. 187).

**Brand Placement on the Internet**

Even the Internet is no longer free of brand placement. Special Internet-only miniseries broadcast via YouTube, Joost, Sling, Hulu, iTunes, and other similar sites also have examples of brand placement. *Married on MySpace* a ten-week series that followed a fictional bride and groom as they planned their wedding, was sponsored by Sandra Bullock’s comedy *The Proposal* that hit theaters in the summer of 2009. MySpace voters made the decisions regarding which placed brands (including everything from rings to dresses to honeymoon destinations) the couple would end up incorporating into their wedding. When it came to deciding on the rings, “Elle was
shepherded into a Robbins Brothers store. The bauble retailer got to showcase its services in front of a rabidly receptive audience. Even a rote, for-the-camera recitation of its ‘World’s biggest engagement-ring store’ tagline didn’t come off as gratuitous,” commented Larry Dobrow (2009) of Advertising Age magazine. A similar series, Road to the Altar featured Pier 1, iRobot, and Panda Express while Lexus was involved with Web Therapy an improv comedy series featuring former Friends star Lisa Kudrow (Stanley, 2009).

As illustrated by Married on MySpace brand placement is also appearing on web sites and social networking sites. Circle of Moms, which owns a website and also has a “Circle of Moms” Facebook application, announced a partnership with Kimberly-Clarke’s Huggies brand in 2009. A customized “Huggies Zone” offers content including diaper-related content, an advice column, parenting polls that allow consumers to earn Huggies brand reward points. “We are very proud of the incredible community the millions of moms have created through Circle of Moms,” said Ephraim Luft, CEO of Circle of Moms. “Huggies is the exact type of brand…designed to engage with Circle of Moms. Its rewards program, added-value content, and expertise improve the community and enable a leading brand and its target audience to connect in a positive way” (“Huggies Brand Rewards Moms,” 2009).

In conjunction with the second movie in the Twilight series, Twilight: New Moon, Volvo launched a rather large Internet campaign centered around the fact that the lead character, Edward Cullen, drives a Volvo XC60. Included in the campaign were ads, social media, and interactive games on a cross-promotional web site. There was also the website WhatEdwardDrives.com where fans from the U.S., Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, and France could win various prizes including tickets to the Los Angeles premiere of the film (Greenberg, 2009).
The Future of Brand Placement

With a well-established past, brand placement is not likely to subside any time soon. Undoubtedly, brand placement will continue to grow on the Internet and as new media technologies are created it is likely spread to those as well. The popularity of cell phones with 3G and 4G technology such as the iPhone, various models offered by Verizon Wireless, and other smartphones, as they are called, has created another opportunity for brand placement.

New opportunities are even being created for brand placement in some old genres of media—film and television. In June of 2009, TellX announced the debut of an “Active Video” technology that features “on-demand” content with the touch of a button on the viewers’ remote control. The technology debuted on the DVD release of *The Code* starting Morgan Freeman.

Each scene in a TellX Active Video DVD is fully interactive and features content such as information on the music playing in the scene, maps showing where a scene was filmed, information about actors’ clothing, and “fast facts” related to production (“TellX Unveils,” 2009). The technology is “completely customizable to the brand and movie content and can include everything from simple product placement content to branded video channels…” (“TellX Unveils,” 2009). Blue-ray technology also allows consumers shop for products in a movie or television program on DVD and purchase them via BD Live if their blue-ray player is connected to the Internet. The technology, developed by Bright Stage Media allows consumers to comparison shop for products at online retailers and to tell others about their purchases via social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter (Tribbey, 2009).

Conclusion and Preview of Chapter Two

The introduction of this study presented a detailed look the growing phenomenon of brand placement, examined its history, and briefly commented on its potential growth in the
future. This portion of the study’s literature review presented important information regarding the context of brand placement and the various ways that consumers encounter it. It demonstrated that regardless of the media one consumes, he or she is likely to encounter brand placement.
CHAPTER 2: FROM THE HISTORY OF BRAND PLACEMENT TO ITS PRESENCE IN ACADEMIC LITERATURE

E.T.’s love of Reese’s Pieces brought about changes in both the movie industry and the research surrounding it. Following this memorable cinematic moment, researchers began to show more interest the phenomena of brand placement and began to study it more closely, creating a new genre of research for publication (Karrh, McKee, & Pardun, 2003). Karrh (1998) classifies these studies as content analyses of placement in various media; surveys of practitioners; qualitative studies of placement’s meaning to audiences; studies of audience knowledge of and inferences about placement in films; and experimental studies testing memory, attitude change, and/or purchase intention. La Ferle and Edwards (2006) note that research has described the impact of product placement on brand attitudes, brand recall, and brand salience, as well as on consumer attitudes and experiences toward products placed in movies. They go on to say that findings across these studies indicate that viewers are able to correctly recognize brands placed in films and that consumers do not really mind seeing products placed in motion pictures. McCarty (2004) condenses the research into three general topic areas: prevalence & nature of placement; attitudes and perceptions/beliefs about practice; and effects of placement, with the most active area of academic research relating to the effects of placements on viewers in terms of memory (recognition & recall), evaluation of brands, and purchase intention. This chapter, which reviews the academic literature surrounding brand placement, roughly follows these classifications, first examining placement research in terms of attitudes toward brands/brand awareness, then attitudes toward the practice itself, and finally, effectiveness of brand placement.
With much of the research that deals with placement centered on film, the focus on college-aged audiences is “understandable, since the target audience for much of Hollywood’s production is college-aged…those aged 18-24 are considered the prime target for movie makers. Some 35% of people aged 18-24 report going to the movies at least once per month, compared with a 20% rate for all U.S. adults” (Karrh, 1998, p. 38). Some noteworthy exceptions include DeLorme and Reid (1999); Karrh (1998); Karrh, McKee, and Pardun (2003); La Pastina (2001); Ong (2004); Ong and Meri (1994); Russell (2002); Russell (2006); and Schmoll et al. (2006).

Karrh, McKee, and Pardun (2003) explain that “much of the empirical research to date concerning product placement has focused on one or more executional variables under control of the sponsor and program creator” (p. 41). These executional variables may be program-induced mood; opportunity to process the appearance of a placed brand; placement modality; priming of the brand appearance; and the degree of an objective link between the placed brand and one or more program characters.

Russell (1998) distinguished among placement types according to their modality: “screen placements” (where the brand is visually positioned as part of the set), “script placements” (where the brand is mentioned only verbally), and “plot placements” (which more closely weave the brand into the story); plot placements are assumed to be most effective. For audio-visual media, such as television and film, placements vary along two dimensions: visual and verbal (auditory). Visual placements, called screen placements, are positioned on the television or film set and vary in the number of appearances and the type of camera shot used.

The second dimension is verbal or auditory. This type of placement refers to the brand being mentioned in a dialogue. Russell (1998) goes on to explain that verbal or auditory placements are script placements. As with visual placements, they also vary in degree of audio
placement, depending on the context in which the product is mentioned, the frequency with which it is mentioned, and the emphasis placed on the product name (tone of voice, place in dialogue, character speaking at the time, etc.). One of Russell’s (1998) key findings is that in the context of audiovisual media, memory is greater when the stimulus is spoken than when it is only visually presented.

When a brand becomes part of the plot, taking a major place in the story or building the persona of a character it is known as a plot placement (Russell, 1998). They consist of any combination of visual and verbal connections between the product and the plot. Building on this work on modality, Russell (2002) added that if a brand’s modality of presentation is not congruent with is level of plot connection, viewers tend to become suspicious of the placement.

Gupta and Lord (1998) have a similar way of classifying placements: visual only; audio only; combined audio-visual; placements in these modes are then classified as being either prominent or subtle. Those brand placements that are made highly visible by virtue of size, and/or position on the screen, or the centrality to the action on the screen are prominent placements. Those where the brand is small in size, outside of the main field of visual focus, lost in an array of multiple products or objects, or has a low time of exposure are called subtle placements. Visual is most frequently used of the modes. Following Gupta and Lord (1998) and Russell (1998), Brennan and Babin (2004) found that brand placement recognition levels achieved by audio-visual, on-set placements exceeded the recognition rates achieved by visual, on-set placements. Karrh, McKee, and Pardun (2003) also note that there is also evidence that dual-mode placements have more impact upon viewers’ memory.
Brand Awareness and Attitudes Toward Placed Brands

Ong and Meri (1994) examined effectiveness via attitude-toward-the-brand and measures of purchase intention, they found many respondents were unable to remember most of the brands that appeared in the movies shown as stimuli, and those who did, did not necessarily indicate increased brand awareness or purchase intention. However, Baker and Crawford’s (1995) study of students who viewed the movie Wayne’s World in its entirety found there was a 16% higher reported purchase intention for placed brands possibly indicating that placement may impact short-term purchase intention. According to Karrh (1998) some studies report effects on purchase intention, but none found significant impact on audience attitudes toward placed brands because ceiling effects might limit significant findings since placement studies typically involve only a few exposures (or even a single exposure) to familiar brands.

Consistent with Gupta and Lord (1998), Brennan, Dubas, and Babin (1999) found that placement type had a significant impact on viewer brand recognition, even when the measure was adjusted for the effects of false recognition. Their study also considered exposure time on brand awareness but they found that a greater percentage of the variation in viewer recognition was explained by placement type. While a prominent brand placement may improve brand recall (Gupta & Lord, 1998), d’Astous and Chartier (2000) noted that recall effects may not translate to attitudes toward brands.

However, findings from Russell (2002) indicate that a product’s connection to the plot is a significant source of influence on viewers’ attention to and attitudes toward products. Conditioning may also have something to do with attitudes toward placed brands, preference for rap music turned out to be a significant predictor of viewers’ evaluation of a brand in Schemer et al. (2008). Their findings also confirmed results from Russell (2006), because they too found
that viewers’ attachment to a performer may produce positive attitudes toward a placed brand. A character’s effect on viewers’ attitudes toward placed brands, particularly when characters’ attitudes toward products are positive, emerged in Russell and Stern (2006). However, when characters’ attitudes toward a product are negative, characters influence viewers only if they are strongly associated with the product. Interestingly, para-social attachment was a stronger predictor of attitude toward the product than attitude toward the character was. In other words, the relationship a consumer felt towards a character was a stronger predictor of a consumer’s attitude toward a brand than simply whether or not that consumer liked or disliked a particular character. Matthes, Schemer, and Wirth (2006) indicated that the frequent and unreinforced presentation of a previously unknown brand can have an effect on viewers’ attitudes, even if memory for the placement is low, lending support to the idea that the impact of product placement on viewers’ attitude can be interpreted as a mere exposure effect. They also explain that the findings contradict the idea that placements must be remembered in order to have an attitudinal impact.

While the findings regarding brand placement and attitude toward a brand or brand awareness are a bit inconsistent, this is not the case with research concerning consumers’ attitudes toward the practice of brand placement itself.

**Attitudes Toward Brand Placement**

Social science surveys confirm that many consumers have no strong objection to seeing brands in film and television, they are readily aware of brand placements, and have no strong objection to them as long as they aren’t “overdone” or “inappropriate (d’Astous & Chartier, 2000; DeLorme & Reid, 1999; Gould et al., 2000; Gupta et al., 2000; Natharius, 2004; Nebenzahl & Secunda, 1993; Wenner, 2004).
McKechnie and Thou (2003) examined fourteen research studies between 1993 and 2001 and found that respondents generally have a positive attitude towards the practice of brand placement. The objective of Nebenzahl and Secunda’s 1993 study was to assess the attitudes of filmgoers toward brand placement, as well as the possibility of banning it from U.S. motion pictures. The results indicated that respondents are tired of traditional commercials and do not object to brand placement, viewing it as an effective marketing communication medium that should be allowed. Morton and Friedman (2002) also found that audience members generally disagreed with the proposition of prohibiting product placement in movies and were adverse to the idea of paying more in movie admission prices to avoid exposure to such placements. The small minority of participants who did object to brand placement did so on ethical grounds, which will be examined later in the chapter.

When Ong and Meri (1994) conducted exit surveys of cinema audiences they discovered that participants disagreed with the idea that brand placement was unethical and did not oppose seeing or hearing brands. Those who value perceived realism and favored less restrictions on placements had more positive general attitudes toward brand placement and tended to be more favorable toward the acceptability of brand placements in general than others, note Gupta and Gould (1997). When it came to ethically charged products, men and those who more frequently watched movies, were more accepting of their placements.

Regardless of age or movie watching frequency, participants in DeLorme and Reid’s study (1999) appreciated when brands were placed appropriately and part of the story because they added a sense of realism. d’Astous and Seguin (1999) reinforced this notion with their finding that consumers better evaluate product placements when they are clearly related to the content of the program. Older moviegoers enjoyed the sense of nostalgia that some placements
evoked. As Schmoll et al. (2006) explained, because they don’t look or feel like commercials, brand placements were generally accepted by the Baby Boomer. For younger moviegoers, brand placement takes on significance, beyond the context of a particular movie, because it provides a common bond for self and group identification.

While there may not be a wealth of it, some researchers have examined attitudes surrounding brand placement in other countries. Gould, Gupta, and Grabner-Kräuter (2000) investigated perception of the acceptability of brand placements in Austria, France, and the United States. Consumers in the United States tended to be more accepting of brand placement, but some ethically charged products (i.e. products of cigarettes, alcohol, and guns) were seen as less acceptable.

Because of Karrh, Firth, and Callison (2001), researchers have reason to believe that audiences in some cultures may have a less positive view of brand placement than audiences in the West. In their study of American and Singaporean students’ attitudes toward brand placement, they concluded that “American respondents tended to agree that brand placement is not personally bothersome and that familiar brand names can make their viewing experience more realistic,” (Karrh, Firth, & Callison, 2001, p. 19). Similarly, McKechnie and Thou (2003) report that U.S. consumers were more accepting of product placement than Chinese consumers.

Despite the academic research that shows that, for the most part, audiences do not object to brand placement, some still have concerns regarding the practice. Moviegoers in DeLorme and Reid’s research (1999), who generally accepted brand placement, did dislike excessive or inappropriate brand placements that clashed with their expectations of movie scenery. As can be expected, placements of ethically charged products (e.g., cigarettes and alcohol) have drawn especially strong criticism from consumer advocates (Gupta, Balasubramanian, & Klassen,
It is important to note that the Master Settlement Agreement (1998), which ended dozens of state attorney generals’ lawsuits against the major tobacco companies, forces the tobacco companies to refrain from placements of their products in movies and several other media outlets (Siegel, 2004).

One of the arguments in the debate over the acceptability of brand placement is whether or not brand placement is commercial speech. Courts have generally taken a “hands-off” approach to regulating the film industry, but because television networks use public resources, placements on television are subject to more stringent regulations (Karrh, 1998). Siegel (2004) presents a brief evolution of the Supreme Court’s Commercial Speech Doctrine and cites two cases, one that “tells us that even purely commercial speech enjoys some First Amendment protection,” and a later decision that “represents the Court’s first attempt to tell us how much protection” in order to explain why brand placement would not really fall under the Commercial Speech Doctrine (p. 96).

Fear surrounding brand placement’s potential effects on children is one of the main reasons brand placements draw criticism. In 1989, Action for Children’s Television and the United Church of Christ asked the Federal Communications Commission to investigate brand placement practices and wanted the FCC to ban the practice (Karrh, 1998). Some older moviegoers in DeLorme and Reid’s study (1999) associated branded props with manipulative power and negative consequences for the viewing public, especially children. Auty and Lewis (2004) attempted to determine if children are aware of brand placement and to determine to what extent they notice brands in films. Results indicated that children’s recall of placement was not a significant factor relating to product choice, but showed an effect of brand placement on children’s incidental choice of a drink. Hudson, Hudson, and Peloza’s (2008) survey of parents
in Canada and the United Kingdom once again found that their major concern was the use of ethically charged products. Parents objected most to the use of brand placement in video games, music, and on the Internet.

Consumer groups such as the Consumer’s Union, the Center for the Study of Commercialism, and the Center for Science in the Public Interest object to brand placement calling brand placement deceptive advertising. Critics who label brand placement as a deceptive practice have pushed for regulations or bans. The idea is that audiences are unaware of the intent behind the placements so they are at the mercy of symbols of consumption hidden in media content. However, DeLorme and Reid (1999) argue that “models of brand placement that isolate and decontextualize the audience miss the point—the moviegoer is the final arbiter of influence, not marketing and movie executives” (p. 85). Researcher Peter G. Bordeau would agree, in an interview he noted that “I argue that most of today’s movie audiences, in particular the targeted 17-25 year-old group, have an intimate understanding of the presence of placed brands within motion pictures” (Galician, 2004c).

Despite the previously mentioned research that shows that most consumers don’t mind brand placement and the majority feel it can add a sense of realism to media content (DeLorme & Reid, 1999) critics also have argued that brand placement jeopardizes the artistic integrity of movies. Wenner (2004) explained that saturation of placements causes harm in two distinct ways. He argued that brand placements corrupt any artistic work that did not set out to be a commercial in the first place. He went on to note that placements, almost without exception, show brands in a positive light, creating a false realism that is deceptive. Additionally, media producers are sometimes out of work or between jobs; refusing to accept placements in their creations could earn them the label of being difficult (Wenner, 2004).
While research examining brand awareness and attitudes toward placed brands show attitudes may vary, and consumers and critics may have different attitudes toward the practice of brand placement, one thing that doesn’t waiver is practitioners’ interest in whether product placement is effective.

**Effectiveness of Brand Placement**

Research findings on the effectiveness of brand placement and the best way to measure it are mixed, at best, and have mostly been limited to measuring brand recall using aided or un-aided recall (Russell, 1998; Karrh 1998). Nelson (2002) argued that memory-based evaluation was an appropriate ways of testing the effectiveness of product placement because increased brand awareness was the primary goal of brand placement. Recall is also the measure widely used and cited by practitioners (Karrh, 1998). Karrh, McKee, and Pardun (2003) examined practitioners’ perceptions of brand placement usage and effectiveness. The respondents clearly indicated their belief that product placement offers a popular-culture setting for a promotional message that may prove powerful in influencing subsequent consumers, but they acknowledge that brand placement is not a perfect promotional vehicle. Unaided recall and brand recognition are still the two most popular means of assessing placements, although the tracking of subsequent sales or the measurement of trade or general press coverage are methods that are growing in use (Karrh, McKee & Pardun, 2003).

In terms of placement in film, several studies have found preliminary support for the impact of mode and prominence on recall and recognition of brands (Babin & Carder, 1996; d’Astous & Séguin, 1999; Gupta & Lord, 1998; Russell, 2002). Since the 1990s, more researchers have opted to examine attitudinal measures and purchase intentions (Ong, 2004). Babin and Carder (1996) outlined two managerial implications of their research—if a brand’s
goal is exposure to increase brand recognition, then brand placement is effective but if the second desired effect of placement is recall, it may only be marginally successful.

Some researchers have attempted to propose other measures for determining effectiveness. Russell (1998) adapted a meaning transfer model in order to present a framework for how brand placement works. However, the effectiveness of the proposed model remains to be empirically tested (Russell, 1988). Gupta and Lord (1998) used a two-dimensional approach to categorize different types of product placements based on mode of presentation (the senses activated by the stimulus) and level of prominence (the extent to which the product placement possesses characteristics to make it a central focus of audience attention). As an extension of earlier work, DeLorme and Reid (1999) proposed that placement effectiveness is mediated by audience perceptions of congruence with scenery, prior consumption experience, empathy with characters, audience involvement with story, awareness of traditional advertising for the brand, and other individual differences. Ferraro and Avery (2000) found that brands that were mentioned without a visual depiction led to better recall than a visual placement without audio reinforcement.

Law and Braun (2000) and Auty and Lewis (2004) both illustrated that effects of brand placement could occur without memory of the placement. Law and Braun (2000) found that even people who could not remember seeing certain brands in a television show did prefer these brands in implicit choice tests. They explained that, “if brand awareness is the primary motive, then impact of brand placement is best measured with an explicit (aided or unaided) recall test. On the other hand, if the marketers’ main intent of the product placement is to increase a brand’s likelihood of being chosen from an evoked or consideration set, implicit choice measures would best capture the placement’s effectiveness” (p. 1061). Meanwhile, Johnstone and Dodd (2000)
propose salience as a good measure for placement effectiveness. Their research found that brand placements do have a measurable effect and they are able to increase brand awareness (in short term at least). For Bhatnagar, Aksoy, and Malkoc (2004) a more comprehensive measure of placement effectiveness must also incorporate measures such as trust in brand, effect on trust in the medium and message fit and strength; media credibility, consumer involvement. They also argued that placement efficacy increases with the degree of perceived fit between storylines and placed brands.

In the world of video games, Nelson (2002) demonstrated that game players, even upon playing a game for the first time and for only a limited time, were readily able to recall brands placed within games in both short- and long-term. Schneider and Cornwell (2005) found prominent in-game placements elicited greater recall than subtle placements and they were also better recognized. The level of gamers’ interactivity was found to influence the effectives of brand placements in a study conducted by Nelson, Yaros, and Heejo (2006). Lee and Faber (2007) demonstrated that the location of brand messages in a game influenced one’s processing of embedded brand messages such that focal product placement led to superior recall and recognition sensitivity of brands compared with peripheral placement.

With all of the research on brand placement, there is definitely once conclusion that can be drawn, it is widely accepted that product placements generally do not have an immediate impact, and they rarely work in isolation (Brennan & Babin, 2004).

As we have seen in the literature, the bulk of academic research regarding brand placement focuses more on brand concerns, as can be expected. Researchers primarily have examined attitudes towards brands, awareness of brands, and placement effectiveness. There are
even a number of articles debating the pros and cons of regulating brand placement. However, there appears to be one element of the brand placement equation that is relatively unexplored.

**What’s Missing From the Literature?**

There have been some studies that have raised the possibility of the impact of brand placement on concepts other than just attitudes and recall. One area that remains relatively unexplored is the intersection of brand placement and consumer identity; ideally, this study will help fill that void.

As Hirschman and Thompson (1997) indicate “television programs, magazines, and motion pictures inherently function as informal ‘advertisements persuading consumers to adopt particular lifestyles,’” (p. 97). A promotional effort’s meaning emerges in the relationship to the multiple frames of reference consumers use to make sense of it (Hirschman & Thompson, 1997). The frames of reference can be very wide-ranging in scope, encompassing ideals about the good life, views on celebrities, knowledge about advertising, and even aesthetic standards (p. 43). That is, media and advertising have a symbiotic relationship in which media can enhance the advertising effectiveness by portraying certain brand associations as more desirable than others.

Certain viewers are quick to seek out products (accessories, clothing, and others) seen in media. As a result of Quentin Tarantino’s 2003 film *Kill Bill Vol. 1*, the consumer demand for the yellow and black Onitsuka Tigers tai chi shoes Uma Thurman wore in the film impelled the Japanese manufacturer Asics to increase their production (Lehu, 2007). As Karrh (1998) highlights, missing from brand placement research is brand placement’s opportunity to represent desirable characteristics through brand/character pairing. Which types of character/brand pairings evoke a desire to emulate? How might certain brands or product types “fit” with others to intensify identity display?
Advertisers have already recognized the power of groups of brands in signaling identity. Abercrombie & Fitch is among those blending elements of lifestyle magazines with its mail-order catalog. “The A&F Quarterly has featured recommendations on scooters, beer brands, and personal communication devices as a way of marketing the ‘Abercrombie lifestyle;’” (Karrh, 1998).

**Connectedness: A Different Measure of Brand Placement Effectiveness**

Connected audiences are equivalent to loyal customers, who come back for more, season after season, and who are dedicated to their show and characters to the point there the shows help define who the viewers are, how they behave, and even what they consumer and whom they interact with. (Russell, Norman & Heckler, 2004b, p. 287)

One concept that could help address the void of research Karrh (1998) highlights is the concept of connectedness. In 1999, Russell and Puto expanded on earlier research (Russell, 1998) and proposed the idea of connectedness as a measure for the effectiveness of brand placement. In terms of measuring effectiveness, the results of their study offer support for the idea that a person’s degree of connectedness with a television show moderates the effectiveness of product placement efforts; participants who demonstrated stronger degrees of connectedness with their shows noticed and responded to product placement efforts in a very positive manner. Also, despite the fact that highly connected viewers are influenced by the products portrayed in “their shows,” the study revealed that the viewers do not necessarily see the intent of the placement as a commercial technique.

Russell and Puto’s (1999) findings also revealed important implications regarding a possible influence of brand placement on identity formation. Russell and Puto gathered discourse from several focus groups, Internet “fan forums,” and phenomenological interviews. They found connectedness to be an indicator of the intensity of the television viewing experience...
and a moderator of television influence, stemming from viewers’ perceptions of consumption
images in television programs. Specifically, they defined connectedness as “an intense
relationship between audience and television program that extends beyond the television
watching experience into individuals’ personal and social lives…mediated by high involvement
while watching the show, as manifested by identification to the characters as well as
commitment to the television show,” (Russell & Puto, 1999, p. 397). As a viewer becomes more
intimately connected with a television show, it becomes more influential to his or her personal
and social experiences that extend outside of the watching experience. Connectedness is
associated with measurable behaviors including efforts to not miss an episode of a particular
television show to the rather addictive behavior of some viewers:

This behavior was manifested by: (1) discussion about the show characters: their life
outside the show, gossip, critiques of their personalities, salaries, appearances, clothes,
(2) discussion about the plot, comments about the story, best episodes, conjectures about
next episodes, (3) fantasies about the actors, and (4) quizzes, questions, inquiries related
to episodes of the show. (Russell & Puto, 1999, p. 397)

Russell and Puto (1999) explain that connectedness showcases a show’s contribution to a
person’s identity, both personal and social. Adoring, imitating, and/or modeling character traits
or behaviors portrayed on a show demonstrates a connection to the show. Examples of this
would be viewers adopting clothing or hairstyles (i.e., “Rachel” haircut worn by Jennifer
Aniston’s character on the NBC prime time show Friends) similar to those associated with
television characters, or using phrases quotes from a particular show as part of their everyday
vocabulary (i.e. “Yada, Yada, Yada” from Seinfeld). “Some Mad About You watchers [who
participated in focus groups] inquired about ways to find the same bed or couch as used on the
set of their show” (Russell & Puto, 1999, p. 403). Russell and Puto also cite Seinfeld as a
brand placement and its influence

compelling example because it was one of the most frequent host shows for product placement and it had fans with high levels of connectedness:

[post from a fan forum]  On my recent trip to New Jersey, I was able to finally sample may food items that are regional to the setting of the show. I bought 3 boxes of Drake’s Coffee Cakes (3 for $5) and they were great! I also bought a bottle of “BOSCO” chocolate sauce and had a CLARK BAR. Snapple and Calzones, I can already get where I live. What else am I missing?

This posting generated many suggestions by other watchers who pointed out other branded products that had been portrayed in the show, such as Juju Fruits, Yoo-Hoo, and Kenny Rogers Roasted Chicken. (Russell and Puto, 1999, p. 404)

Socialization and ritualization that occur around a show contribute to the emergence of one’s social self (Russell & Puto, 1999). Russell, Norman, and Heckler (2004a) illustrate this by reporting that, “focus group participants often commented on their favorite programs as being integral to their relationship with their friends, family members, and acquaintances” (p. 279).

Joining a fan club or Internet community or regularly gathering with a group of people to watch a particular show would be other ways that connectedness would contribute to the emergence of one’s social self.

In efforts to build on Russell and Puto’s (1999) initial study of connectedness, Russell, Norman, and Heckler (2004a) developed six factors that represent how viewers connect with their television programs: Escape, Modeling, Fashion, Imitation, Aspiration, and Paraphernalia. Escape characterizes the emotional benefit a viewer gets from a television program. By capturing how individuals relate their everyday lives to the fictitious lives lived by television characters, Modeling measures the social learning process. A character’s appearance is an important potential source of influence and the factor labeled Fashion is designed to measure the extent of this influence. On the surface, Imitation may seem similar to Modeling, but as Russell, Norman, and Heckler (2004a) explain, “although related to the Modeling factor, Imitation represents a shallower expression of identification with the characters, while Modeling is deeper
and affects more long-term aspects of a person’s life” (p. 152). The last factor of connectedness, Paraphernalia, examines the extent to which people collect items such as memorabilia, books, posters, etc. in order to feel more connected to or demonstrate their devotion to particular programs.

In their article, Russell, Norman, and Heckler (2004a) also laid out several propositions related to connectedness. Their research showed that:

1. Connectedness and attitude toward a show are distinct concepts.
2. Connectedness and television viewing are distinct concepts.
3. As connectedness increases, memory of brand placement improves. This was even the case when controlling for attitude toward the show, involvement, or overall TV viewing—highly connected individuals in the study recalled significantly more product placements than did the low-connected individuals.
4. As connectedness increases one’s ability to imagine a show’s characters as real consumers also increases—highly connected individuals in the study were able to imagine their favorite character using more brands than low-connected individuals.
5. Connectedness is significantly related to socialization (i.e. interaction with others, relationships with co-viewers, and the viewer’s social network of co-consumers), reinforcing what Russell and Puto (1999) noted. As one becomes more connected to a television program, he or she will seek out and have more opportunities to interact with other viewers of the program.

These propositions, along with the notion that relationships are the core of the construct of connectedness, led to the proposal of a model illustrating the various types of relationships represented by connectedness (Russell, Norman, & Heckler, 2004b). “A highly connected viewer has a deeper, more intimate relationship with a show, the characters in the show, and other viewers” (p. 280).

Russell, Norman, and Heckler (2004b) classified the relationships as Vertical Connections and Horizontal Connections. Vertical Connections are those between the viewer and the television program. Those with the highest levels of vertical connectedness are emotionally invested in their programs. “Not only do viewers go out of their way to see each episode but also their emotions might be adversely affected if they miss an episode. In a similar
manner, viewing the program elevates the mood of these viewers” (p. 278). The para-social interactions that viewers establish with television characters are captured by the vertical connections of connectedness and they are “characterized by the influence that characters in a program have on a viewer’s cognitions, attitudes, and behaviors” (p. 279).

Horizontal Connections are those that form between viewers of the same program. Even among viewers with lower levels of connectedness, television programs provide a way to create and reinforce relationships with others, but these relationships go beyond merely talking about a particular program. As discovered by Russell and Puto (1999), these connections can contribute to a viewer’s social identity.

Figure 1: Russell, Norman, and Heckler’s Connectedness Model

In addition to illustrating connectedness via a model, there are also several correlates of connectedness, which Russell, Norman, and Heckler (2004b) identified: Gender, Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence, Imaginal Ability, and Optimum Stimulation Level.

Stern and Russell’s previous research (as cited in Russell, Norman & Heckler, 2004b) has shown that men and women interpret television programs differently and that women are more likely to identify with characters. As a result, Russell, Norman, and Heckler (2004b) suggest that women are more likely to engage with television programs and their characters, generating
higher levels of connectedness than men. Regardless of gender, when it comes to being influenced by others, it is proposed that those who are highly susceptible to interpersonal influence will be more susceptible to the influence of a character in a program to which they are highly connected. “Highly imaginative individuals would be more likely to expand their favorite television characters’ lives to other activities or settings,” therefore, Russell, Norman, and Heckler (2004) propose that imaginal ability is also related to connectedness (p. 282). A correlation has been established between optimum stimulation level, OSL, or sensation seeking and motivation for television viewing; as a result, it is thought that OSL and sensation seeking are related to connectedness (Russell, Norman, & Heckler, 2004b). This idea been supported in a more traditional context with consumer brands—individuals with a high OSL tend to switch because of a desire for change/variety; low OSL individuals tend to be more loyal to brands they consume. However, Russell, Norman, and Heckler (2004b) do provide one caveat:

“We do recognize one possible exception to this proposed relationship between OSL and connectedness. The very nature of connectedness is based on a relationship that is deeper and more intimate. Although this does not necessarily imply that this relationship will be more stimulating, it is possible that a high connection to a show could satisfy the need for stimulation…We thus recognize that a person with high OSL might satisfy their need for stimulation through a strong connection with a television program, thus arousing the senses or emotions. However, because OSL tends to be more based on arousal from that which is new and unfamiliar, we believe that high connectedness will account for very little in the way of satisfying the need for stimulation across populations. (p. 282-283).

**Consequences of Connectedness**

The consequences of connectedness that Russell, Norman, and Heckler (2004b) describe are of particular importance to this study because they provide the foundation for inquiry into the potential influence of brand placement on identity formation. Consequences of connectedness include development of the self-concept; identification and social comparison; and community building all of which are integral to identity formation.
As the review of literature in chapter three will show, academic literature regarding individual consumption and the relationships individuals form with a brand explores how consumers associate various brands with aspects of the self. While one’s identity consists of many different aspects, several scholars (see Escalas, 2004; Kleine, Kleine, & Kernan, 1993; Krugman, 1965) have illustrated how people often use brands to mentally and physically represent themselves and to construct and express their identities. Polkinghorne (1991) notes that narrative thought is likely to create a link between brand associations and experiences and one’s self-concept because people tend to create their self-identity though narratives about themselves. Essentially, as people internalize a television show they become more connected to that show so associations with that show (i.e. brand placements) are more likely to be used to cultivate and express their self-concept (Russell, Norman & Heckler, 2004b).

Another consequence of connectedness that will be explored in more detail through the literature review in chapter three is the notion of identification and social comparison. As the literature will explain, television characters can become referent others to viewers, providing them with a source of identification (Harwood, 1999; McCracken, 1986), a source of social comparison (Richins, 1991), and even a source of inspirational goals. The process of social comparison not only allows connectedness to be a unique way of evaluating the effectiveness of brand placement but also allows connectedness to be helpful in identifying those whose identity formation who may be more influenced by it. “Because they identify with and compare themselves to television characters, connected viewers are very attentive to the surroundings of their characters and get ideas for their own lives from the lifestyles they vicariously experience through television programs,” (Russell, Norman & Heckler, 2004b, p. 285). Russell, Norman, and Heckler (2004b) found several examples of this when reviewing Internet fan forums;
viewers often explained how they related to or hoped to emulate characters’ lifestyles. They found instances of connectedness with viewers of *Sex and the City* explaining that viewers were throwing season premiere parties complete with cosmopolitans and tartinis, products that were symbolic of the characters’ lifestyles.

The idea of identification and social comparison is also linked with the third consequence of connectedness: community building. Again, as the literature in chapter three will explain how one identifies one’s self and compares that self with others it can lead to the construction of a social identity. As Arnett (1995) noted, especially during the teenage years television can foster cultural identification among viewers. By associating with those one perceives as being similar, community building can occur. Viewing parties, fan clubs, fan forums, and social networking fan pages all are examples of communities built around individuals’ connectedness with television programming.

**Conclusion and Overview of Chapter Three**

As numerous research (d’Astous & Chartier, 2000; DeLorme & Reid, 1999; Gould et al., 2000; Gupta et al. 2000; Natharius, 2004; Nebenzahl & Secunda, 1993; Wenner, 2004; Schmoll et al., 2006) has noted, many consumers support brand placement as a means of inserting realism into television shows. For better or worse, we live in a branded world. In order for television to continue to communicate a fictional reality, it must reflect the world it mimics, and this world contains brands; if the televised world contained no brands, for some, it would cease to be credible.

Through a review of the academic literature surrounding brand placement this chapter has shown that concept of connectedness not only provides a unique way to measure the effectiveness of brand placement but also provides a way to recognize those consumers whose
identity formation may be influenced by the brands they are exposed to in their favorite television programs. “Whether through the construction of key life roles, the modeling of behaviors, or…the validation of one’s lifestyle, connected viewers rely on their shows for self-definition” (Russell & Puto, 1999, p. 39).

In chapter three, this self-definition is explored through an extensive review of the literature regarding identity formation with a particular focus on identity formation and consumption. Of particular note is Kleine, Kleine, and Kernan’s (1993) notion of the social identity perspective. Its importance to this study is articulated towards the end of the chapter, which also contains the research questions that guide this study.
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

“To consume is to belong: to consume is to justify yourself as a citizen of contemporary society” (Miles, 2003, p. 174).

When addressing avenues for future research, several scholars studying brand placement (Balasubramanian, Karrh, & Patwardhan, 2006; Gould & Gupta, 2006; Karrh, 1998; Russell & Stern, 2006) called for research to move beyond debating the effectiveness of the practice to examining the meanings consumers take from instances of brand placement. Arguably, of all the meanings consumers could create from being exposed to brand placement, the most important meanings are those that deal with their own identity.

Problem Statement

Grodin and Lindlof (1996) note that “over the past 20 years, the socially constructed nature of the self has been the premise of many important research projects, but during that time relatively little attention has been given to the relationship between self and media,” (p. vii). Harwood (1999b) also noted that little research has sought to understand the ways in which identities may be related to mass media use. The media one consumes help to produce a sense of social identity (Elliott, 1997; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Hackley & Tiwsakul, 2006). As a result, it is critical to have a better understanding of how brand placements that might be embedded in the media one consumes may impact the formation of one’s identity. The goal of this study is to provide that critical information. This chapter will examine the intersection of brand placement and identity formation and conclude with the research questions and hypotheses that are at the core of this study.

Gergen (1991) explained that brand consumption helps one address the dilemma of a fragmented identity. Brands do this by serving as a way to display and reinforce one’s self-
concept (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998; Hackley & Tiwsakul, 2006; McNamee, 1996). “As practitioners realize, when brands are subsumed within entertainment experiences, the brand that is featured and the brand that is the entertainment mutually reinforce each other and provide a powerfully resonant discursive resource for identity formation,” (Hackley & Tiwsakul, 2006, p. 69). Hackley and Tiwsakul (2006) cite the television show Friends as an example; wine brand Jacob’s Creek occasionally sponsored the show, and as a result, some fans of the show who aspired to the lifestyle it portrayed may have chosen to consume Jacob’s Creek wine to help symbolically signify a part of their identity.

In order to better understand the relationship between brand consumption and identity formation it is best to start with the subject of identity. However, as Côté (2006) discovered, studies related to identity are “one of the fastest-growing areas in the social sciences” and “the number of publications using identity as a keyword is now in the tens of thousands per decade,” (p. 3 & 4). This review of literature will begin by defining identity and its key components but because the body of literature relating to identity is so immense, it is necessary to focus only on identity research that is related to brand placement—the literature regarding identity formation and consumption.

Kroger (2000) and Côté (2006) explain that Erikson’s work has been credited with drawing attention to and laying the groundwork for the study of identity. According to Jenkins, (2004), “Identity is our understanding of who we are and of who other people are, and reciprocally, other people’s understanding of themselves and of others (which includes us),” (p. 5). However, as Castells (1997) cautions, “…identity must be distinguished from what, traditionally, sociologists have called roles, and role-sets. Roles…are defined by norms, structured by the institutions and organizations of society….Identities are sources of meaning for
the actors themselves, constructed through a process of individuation,” (p. 6-7). Kleine, Kleine, and Allen (1995) note “identity is reflected in one’s life narrative, or life story, capturing various roles including past, present, and anticipated future selves. My life narrative describes the path of my identity development; it defines who I am, who I have been, who I am becoming, and/or who I am no longer” (p. 328). Martin and Nakayama (2008) explain identity as simply our self-concept, who we think we are as a person and note that there are six key aspects of our identities: 1) we create them through communication; 2) we create them in spurts; 3) we have multiple identities; 4) society influences the creation of our identities; 5) our identities are dynamic; 6) identities are developed in different ways in different cultures.

Communication is vital to identity formation. Communicative messages enable us to co-create, negotiate, and reinforce our identities, while also allowing us to emphasize a particular identity depending on who we are communicating with and what we are communicating about. As Annese (2004) explains, “images of the self are formed in a collaboration between personal experience and communication,” (p. 386). However, the personal experience Annese refers to is not limited to experiences of the interpersonal kind, media also has a collaborative role in identity formation. As McNamee (1996) notes, “the vast expansion of technological capabilities in this century has had a tremendous impact on our identity construction. With a simple flip of the television channel or radio station, or a turn of the newspaper or magazine page, we have at our disposal an enormous array of identity models,” (p. 141). Voicemail, e-mail, cellular phone technology, the Internet and more allow connections with others across the miles and thus expand the possibility for identity construction (McNamee, 1996). Turkle (1996) examined multiuser domains (MUDs) as “identity workshops” where people can construct and destruct various identities, which enables them to embody various aspects of their identities they are
unable to project in real life. MUDs also let them build relationships with others in a way they felt they cannot do in real life. Ritson and Elliott (1999) showed how consumers used advertising symbols, which are communicative messages, to aid in social positioning and identity formation.

Identify formation occurs in spurts. “Identity formation involves trying out various life possibilities and gradually moving toward making enduring decisions” (Arnett, 2000, p. 473). Martin and Nakayama (2008) explain that occurrences in our lives provide us with insight and allow reflection, but there are times (sometimes lengthy ones) when we are not inclined to think about who we are as a person. However, they go on to explain that many people will still minimally process information and experiences, which can help them with identity formation. Identity formation is a life-long process (Arnett, 2000; Hall, 1996a; Martin & Nakayama, 2008; Wilska, 2002). Perhaps Hall (1996a) explained it best when he noted, “Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished historical fact...we should think, instead, of identity as a ‘production,’ which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation” (p. 210).

Côté (2006) notes that “…identity is multifaceted, and it is not simply one ‘thing’” (p. 8). Hall (2000) posited that identities are never singular in today’s modern world. As Martin and Nakayama (2008) explain we develop multiple identities and the context we are in determines which one comes into play. Our overall self consists of multiple identities and we often operate in two or more identities at a time, for example, one can be both a friend and a colleague (Stets & Burke, 2005). Gergen (1991) developed the notion of the pastiche personality, noting that people are often similar to “…a social chameleon, constantly borrowing bits and pieces of identity from whatever sources are available and constructing them as useful and desirable in a
given situation,” and that “for the pastiche personality, there is no self outside of that which can be constructed within a social context” (p. 150 & p. 154). Jenkins (2004) adds, “identity can only be understood as process, as ‘being’ or ‘becoming.’ One’s identity—one’s identities, indeed, for who we are is always singular and plural—is never a final or settled matter,” (p. 5).

Identity formation is influenced by society. “It is well acknowledged in both psychology and sociology that the individual ‘self’ or ‘personal identity’ can only be formed with the aid of other individuals. The social dimension becomes ever more important, particularly when talking about the identity of a consumer” (Wilska, 2002, p. 195). Sarup (1996) notes that what we consume, what we wear, what we buy, what we think of society, and what we think of others all play a part in who we are as a person. How one relates to everyday life is key to one's identity formation (Sarup, 1996). Popular culture, mass media, history, economics, and politics are also powerful forces that impact how we see ourselves (Martin & Nakayama, 2008; Sarup, 1996). Jenkins (2004) explains the importance of validation, when it comes to identity formation, noting that it is not enough for us to see ourselves in a particular light, how others see us is just as important. “It is not enough to assert an identity. That identity must also be validated (or not) by those with whom we have dealings. *Identity is never unilateral,*” (Jenkins, 2004, p. 19).

Schau (2000) notes that consumer research, sociology, and anthropology all describe identities as dynamic and context specific. Martin and Nakayama (2008) add that our identities are dynamic because societal forces often contribute to their changes. History, geography, biology, productive and reproductive institutions, collective memory and personal fantasies, power apparatuses, and religious revelations all play part in identity construction (Castells, 1997). A good illustration of this is Lyons and Willott’s (2008) study that examined how changes in society’s construction of gender impact how some young women are redefining their
gender identities in relation to men and the traditional masculine ideals of consuming alcohol in public.

While we may all be similar in the fact that our dynamic, multiple identities are created in spurts, by communication, and shaped by societal influences, it is important to remember that identity formation develops in different ways in different countries. “The ways that we see ourselves, our sense of social identity, and the ways in which we seek to express and validate this sense of identity are highly personal, malleable and variable and may not be entirely transparent to even ourselves. Our identity is intimately connected with our subjective experience, both framing and forming it” (Hackley & Tiwsakul, 2006, p. 72). Cultural images and ideals portrayed in media are critical to identity development (Hirschman & Thompson, 1997). Elliott and Wattanasuwan (1998) note that in society’s symbol-rich environment meanings become shared through the socialization process. The various cultural interpretations of situations and objects depend upon these shared meanings and “consumers use these symbolic meanings to construct, maintain and express each of their multiple identities” (p. 133).

**Consumption and Identity Formation**

We cannot hope to understand consumer behavior without first gaining some understanding of the meanings that consumers attach to possessions. A key to understanding what possessions mean is recognizing that, knowingly or unknowingly, intentionally or unintentionally, we regard our possessions as part of ourselves. (Belk, 1988, p.139)

One cultural practice that is key in developing the social relationships that aid in identity formation is consumption (Elliott, 1997). Consumption helps us create and negotiate our identity, which impacts how we create meaning in society (Sarup, 1996). We use our possessions as symbols to shape a unique identity, connect with others, and participate in our culture through shared meaning (Schultz, Kleine, & Kernan, 1989). As consumers situate
themselves with respect to consumer goods, symbols and services, they are creating their consumer identities (Schau, 2000). According to Hackley and Tiwsakul (2006), “…the question ‘who am I and how can I represent my identity in a way in which others will recognize?’ is resolved into the question ‘what shall I consume?’” (p. 70).

Schau (2000) defines consumption as “the process of procuring, appreciating, and using things as utilitarian objects, signs, and enablers of the self,” (p. 53). It is important to note these objects, services, etc. do not have to be purchased; our consumption habits are not necessarily synonymous with our purchasing habits. Elliott (1997) explains that postmodern theories of consumption suggest that consumers no longer consume products simply for their material usage, they consume them for the symbolic meaning of those products and how they portray their images. “It is within this social context that the individual uses consumer goods and the consumption process as the materials with which to construct and maintain an identity, form relationships, and frame psychological events,” (Elliott, 1997, p. 287). As Kleine, Kleine, and Allen (1995) discuss, the essences of one’s individuality may be portrayed through the symbolic meanings of his or her possessions. According to Levy (as cited in Reed, 2002), much of our self-esteem and social status is connected to the products we consume. For those individuals who aspire to a certain status or lifestyle, possessions are part of the process of symbolic self-completion, where individuals use symbolic resources to attempt to fill potential voids (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982). Wearing and Wearing (2000) note that Veblen (1899) coined the term ‘conspicuous consumption’ to refer to the purchase of goods for display as a means of asserting prestige and status.

“Although the consumer learns and develops consumption symbols through socialization processes and exposures to mass media (for example, advertising), it does not mean that
everybody who possesses the same product bought it for the same symbolic meaning,” (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998, p 134). Also, Dittmar (1992) and Karrh (1998) note that we use the goods we consume to construct our self-identity while others rely on how we use those goods to make inferences about us.

“It has been suggested that the representation of ‘who we are’ relies to a large extent on the ‘symbols associated with the goods we purchase, and especially those that are in fashion at a particular time,’ (Wearing & Wearing, 2000, p. 45). Consumer research on the significance of possessions finds that they can be used to satisfy psychological needs; to reinforce and express self-identity; to allow one to differentiate one’s self from others; and to connect one’s self to significant others (Escalas, 2004; Kleine, Kleine, & Allen, 1995). Belk (1988) provides examples of this when citing interviews with individuals who have reported an extreme feeling of identity invested in certain material objects. Similarly, Schau (2000) notes that the studies relating to identity formation and consumption that have been conducted in the fields of consumer research, sociology, and anthropology revolve around the tenet that “consumers are what they consume, and conversely that consumers consume what they are,” (p.50). Essentially, Schau is arguing that these studies imply that what we consume is based upon our identity and our identities are evident through that consumption. This point is illustrated well by Bengry-Howell and Griffin (2007) who found that for young, working class, white men in Midlands and North Wales, modifying their car was both a key consumption activity and a critical part of their identity formation. “It is a material process that enables individuals to symbolically differentiate themselves from the mass of others and culturally constitute themselves as ‘unique’ individuals through their ownership of ‘unique’ cars (Bengry-Howell & Griffin, 2007, p. 452).
As consumers, we deliberately acquire things in order to achieve a pre-conceived idea about ourselves (Schau, 2000). Acquiring possessions is a fundamental process in identity construction and those possessions can operate as extensions of the self (Bengry-Howell & Griffin, 2007). “Indeed, marketers often create or (re)position products and brands to embody a particular social identity oriented lifestyle,” (Reed, 2004, p. 286). Products that correspond with the identities that people want to project are often sought out while those products they feel will reflect negatively on them are avoided (Bengry-Howell & Griffin, 2007). Sarup (1996) notes that one cannot avoid the obligation to consume because it is the primary mode of social integration and a primary activity within society.

Brand placement is just one of the many ways that consumption is reinforced in society (Galician, 2004c). Unfortunately, “one effect of the propagation of a culture dedicated primarily to shopping is the increasingly prevalent notion that identity is something that can be purchased…,” (Galician, 2004c, p. 243).

Smith (2007) argued that material culture “is the most straightforward way of expressing the shifts and subtleties of identity as they are selectively created” (p. 414). In order to reach that conclusion, Smith (2007) examined the use of several goods not usually seen by others (prescription drugs, underwear, and personal hygiene products) and found that these product contribute to the development of a reflexive identity, an identity that people project to themselves containing elements of self-awareness or self-construction that are not necessarily known to the public.

According to Kleine, Kleine, and Kernan (1992), mundane consumption, “the ordinary things people do (and consume) every day has profound implications for their sense of well-being…what we consume—in order to perform even ordinary human activities—both
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contributes to and reflects our sense of identity” (p. 411). There are three characteristics of mundane consumption: 1) it involves the use of product clusters in a pattern; 2) it occurs within an activity stream; 3) it involves social interaction (Kleine, Kleine, & Kernan, 1992). In reference to product clusters, Kleine, Kleine, and Kernan (1992) provide the example of the equipment and clothing used by a cyclist, “mundane consumption entails using sets of interdependent and complementary products in a particular way. A cyclist’s bicycle, cycling shorts, shirt, shoes, helmet, and gloves exemplify the utilitarian and symbolic coherence of such sets,” (p. 412). They go on to say that it is the patterned usage of these product sets that can influence our impression of others as well as their impression of us. Fournier (1998) examined brand usage using relationship principles and theories and found that, “brands cohere into systems that consumers create not only to aid in living but also to give meaning to their lives. Put simply, consumers do not choose brands, they choose lives,” (p. 367). One’s activity streams generate, organize, and regulate consumption, which in turn enables activity (Kleine, Kleine, & Kernan, 1992). To help explain this, Kleine, Kleine, and Kernan (1992) extend the cycling example noting that cycling shoes enable one to ride a bicycle in a particular way that is not achieved by using regular street shoes. Lastly, in reference to the fact that mundane consumption involves social interaction, they note that one purpose of consumption is to help us get along with others. One’s participation in social networks can serve to regulate or stabilize consumption patterns, but their influence can also make changing consumption patterns difficult. When one wants to avoid social interaction, he or she can also use consumption patterns such as listening to music or reading a book (Kleine, Kleine, & Kernan, 1992).

In order to better understand ordinary consumption activities, Kleine, Kleine, and Kernan (1993) proposed and tested a model based on symbolic interactionist identity theory that
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highlights the importance of self-definition. To test the model, they conducted two studies and found that people use different groups of products to enact each of their role identities and that those products relate indirectly to self-definition. Their model examines how one’s artifacts and consumption patterns contribute to his or her self-definitions (Kleine, Kleine, & Kernan, 1993; Laverie, Kleine, & Kleine, 2002). It is important to note, “The model’s unit of analysis is a role identity, not the entire self-concept… For example, it is useful to study how a person’s tennis-related possessions impact views of herself as a tennis player, not her entire self-concept” (Laverie, Kleine, & Kleine, 2002, p. 661).

Laverie, Kleine, and Kleine (2002) sought to extend the work of Kleine, Kleine, and Kernan (1993) noting that they believed their study “…to be the first study to empirically demonstrate distinct effects of possessions and performance appraisals on self-definition, (p. 668). Their work confirmed that the way people define themselves is dependent upon what they perceive others think—a main premise of identity theory (Laverie, Kleine & Kleine, 2002). One’s possessions are linked to the self because they enable cultivation of identity. As Smith (2007) notes, “…the identity is both self-projected and perceived by others. It is important to keep in mind that some components of an individual’s reflexive identity are thwarted in their public expression” (p. 415).

How can one insure that his or her identity is not thwarted? It is arguable that the answer to this dilemma is where brand placement’s concept of connectedness and the social identity perspective intersect.

“Each of our identities exists at a ‘real’ level (e.g., what a person actually does when her or she goes fishing) and at an ‘ideal’ one (e.g., how a person would like to be as a fisherman)”
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(Kleine, Kleine, & Kernan, 1993, p. 213). In order to aspire to an ideal identity, one must have some way of developing that ideal. **Modeling, Imitation, and Aspiration** are three aspects of connectedness but ideas surrounding these concepts also appear in the literature regarding identity formation, and more specifically, the social identity perspective.

**The Social Identity Perspective**

According to the social identity perspective, consumption is central to the communication of self-identity (Warde, 1994). It predicts a connection between one’s possessions and their various identities noting that one’s identity-related possession are used to enact his or her corresponding identity (Kleine, Kleine, & Kernan, 1993). The social identity perspective focuses on three ideas that support daily life: 1) most of daily life constitutes doing things (eating, sleeping, working, recreating); 2) doing things in daily life requires having possessions; 3) the things we have/do are largely social in nature—our behavior is influenced by the physical or symbolic presence of others (Kleine, Kleine, & Kernan, 1993, p. 212).

The basic tenet of the social identity perspective is that, “people’s activities and enabling possessions are organized around their social identities—the multifaceted labels by which their Me is recognized by themselves and members of society,” and “we come to know which products enable which activities by observing other people’s behavior and by interpreting their reactions to ours,” (Kleine, Kleine, & Kernan, 1993, p. 211). Possessions and consumption allow us to gain feedback from others, which is necessary for identity formation and maintenance (Kleine, Kleine, & Kernan, 1993; Wiklund & Gollwitzer, 1982).

Annese (2004) found that television talk show viewers use their programs in the formation and maintenance of identity by comparing their lives to the shows’ guests in order to form a judgment that they are better off than those featured on the program. Gould and Gupta
(2006) found the theme of “imagining” emerged from their study of brand placement on television game shows. Viewers often imagined what it would like to be a contestant and/or winner:

Plus, since I often play along with the show, as I’m sure most watchers of the game do, I somewhat place myself in the shoes of the contestants. (Ed 34)

I wonder about how much money that person is going to win, and more importantly, I wonder how much money I would have won if I was there (Will 32)

(Gould and Gupta, 2006, p. 74)

The theme of imagining that emerged in Gould and Gupta’s (2006) study bears resemblance to Markus and Nurius’s (1986) notion of possible selves. “Possible selves are the ideal selves that we would very much like to become. They are also the selves we could become, and the selves we are afraid of becoming,” (p. 954). The guests featured on the talks shows in Annese’s (2004) study represented possible selves that the study participants feared. The possible selves we create result from our comparison of ourselves (including our thoughts, feelings, characteristics, and behavior) to other people we consider to be important in our lives (Markus & Nurius, 1986). “An individual is free to construct any variety of possible selves, yet the pool of possible selves derives from the categories made salient by the individual’s particular sociocultural and historical context and from the models, images, and symbols provided by the media and the individual’s immediate social experience” (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 954). In addition to providing a self to aspire to or avoid, Markus and Nurius note that possible selves provide a context that one can use to compare and interpret one’s current self.

People may draw inspiration from celebrities if they see them as mentors and/or role models. Boon and Lomore (2001) found that media figures play a part in identity formation by serving as models and mentors who inspire their fans to emulate everything from their attitudes and behaviors to their personal beliefs and values. Celebrities can impact identity formation by
modeling behaviors, attitudes, and values that their admirers aspire to emulate (Boon & Lomore, 2001; Russell & Puto, 1999; Russell, Norman, & Heckler, 2004a). Karrh’s (1998) model of brand placement posits that characters’ identities are actually evaluated and desired by audience members.

In Internet chat forums, Russell and Puto (1999) found fans who were so devoted to shows that they knew about particular items used by the characters on their favorite shows, who used them, what episode they were used in, and even what stores carried the items. They also reported that one focus group participant had a friend who had adopted the clothing and hairstyle of the character Kramer from the television show *Seinfeld*.

In a study of young adults, Boon and Lomore (2001) found that almost 60% of their sample of participants reported that their idols had an influence on their attitudes and personal values while nearly half (46.7%) noted that they were inspired to pursue activities in which their idols participated. “Many of the young adults in our study reported taking concrete steps directed at transforming themselves in ways that would tend increase the apparent “match” between their idol’s identity and their own” (Boon & Lomore, 2001, p 446). Some participants reported that their idols even motivated them to increase their involvement in sports or volunteer work, or to undertake a variety of pursuits such as creative writing, becoming a vegetarian, or smoking marijuana (Boon & Lomore, 2001). Englis, Solomon, and Olofosson (1993) cite Madonna’s “use of lingerie as outerwear” as an example of how popular culture icons provide “prototypes that consumers strive to emulate,” (p. 22).

The influence of celebrities is not unique to the United States either, Kirplani (2006) discussed how fans in India frequently emulate celebrities, in dress, speech and behavior. La Pastina (2001) found that telenovelas in Brazil also had influence over fans noting that the local
hairdresser said that many people asked to have their hair cut like their favorite telenovela character’s hair. This mirrors what occurred in the U.S. when women flocked to their hairdressers to get the signature haircut worn by Jennifer Aniston’s character, Rachel, on the TV show *Friends*. The cut even became known as “the Rachel.”

Hirschman and Thompson (1997) note that consumers may experience a sense of dissatisfaction with their current possessions, appearance, or lifestyle when they encounter the idealized images conveyed by media. Because audience members realize they may not be able possess all of the traits of their favorite actor or actress, they may see acquiring the consumer goods their idols use as a tangible way to emulate them (Karrh, 1998). Hackley and Tiwsakul (2006) note that, “product placement is an ideal vehicle for suggesting new associations between self-concept and consumption practices” (p. 70). Media content provides an opportunity to discover various identities and the props necessary to enact them (Kleine, Kleine, & Kernan, 1993). Content such as magazines, books, films, and television programs contain information about how to enact a particular identity. The film and television stars who are associated with placed brands represent possible selves. “An admirable character using a particular brand tells the audience that this is the ‘in’ or ‘cool’ brand of a particular product or the way to the good life” (McCarty, 2004, p. 53).

Some viewers may see the placed brands as validating their existing identity and consumption patterns (Balasubramanian, Karrh, & Patwardhan, 2006; DeLorme & Reid, 1999). When audience members actively process a program, they are looking for cues about the characters, their identity characteristics, and their behaviors; the brands featured in the programs not only serve as guides for asserting an identity, but also serve as guides for reinforcing them (Karrh, 1998). As DeLorme and Reid (1999) found out, exposure to previously purchased brands
was judged to validate and reinforce identities, consumer decision-making, and purchasing patterns:

Elaine, 40, infrequent moviegoer

…seeing brands in those kinds of presentations validates my existence. I recognize it. Other people out there in the world use the same things that I do. Have the same stuff in their house. Have the same stuff in their car. Wear the same things. So it kind of makes me feel like I’m like them or not like them. These things are mainstream or not mainstream. Where I make a conscious decision not to have those, I recognize that I’m not like many people from my culture who would have things like that… (p. 82)

“Whether through the construction of key life roles, the modeling of behaviors, or…the validation of one’s lifestyle, connected viewers rely on their shows for self-definition,” (Russell & Puto, 1999, p. 39).

**Consumption and Emerging Adulthood**

Media portrayals of products and lifestyles bombard us throughout the course of our daily lives. However, as Englis, Solomon, and Olofosson (1993) note, “the desire to display the trappings of U.S. popular culture is probably most acute among adolescents and young adults, whose developing identities and interpersonal behaviors tend to be strongly influenced by the material symbolism associated with relevant subcultures,” (p. 21). Young consumers assimilate the consumption ideals in efforts to shape identities and build lifestyles they see as desirable (Englis, Solomon, & Olofosson, 1993).

Even though identity formation is an ongoing process, there is one key stage during a person’s life when he or she is highly engaged in shaping relevant identities as the foundation for the later stages in life. Arnett (2000, 2004) defined emerging adulthood as the late teens through the twenties, especially ages 18-25, and noted that it is an important developmental period in one’s life. Societal changes in the “Western nations” have led to a “delaying of psychosocial
maturity,” creating an “age of possibilities” and opportunity for identity formation (Arnett, 2000; 2004). There are five main characteristics of emerging adulthood:

1. It is the age of identity exploration, of trying out various possibilities, especially in love and work.
2. It is the age of instability.
3. It is the most self-focused age of life.
4. It is the age of feeling in-between, in transition, neither adolescent nor adult. (Arnett, 2004, p. 8).

Arnett (2000) also explains that while most identity research has focused on adolescence, it has shown that identity formation continues through the late teens and twenties. Kroger (1999) and Mullis, Brailsford, and Mullis (2003) observed that despite the fact that identity formation is an ongoing process, few studies have involved those over the age of 21.

As emerging adults gain independence and greater financial responsibility, they develop new consumption patterns, which impact their consumer behavior later in life (Xu et al., 2004). Fournier (1998) used phenomenological interviewing to construct life history case studies to better understand consumers’ lived experiences with brands. When referring to a 23 year-old female college student, Fournier (1998) noted that, “this is a phase of serious self-concept negotiation. It is a time for exploring possible roles and identities and for making provisional commitments to some working definition of self…Vicki’s transactional life task is to explore the possibilities of the adult world, arrive at an initial definition of the self as an adult, and fashion a world consistent with external and internal dimensions of that definition” (p. 356). Xu et al. (2004) found that identity influenced emerging adults’ choices with regard to ethnic food and entertainment, in particular that Asian American emerging adults with friends from their own ethnic group are more likely to possess a strong ethnic identity and were also more likely to consume ethnic food, attend ethnic movies and performances, and listen to ethnic music.

Galician (2004c) offers a poignant critique of emerging adults noting that:
...so many aspects of American culture have been connected to advertising, marketing, and consumption that it becomes difficult to find any other form of discourse or ideas that are not connected to consumption or branding. We have a generation entering its twenties that has never known anything different: They have never known a culture that wasn’t organized around marketing or one that was really of their own spontaneous creation...

For these young people, the way they think about who they are, the way they understand their very identity, is tied to their consumption patterns. Much of what they want to say to each other and to the rest of the world they communicate through the brands they wear, the beverages they drink, the fast food they prefer, the music they buy and the movies they see. (p. 243)

The review of brand placement literature in chapter two noted that much of the research focuses on college-aged audiences because they are the target audience for much of Hollywood’s production. The literature also shows that brand placement can be a particularly effective way for reaching younger consumers because while young people do watch television, they frequently use technology to “edit out” ads (Pompper & Choo, 2008). “Product placement is youth oriented and ...they are more likely to be influenced by what they see on TV or film—as well as affluent, upscale, status-oriented consumers,” explained a strategic planner with a food and beverage company in Pompper and Choo’s (2008, p. 59) study of industry professionals’ views of brand placement. Another professional adds that, “If a star in a movie wears (a product)...uses it correctly...and shows the benefits of using...then product placement can be very effective,” (Pompper & Choo, 2008, p. 60). As Maguire and Stanway (2008) argue, emerging adults’ affinity with consumption and the fact that they are strategically targeted make them an important lens through which to consumption and identity formation. “In working on their appearances, young adults negotiate the competing demands of forging an identity in a consumer society—to fit in and be accepted, but at the same time to stand out as an individual” (p. 64).
Research Questions and Hypotheses

In chapter two, the review of the academic literature surrounding brand placement explained how the concept of connectedness not only provides a unique way to measure the effectiveness of brand placement but also provides a way to recognize those consumers whose identity formation may be influenced by the brands they are exposed to in their favorite television programs. Connectedness is the level of intensity of a viewer’s relationship with the characters and context of a television program; it captures the extent to which a television program can contribute to a viewer’s self and social identity (Russell, Norman, & Heckler, 2004a; 2004b). Given the research regarding consumption and emerging adults, and the fact that brand placement is often used to target emerging adults, the first research question guiding this study is:

RQ 1: To what extent does brand placement contribute to identity formation in emerging adults?

This question seeks to understand what aspects of connectedness, Escape, Modeling, Fashion, Imitation, Aspiration, and Paraphernalia, are most prevalent among emerging adults and raises an additional question. The potential results from the first research question lead to another research question:

RQ 2: What are the results of any influence on identity formation?

Aspects of Imitation, Modeling, Fashion, and Paraphernalia that might emerge from question one speak to behavioral influences: Do emerging adults acquire or change their behavior in order to later acquire the placed brands? Aspects of Escape and Aspiration that might emerge from question one speak to affective influences: What the emotional connection or impact that might result from placed brands?
As Russell, Norman, and Heckler (2004a; 2004b) explain, viewers who are highly connected are more likely to be influenced by the content of their favorite programs and to attempt to mold their own lives after the lives of those characters within those shows.

“Individuals appear to invest in their relationships with their favorite media personalities in much the same way as they invest in relationships with partners in their real relationships, and in spite of the lack of opportunities for actual interaction, often experience a sense of emotional closeness to their idols that parallels affective experiences common to their other relationships” (Boon & Lomore, 2001, p. 435). Fiske (1992) notes that some viewers feel they can relate to and/or identity with characters in a television show because, depending upon the setting of the show, the characters appear to live in time scales similar to their viewers. Viewers with high levels of connectedness have a greater ability to imagine their favorite characters as real people (Russell, Norman, & Heckler, 2004a). Some viewers may even go as far as seeing the characters as real people or they may develop enough of an emotional attachment or feelings of intimacy with the characters that a para-social relationship results (Fiske, 1992). The characters become referent others and serve as models that can influence identification, can serve as a reference point for social comparison, and can serve as an ideal to which to aspire (Hirschman & Thompson 1997; Maccoby & Wilson 1957; Richins 1991; Russell, Norman, & Heckler, 2004a; Russell, Norman & Heckler 2004b). “Because of the relationships they have with the characters, they are interested in the types of consumption displayed on the show, and, as a result, they pay more attention to these consumption portrayals and become more familiar with the premise and characters” (Russell, Norman & Heckler, 2004, p. 156). With all of this in mind, the next logical research question is:

RQ 3: Among emerging adults, what are the characteristics of someone whose identity formation is most likely to be influenced by brand placements?
Following examples of research methodology used by Fournier (1998) and Holt and Thompson (2004), in-depth interviews were used to answer this question. According to van Reijmersdal, Neijens and Snit (2007) young people, women, and viewers with lower levels of education tend to watch more programming that features brand placement. Research has also noted that as education level decrease, one’s television viewing tends to increase (O’Guinn & Shrum, 1997). As mentioned in chapter two, women tend to engage more with television; therefore, they tend to have higher levels of connectedness (Russell, Norman, & Heckler, 2004b). Hirschman and Thompson (1997) cite research (Fiske, 1992; Richins, 1991) that shows that young women tend to look to fashion models or celebrities for inspiration while young men often look up to athletes. Similarly, Inceoglu and Kar (2009) discussed how women’s consumption habits, including media exposure, influenced their decision to have plastic surgery and Trautmann-Attmann and Johnson (2006) examined the motivations behind the compulsive clothes buying behaviors of some women. Women also use consumption as an important way to transition among life stages (Carrigan & Szmigin, 2004; Curasi, Hogg, & Maclaran, 2004; Thomsen & Sorensen, 2006). This leads to the first hypothesis of the study:

H1: Women, who are emerging adults, are more likely to have their identity formation influenced by brand placement than men.

According to O’Guinn and Shrum (1997), “our data indicate that, at least where consumption markers of affluence are concerned, those with less income and less education are most affected by televised representations of the consumptions practices of others” (p. 291). However, Pompper and Choo (2008) note that those on the more affluent end of the socio-economic spectrum who are status-oriented tend to be more influenced by the brands they see on television or in films. Because of the divergent findings from these studies, a second hypothesis
has been proposed in hopes of contributing to the knowledge about the potential influence of socio-economic factors on consumption.

H2: Emerging adults who report higher estimates of family income are more likely to have their identity formation influenced by brand placement.

**Conclusion and Overview of Chapter Four**

Understanding what leads people to want to emulate the usage of placed brands or to look to their usage for reinforcement of an identity has important implications for those in the academic realm as well as those in the business world. Scholars in the fields of communication, sociology, and psychology stand to benefit from the findings related to identity formation. This study’s findings also have implications for those in the business world who rely on brand placement to promote their products and/or companies. The findings will also be useful for those who debate the ethics of brand placement.

Chapter four contains a detailed description of the methods used to answer the research questions and test the study’s hypotheses. As alluded to in this chapter, the population central to this inquiry is emerging adults. The next chapter also provides more rationale for selecting this segment of the population.
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHOD

Following the review of the academic literature surrounding brand placement and the academic literature concerning identity formation and consumption, along with the presentation of several research questions, it is now important to discuss the method used to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses driving this study. Chapter four details how this study sought to understand if, and possibly how, brand placement could impact identity formation. This chapter provides the rationale for focusing on brand placement in television programs, continues chapter three’s discussion of the population by providing the rationale for the population’s selection, and details how the research was conducted.

Hirschman and Thompson (1997) note that mass media provides a frame of reference that helps consumers categorize and interpret reality. According to Solomon and Englis (1994) television plays a variety of social functions including regulation of behavior, facilitation of communication, and social learning. “In terms of exposure television rivals many traditional socialization agents such as school, church, and even parents” (O’Guinn & Shrum, 1997, p. 279). Based upon the results of their 1997 study, O’Guinn and Shrum argue that there needs to be a better understanding of the role television programming plays in consumer socialization because very little research has explored this phenomenon.

The research concerning adults and their relationship with television often falls into two broad categories—market research concerning viewing patterns and various preferences, and Uses and Gratifications studies (Newton & Buck, 1985). Research has shown that there is a positive correlation between the amount of television viewing and a viewer’s estimates of the prevalence of products associated with affluence (O’Guinn & Shrum, 1997). Therefore, the
message that television sends with its frequent use of affluent consumption symbols warrants further investigation.

Karrh (1998) argued for more research that explores the bond that consumers form with various media characters and how that relationship may aid in processing brand placements. Russell, Norman, and Heckler (2004a) add that since it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish promotional content from programming content it is important to move beyond the amount of television people watch and how much they enjoy their programs to explore how people connect to characters and the situations the they face, and how referential relations with those characters can impact a consumer’s consumption.

In response to O’Guinn and Shrum (1997), Karrh (1998), and Russell, Norman, and Heckler (2004a) this is research seeks to add to the body of research addressing television as an agent of socialization and to further explore the unique relationship between a television consumer and his or her favorite characters.

**Rationale for Focusing on Television Programs**

Identification with social groups that are important to them is one reason that individuals choose to watch certain television shows (Harwood, 1999b). Harwood (1999a) notes that experimental work has shown that people prefer watching television shows featuring characters that are similar to them in age. Television’s global reach has contributed to both the deconstruction and construction of identities (Barker, 2000). Thompson (1995) and Barker (2000) both discuss how viewers incorporate meanings and messages from television into their identities. According to Livingstone (1990), audiences “participate without passive identification, they blur boundaries between viewing and living by endless ‘what happened then’ discussions and by bringing their everyday experience to judge the drama” (p. 2).
Both Russell (1998) and Hirschman (1998) note that we often think of ourselves in terms of characters from plays, novels, or movies. Seeing ourselves as a character and our everyday actions as part of the plot of a narrative helps us create and assign meaning to our experiences; “…individuals construct private and personal stories linking diverse events of their lives into unified and understandable wholes. These are stories about the self. They are the basis of personal identity and self-understanding and they provide answers to the question, ‘Who am I?’” (Polkinghorne, 1991, p. 136). “Television programs drive viewers to co-construct, in cooperative or conflicting ways, TV meanings through their involvement in what they are watching” (Annese, 2004, p. 374). When brands are placed into television stories with which one feels he or she can relate, it adds a sense of authenticity and salience to the story and encourages a sense of familiarity with the brand (Hirschman, 1998; Russell, 1998). Those brands that are placed in mass media content become symbols of consumption and become associated with people’s life narratives due to their association with a familiar fictional narrative. “TV programs themselves are influential because they depict and even model a myriad of consumption-relevant phenomena, such as the structure of family life, social roles, lifestyles and subcultures, or issues of gender, race and class” (Russell, Norman, & Heckler, 2004a, p. 151). Holbrook and Grayson (1986) provide an example of this through their review of the symbolic consumer behavior of Meryl Streep’s character in Out of Africa. Subsequently, as Livingstone and Lunt (1994) explain, “…through their responses to television, people generate social identities” (p. 91).

Television programming such as soap operas, comedies, and dramas can captivate the attention of many viewers and also provide a fertile environment where relationships between viewers and the program’s characters can develop (Russell, Norman & Heckler, 2004). Lehu
(2007) highlights why brand placement in a television series could have more impact on a consumer than brand placement in movies; he notes that a television series, particularly those that appear on cable television, can be more attractive for brand placement because they have fewer commercial breaks than those on network television, they run shorter than a feature film, and many of them have budgets comparable to films. Brand placements in television programs also provide the benefit of syndication in reruns (Karrh, 1998).

However, the use of recurring characters is what gives brand placement in a television a distinct advantage. Brands can be easily woven in to television programs featuring characters whose lives are depicted daily or weekly on popular shows (Ferraro & Avery, 2000; Gupta & Lord, 1998). Ferraro and Avery (2000) concluded that the majority of brand placements in scripted television programs do not try to blatantly persuade via dialog, their persuasive intent is achieved through their connection to the action within the program’s plot and/or demonstration of brand use and product attributes by characters. In their study, “the majority of brands were featured prominently on the screen and were central to dialog and character roles. In many situations characters, particularly well-known ones, are consistently portrayed the same, and recognizable in repeated episodes of their shows” (Ferraro & Avery, 2000, p. 12). The use of recurring characters aids consumer memorization and enables brands to instill familiarity between the character and the audience. A character’s brand use can serve as very positive testimonial (Ferraro & Avery, 2000; Lehu, 2007). Fiske (1998) explains:

The constant repetition of a character means that characters “live” in similar time scales to their audience. They have a past, present, and a future that appear to exceed their textual existence, so that audience members are invited to relate to them in terms of familiarity and identification…. TV characters have a future; they will return tomorrow, or next week, and the end of each episode has built into it the expectation of the next, either explicitly in serials or implicitly in series. This offers the viewer a quite different relationship to the character from that offered by film, where the end of the film is
normally the end of the character. Sequels are film versions of television series but lack some of same feel because of lull between releases. (p. 150)

Viewers often become attached to certain characters with the attachment being strengthened by long-term viewing (Ta & Frosch, 2008). Russell and Stern (2006) note that products placed within a television program are often integrated as part of the relationship between the viewer and the character. “Not only does a viewer witness the brand in its own context, but additional meaning is also communicated because of the product’s association with a character. Thus, a viewer’s relationship with a character may influence his or her attitude toward the brand being used” (Ta & Frosch, 2008, p. 99).

If a television viewer identifies with a particular character several things may occur: the viewer may imagine himself or herself in the same situations as the character; the viewer may see the character as a role model and imitate the character’s behavior; the viewer may compare certain aspects or notice certain aspects of the character that are similar to ones shared by the real people within the viewer’s life (Churchill & Moschis, 1979; Livingstone, 1990; McCracken, 1986). These behaviors are characteristic of para-social interaction, which was identified by Horton and Wohl (1956), and often results in the viewer watching as if the character was interacting directly with them; the character may also serve as a referent other for the viewer (Newton & Buck, 1985). When characters function as meaningful referent others, they are able to influence viewers’ norms, desires, and behaviors (Churchill & Moschis, 1979; Russell, Norman, & Heckler, 2004a). Russell, Norman, and Heckler (2004a) argue that the potential influence a television character may possess as a referent other makes it important for researchers to understand the extent to which viewers develop these relationships and how they impact consumers. This study seeks to add to that understanding by examining one potential source of impact on a consumer’s identity.
Participants

Cummings (2006) notes that for the younger members of society, “consumption becomes ‘primary means’ of achieving a way of belonging to that society” (p. 72). Many social psychological research studies have used college students as participants but they are usually labeled as “adults” (Arnett, 2000). As chapter three explained, few studies have recognized that one’s late teens through the early twenties is a distinct developmental period that differs from adulthood, a period that Arnett (2000, 2004) has labeled emerging adulthood.

With one’s identity being dynamic, created in spurts, and influenced by communication and society (Martin, J. & Nakayama, 2008), this study is a valuable contribution to understanding the crucial period known as emerging adulthood. According to Pompper and Choo (2008), the 2000 United States Census reported 27 million people ages 18 to 24 living in this country (p. 50). For the purpose of this study, participants were undergraduate students recruited from a small, Eastern college because the majority of the undergraduate population falls into the 18 to 25 year-old age range of emerging adulthood. As mentioned in chapter two, the use of college-aged audiences in much of the research dealing with placement in film is “understandable, since the target audience for much of Hollywood’s production is college-aged… those aged 18-24 are considered the prime target for movie makers” (Karrh, 1998, p. 38). However, the study will not be concerned with their movie viewing; it will focus on their television viewing. The selection of emerging adults who are attending college is also warranted because as Xu, Shim, Lotz, and Almeida (2004) note, “most are living away from home for the first time making numerous consumption decisions with regard to running a household, including decisions related to food, entertainment, technology, and household items” (p. 100). O’Guinn and Shrum (1997) also explain the value of using college students because while they
watch less television than the general public (due to other time constraints such as studying and socializing) they tend to watch many of the same types of television programs. This allows for participants to be heavily exposed to particular types of programming where brand placement may be prevalent.

**Research Method**

The phenomenon of brand placement has been studied using both quantitative and qualitative methods. While experimental conditions are sometimes used, Hackley and Tiwsakul (2006) note that often studies investigating brand placement have utilized survey methods; examples include Gupta and Gould, 1997; Karrh, Firth, and Callison, 2001; McKechnie and Thou, 2003; Nebenzahl and Secunda 1993; Nelson, 2002; Ong and Meri, 1994. They also note that qualitative studies examining brand placement have used focus groups and in-depth interviews or a combination of these with survey methods (examples including DeLorme & Reid, 1999; La Pastina, 2001).

Hackley and Tiwsakul (2006) advocate for understanding entertainment marketing, such as brand placements, using an approach that works to understand how consumers draw meaning from and also project meaning onto entertainment marketing. They also argue for a better understanding of how people incorporate those meanings into their everyday lives, including how those meanings shape their self-concept. Their approach is not concerned with what brand placement does for the brand but what it means for the consumer. DeLorme and Reid (1999), Fournier (1998), and Holt and Thompson (2004) are also concerned with brand placement’s meaning among consumers. “Experientially focused qualitative research methods, when imaginatively deployed, would seem to be appropriate ways of delving into this area [how our
identity is connected with our experiences] for insights concerning its relation to entertainment marketing” (Hackley & Tiwsakul, 2006, p. 72).

The methods used for this study drew heavily from the suggestions put forth by Hackley and Tiwsakul (2006). The study consisted of two parts—an initial survey followed by in-depth interviews. Both Boon and Lomore’s study (2001) regarding celebrity influence on young adults and Stern, Russell, and Russell’s study (2007) examining brand placement in soap operas used a survey as a screening tool to identify participants from a larger population, as did O’Guinn and Shrum (1997). An initial survey containing the Connectedness Scale developed by Russell and Puto (1999) and validated by Russell, Norman, and Heckler (2004a, 2004b) was used to find emerging adults who had high levels of connectedness. The survey also contained both open-ended and closed-ended questions designed to gather information regarding media consumption habits and preferences as well as demographic information. Survey instruments used by Boon and Lomore, 2001; Karrh, Firth, and Callison, 2001; Russell, Norman, and Heckler, 2004a; Russell and Stern, 2006; and Stern, Russell, and Russell, 2007 guided the formation of the questionnaire. Appendix B contains the instrument.

After HSRB approval of the project, the questionnaire and recruitment materials were pretested in order to refine both. Following pretesting, a recruitment email (Appendix A) was sent to all 1,519 undergraduate students at a small, Eastern college inviting them to participate in a web-based survey about their interaction with television programs and their content. Web-based surveys have been used in research with promising results for studies that have targeted 18-25 year-olds; see Xu, Shim, Lotz, and Almeida (2004) and Stern, Russell, and Russell (2007) for examples. Russell, Norman, and Heckler (2004a; 2004b) also used a web-based survey to further test the connectedness scale once they had validated it.
The exact nature of the study was not revealed in the email in order to avoid potentially influencing responses and reducing a possible social desirability bias in participants’ responses. The email stated that the survey contained questions designed to learn more about the role television programs play in undergraduate students’ lives and also how some of the content in those television programs impacts students’ lives. The hyperlink embedded in the email directed interested participants to the online survey. The web-based survey was available for one month and two subsequent reminder emails were sent with one going out at the two-week mark and then another one being sent two days before the survey was closed.

As an incentive to encourage participation, respondents had the opportunity to win one of five gift cards ranging in value from $10 to $25 for either amazon.com or i-tunes. Respondents were able to remain anonymous if they chose to do so. Two questions on the survey gave respondents the option of providing an email address. If students were interested in being entered in the drawing for one of the gift cards they needed to provide an email address. An additional question asked respondents to provide an email address if they would be willing to participate in follow-up research. Those respondents who noted that they were willing to participate in the follow-up research, who provided a valid email, and who scored highest on the Connectedness Scale comprised part of the pool of potential participants for the second phase of this study. The rest of the participants came from those who scored lowest on the Connectedness Scale and indicated that they were willing to participate in follow-up research. Having participants from the extreme ends of the scale provided a good way to examine contrasting behaviors.
Survey Participants

Of the 1,519 students, 362 students completed the web-based survey for a response rate of 23.8%. The majority of the respondents were women (75%); given that the make-up of the student body is 60% female, this was somewhat expected. Participants’ ages ranged from 18 to 37. Twenty-year-old participants (n=99) only slightly outnumbered other age groups in terms of respondents: 19 year-olds (n=92); 21 year-olds (n=78); 18 year-olds (n=54); 22 year-olds (n=32); 23 year-olds or older (n=7). The first question of was designed to insure that all participants were 18 or older so that parental consent was not necessary to participate. Given the lack of diversity among the student body (4% minority enrollment), participants’ race and ethnicity were not recorded. This will be addressed later as part of the study’s limitations.

In terms of the number of hours spent watching television, 55.5% (n=201) of the respondents reported watching 1-3 hours of television per week with 4-6 hours receiving the second most responses (n=89; 24.5%). There was a slight edge in the number of participants who reported that they primarily watch television with others (n=197; 54.7%) compared to those who primarily watch it alone (n=151; 45.3%) and 14 people did not respond to the question.

Respondent scores on the Connectedness Scale ranged from 1.25 to 5.0 with a mean connectedness score of 3.03. As Russell (1998) hypothesized and confirmed through later validation of the connectedness scale, “the higher degree of connectedness with the show/actor, the greater the affective transfer, and the stronger the transformational effect of product placement” (p. 363). Since brand placements are more likely to be effective among participants scoring highest on the connectedness scale, if brand placement can impact identity formation, it is most likely to occur among those who score highest on the connectedness scale. Of the 362 students who responded to the web-based survey containing the connectedness scale, 16 students
scored 4.0 or higher on the connected scale. Of those 16 students, nine provided email addresses indicating they would consider participating in future research so a second email (see Appendix C) was sent asking them if they would participate in a follow-up interview.

To provide a contrasting view, those who scored 1.9 or less on the connectedness scale were also invited to participate in follow-up interviews. Nine students scored 1.9 or less on the connectedness scale with six of them indicating they would consider participating in follow-up research so they also received the recruitment email asking them to participate in an interview. Of the 15 students indicating they would be interested in participating in follow-up research, a total of eight agreed to be interviewed.

Côté (2006) argues that “manifestations of identity at the level of subjective experience and interactional discourse are especially emergent and transitory and should be studied as such with appropriate in-depth, qualitative methods” (p. 10). Cummings (2006) relied on interviews (along with focus groups and observations) to explore how consumption habits contributed to the display of participants’ identities at indie music festivals. In laying the groundwork for the Connectedness Scale, Russell and Puto (1999) used qualitative investigations of television viewership through focus groups, Internet fan forums, and in-depth interviews and discovered that television programs can create communities of consumption, can contribute to viewers’ social identity, and can foster social interaction.

Drawing from Hirschman and Thompson (1997), McCracken (1988), DeLorme and Reid (1999), and Holt and Thompson (2004) interviews were semi-structured and varied in length with the shortest lasting just over 19 minutes and the longest running just over 28 minutes. After receiving informed consent (see Appendix D for the informed consent form) the author conducted the interviews using an initial question guide consisting of open-ended questions
modeled largely after those used by DeLorme and Reid (1999). The open-ended questions allowed for participants to provide detailed responses and also enabled the researcher to probe for deeper discussion when necessary. Interview protocol followed the design laid out by Lindlof and Taylor (2002) including establishing rapport; asking questions including the use of probes to encourage participants to elaborate on their experiences; collecting data through listening, observing, occasional note taking; audiotaping; and finally transcription of the interviews.

During each of the interviews, the author took observational notes that were later combined with the transcripts (compiled by the author) from the interviews. When combined, the notes and transcripts provided very detailed accounts of each interview and were analyzed by the author in order to look for the emergence of themes and topics related to the study’s research questions.

**Data Analysis**

Research questions one and two were addressed using the responses collected via the online survey and the follow-up interviews. To address research question three, this study followed examples set forth in research conducted by Fournier (1998) and Holt and Thompson (2004) to try and discover characteristics of those whose identities are most likely to be influenced by brand placement in television programming. Following the suggestion of Hackley and Tiwsakul (2006) data analysis sought “to understand how consumer’s draw meaning from (and project meaning onto) entertainment marketing incidents and how they then integrate these meanings into their lived experience in order to reinforce or construct their self-concept” (p. 68).
emerged regarding respondents’ feelings about characters and also their feelings about themselves was also influential.

The process began with a close reading of the interview transcripts to identify themes relating to influences that brand placement may have on emerging adults’ behaviors, and their emotions. The aspects of connectedness were the primary categories used to analyze comments made by interviewees.

Emerging themes were interpreted using Kleine, Kleine, and Kernan’s (1993) social identity perspective. They explain that, “social-identity theory has been suggested as a way of looking at consumers because it seems to have a good deal of ecological validity. It recognizes people as multifaceted beings (not lumps of self) who, in the best spirit of rationality, do what they do best…. it places products in a realistic perspective, as artifacts which enable the many pursuits of people’s day-to day existences” (Kleine, Kleine, & Kernan, 1993, p. 229). As mentioned in chapter three, stemming from social identity theory, the basic tenet of the social identity perspective is that, “people’s activities and enabling possessions are organized around their social identities—the multifaceted labels by which their Me is recognized by themselves and members of society,” and “we come to know which products enable which activities by observing other people’s behavior and by interpreting their reactions to ours,” (Kleine, Kleine, & Kernan, 1993, p. 211).

Descriptive statistics were calculated using the Minitab statistical package. These statistics were used for hypothesis testing in regards to H1 and H2.

**Conclusion**

DeLorme and Reid’s (1999) study of brand placement in movies notes that a combination of methods allowed them to provide richer, “detailed first-person descriptions” of brands placed
in movies and how they fit into people’s everyday experiences (p. 73). McCracken (1986) adds that combining methods allows a researcher to maximize the breadth and depth of experiences and interpretations.

This chapter has provided the rationale for this study; identified and explained the rationale for the population selected to be involved in the study; and detailed the method used during the two stages of the study. The remaining two chapters will present an analysis of the information gathered during both phases of research and subsequently the implications of those findings. The concluding remarks will address limitations and future research that can be undertaken as a result of this investigation into the potential influence brand placement in television programming can have on the identities of emerging adults.
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF RESULTS

This chapter presents a summary of results of the study. The information in this chapter is organized in order of the study’s research questions and hypotheses. Chapter six will elaborate on these findings using the social identity perspective as a theoretical lens, discuss what the findings contribute to academic knowledge surrounding brand placement and identity formation, and explain some of the study’s limitations.

RQ 1: To what extent does brand placement contribute to identity formation in emerging adults?

As mentioned in chapter three, this question seeks to understand what aspects of connectedness, Escape, Modeling, Fashion, Imitation, Aspiration, and Paraphernalia are most prevalent among emerging adults. Figure 2 illustrates the connection between brand placement and identity formation. The vertical connections illustrate the influence of the para-social connection between brand placements in television programming and the viewer. The horizontal connections illustrate the viewer’s relationship with others and how viewers use aspects of connectedness to enact aspects of an identity as part of their interactions with others. Feedback from others enables one to continue to shape and enact his/her evolving identity.

Figure 2: Brand Placements Influence on Identity Formation
In order to determine which aspects of connectedness were most prevalent among emerging adults, the mean for each aspect was calculated. For those who were not highly connected, Escape (M=3.85) and Aspiration (M=3.75) ranked highest among the aspects followed by Fashion (M=2.91), Modeling (M=2.65), Imitation (M=2.64), and Paraphernalia (M=2.38). However, this is not enough to fully address RQ 1. To gain a better understanding of the extent to which brand placement might have some sort of influence on identity formation, it is important to compare those who are not highly connected to those who scored highest on the Connectedness Scale.

Among those who are highly connected, Escape (M=4.8) and Aspiration (M=4.46) also ranked highest among the aspects. The difference in the ranking of the other aspects is what is key. Paraphernalia (M=4.15), Fashion (M=4.09), Modeling (M=4.0), and Imitation (p=4.0) had slightly lower mean scores. It was not that surprising that Aspiration surfaced as a key aspect for participants on both ends of the scale given our celebrity-obsessed culture. Analysis of the interview transcripts did have a fair amount of comments related to Escape and Aspiration. However, conversations regarding Fashion and Paraphernalia were actually longer and more prevalent than any of the other aspects. The importance of the aspects of Paraphernalia and Fashion ranking higher than other aspects among emerging adults who are highly connected to a television show is a key finding and will be discussed in much greater detail in chapter six. As the next chapter will explain, when seen through the lens of the social identity perspective, the fact that Fashion and Paraphernalia ranked higher indicate that highly connected emerging adults are using their consumption of items associated with their favorite shows to enact their identities. Interviews revealed that highly connected participants spent hours acquiring everything from DVDs to items of clothing because of their relationship with a particular television show or
character. Even those who were not highly connected were able to share stories of at least one person in their lives who followed similar patterns of consumption.

Escape, Aspiration, Paraphernalia, and Fashion are the aspects of connectedness that are most prevalent among emerging adults. This means, in response to RQ1, brand placement is likely to contribute to identity formation among emerging adults if the television show in which it occurs is seen as an escape. Brand placement is also most likely to influence identity formation if it is closely tied to a character through his or her actions or physical appearance (i.e. clothing or personal style) because characters may function as ideal selves causing individuals to aspire to the life portrayed on the small screen. This is a finding that is consistent with prior research conducted by Russell and Puto (1999); Karrh, Firth, and Callison (2001); and Russell and Stern (2006).

RQ 2: What are the results of any influence on identity formation?

The prevalence of the connectedness aspects of Fashion and Paraphernalia speak to behavioral influences that brand placement can have on individuals. They are behavioral in nature because they involve a variety of actions from the way one dresses to the items one chooses to acquire and display. As revealed through the follow-up interviews individuals frequently sought out clothing and other items featured on their television programs. Some took their behaviors to the level of obsession, as will be explained in more detail in chapter six. Several of their behaviors where a sharp contrast to those interviewed who scored lowest on the connectedness scale.

The aspects of Escape and Aspiration speak to affective influences on the emerging adults in this study. College students lead busy lives and the fact that television can provide them with a sense of escape may make them less likely to critically examine the potential
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persuasive aspects of what they are watching. As mentioned in the review of literature, often viewers do not see brand placement in the same negative light as advertising; therefore, if they are accepting of the practice, they may actually be bombarded with more attempts to influence their consumption behaviors. These attempts, which are more subtle than commercials, may actually end up having more influence because of their repetition and connection to the plots and/or characters within their favorite shows. However, more important to the discussion of affective influences is the potential for brand placements to be tied to sources of aspiration.

Seven out of the 16 participants who scored highest on the Connectedness Scale indicated that they “strongly agree” with the statement that they would like to be on their favorite television, and another five “agreed.” The idea of participants aspiring to be like their favorite characters was echoed in the follow-up interviews. Each of the six highly connected participants that were interviewed indicated that they took their relationship with their favorite characters very seriously. When asked to rate the seriousness of that relationship on a scale of 1=passing thoughts to 5=all consuming passion, each rated the relationship as being a 4, indicating that characters have the potential to be very influential in terms of both thoughts and deeds. Although in reality, for some of the participants, the relationship is probably much more important to them and more influential than they realize. As one male participant put it, “…I think there is always room to be more fanatical, but at the same time, I’m at the risk of being in self-denial….”

As Russell, Norman, and Heckler (2004a) explain, viewers who are highly connected are more likely to be influenced by the content of their favorite programs and to attempt to mold their own lives after the lives of those characters within those shows. The characters become referent others and serve as models that can influence identification, can serve as a reference point for social comparison, and can serve as an ideal to which to aspire (Hirschman &
The bond the highly connected individual feels with a particular character makes that character very influential when it comes to consumption behavior. In the follow-up interviews, even the individuals who scored lowest on the Connectedness Scale reported that they occasionally sought out products that they saw used by characters on television. Chapter six provides a more detailed discussion of some of the specific ways in television content has led to interview participants’ aspirations.

RQ 3: Among emerging adults, what are the characteristics of someone whose identity formation is most likely to be influenced by brand placements?

With the participants in this study, there was no single academic major or demographic characteristic that was really noteworthy in terms of connectedness. However, the analysis of the follow-up interviews did reveal three key characteristics of someone whose identity formation is most likely to be influenced by brand placement including very selective television viewing, typically watching the program alone, the ability to easily name brands placed within the show. “…I’ll actually stop my life to watch.”

Of the 16 participants who are most likely to have their identity influenced by brand placement, half reported that they spent only 1-3 hours (n=8) per day. With the running time of a television sitcom being 30 minutes and a television drama being an hour, this doesn’t amount to much individual programming on a daily basis. The remaining participants reported 4-6 hours (n=5) and 7-10 (n=3). Because many of the participants did not watch much television over the course of the week, we can begin to understand a bit more about their level of connectedness, and thus, why they may be more susceptible to being influenced by instances of brand placement. Based on the follow-up interviews conducted with those who are highly connected, one can piece together a bit of a viewing profile.
With school, jobs, and socializing, television viewing isn’t at the top of most college students’ “To Do” lists. The majority of highly connected participants only watch a few shows over the course of a week so they select their shows carefully; they aren’t channel surfers. “There are only two shows that I’ll actually stop my life to watch,” noted one highly connected male participant.

Those highly connected emerging adults who participated in follow-up interviews explained that they select shows primarily because they felt they could relate to the characters, story lines, and subject matter; for example, one of the interview participants thought of becoming a U.S. Marshall at one point and explained that it was one of the reasons he was such a fan of the FX series *Justified*. Another participant reported feeling connected to his favorite show “…because you feel like you’re in the characters’ lives and having fun with them.” The limited amount of time the participants did have to watch TV was precious to them and they used it as an escape from their hectic lives, explaining why it surfaced as a prevalent aspect of connectedness. Chapter six will also elaborate on this notion of escape.

This selectivity was in contrast to those who were interviewed with scores on the opposite end of the Connectedness Scale. They reported watching television when they were bored and looking for something to do. What they watch typically “depends on what’s on when I’m flipping through the channels” as one participant explained. Most were not able to name a favorite show. Television was an escape from boredom in their lives. As one of the lower scoring female participants explained, “I usually just put it on when I’m bored, or like when I come up to my room to eat lunch, maybe I’ll put it on for a half hour.” Another participant added that “It’s just a small role [in my life], maybe get the news every once and a while so you know what’s going on.” Occasionally, those who scored lowest on the Connectedness Scale also
mentioned putting the television on for “background noise” as they were studying or doing other things.

“Nobody likes the show as much as I do…”

While the highly connected participants interviewed will occasionally watch television with others, all of those interviewed noted that they primarily watch their favorite shows alone. Consistently, they all expressed a very similar sentiment about their devotion to the show that they were highly connected to, “I don’t think anyone likes it as much as I do…” noted an 18 year-old male participant. This notion was echoed by others including a 19 year-old female participant, “Nobody likes the shows as much as I do…when I talk about how wonderful they are, everybody [her friends and family] just rolls their eyes,” she explained. Another male participant noted that he preferred to watch his favorite show alone because “…I get more out of it that way. Some times when you watch it with other people you get distractions.”

“I definitely know I saw…”

While some interview participants who scored on the lower end of the Connectedness Scale were able to recall instances of brand placement in various television shows, for example a 20 year-old, female participant remembered that there was “usually a lot of Under Armor athletic wear on Friday Night Lights,” their ease in recalling the instances—if they were able to—was a sharp contrast to those who scored highest on the Connectedness Scale. Highly connected participants never seemed to even pause when asked “Can you recall seeing any specific brands on [name of show they indicated on the initial survey]?” The brands they were able to recall varied from clothing to food but were all recalled without hesitation. This is just a partial list of some of the brands recalled:

“Converse with B.J. because he wears them in the last four seasons [of M.A.S.H].”
(Male, 20, High Connectedness)
[referring to *Justified*] “Stetson hat; Sig Sauer, his pistol; I believe the whiskey the head Marshall has is Jim Beam. I know he talked about a Gloc at one point, but I definitely know I saw the Stetson hat because I actually bought it. Also, he drives a Lincoln.” (Male, 20, High Connectedness)

[referring to *It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia*] “If you see a car it’s a Range Rover…” (Male, 18, High Connectedness)

[referring to *Dexter*] “His vehicle is a Ford Escape and he bought a minivan that was definitely like a Town and Country because it had the stow ‘n go things in it. Heineken beer—I did see the beer label once, and Jose Cuervo—a lot of alcohol” (Male, 20, High Connectedness)

“They were eating Fun Dip in an episode of *Invader Zim.*” (Female, 19, High Connectedness)

“I’ve seen Dunkin Donuts on *Jersey Shore* a bunch of times and Verizon phones and Chanel handbags on *Gossip Girl.*” (Female, 20, High Connectedness)

The fact that these brands, along with others were recalled so easily clearly indicates that these highly connected individuals are noticing the brands placed within their favorite shows. Their ease of recall and attention to detail compared to those who scored lowest on the Connectedness Scale is consistent with findings in Russell and Puto (1999) as well as Russell, Norman, and Heckler (2004a, 2004b).

The remainder of the chapter will focus on the two hypotheses proposed as part of the study. These hypotheses were offered in order to try and replicate results from previous research. Unfortunately, none of the findings from this group of participants were statistically significant.

H1: Women, who are emerging adults, are more likely to have their identity formation influenced by brand placement than men.

In order to test this hypothesis it was necessary to run a two-sample t-test comparing mean connectedness scores by gender. In order to reject $H_0$, there needed to be a statistically significant difference between the mean of each group’s connectedness scores. The results of the
t-test were not statistically significant ($t = 0.65$, $df = 114$, $p > .05$). As indicated in Table 1, both the means and standard deviations were similar. This suggests that, among the participants in this study, there is not a relationship between gender and score on the connectedness scale. Failure to conclude a difference in the two subgroups means that statistically there is not enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis. Chapter six contains a discussion of potential reasons for the failure to find significant results.

Table 1: Two Sample T-test for Gender and Connectedness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N*</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>St. Dev</th>
<th>SE Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>3.053</td>
<td>.0577</td>
<td>.036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>.646</td>
<td>.074</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*respondents failing to select a gender were omitted

H2: Emerging adults who report higher estimates of family income are more likely to have their identity formation influenced by brand placement.

The second hypothesis was tested by comparing estimates of family income with connectedness scores. In order to reject $H_0$, mean connectedness scores need to be higher among subgroups with higher estimates of family income. It is important to note that data from 122 respondents needed to be discarded because the participants failed to provide an estimate of family income. As indicated in Table 2, the results of a one-way ANOVA were not statistically significant ($F=.87$, $p=ns$). Table 3 shows the similarity among group means. The lack of variance in means among the various income groups indicates that there is not enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis. The following chapter will discuss possible reasons for the lack of participant responses to the survey question regarding family income as well as why results may have not been statistically significant.
Table 2: Summary of ANOVA Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>Mean Square (variance)</th>
<th>F Ratio</th>
<th>F Critical Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>2.763</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.276</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>2.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>64.314</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>.318</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>67.076</td>
<td>212</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation among Income Groups*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under $20,000</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3.0495</td>
<td>.4932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,001-$40,000</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2.9391</td>
<td>.6672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,001-$60,000</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>3.1470</td>
<td>.5351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60,001-$80,000</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>3.1484</td>
<td>.5749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$80,001-$100,000</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.0104</td>
<td>.5459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,001-$120,000</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.9696</td>
<td>.5214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$120,001-$140,000</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.9750</td>
<td>.5012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$140,001-$160,001</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.8906</td>
<td>.5893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$160,001-$180,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.1250</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$180,001-$200,000</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.9538</td>
<td>.4774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over $200,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9375</td>
<td>.8839</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 122 respondents selected “I do not know,” “Prefer not to Answer,” or skipped the question

This chapter contained a summary of the finding for the three research questions and the two hypotheses guiding this study of the potential influence brand placement has on identity formation among emerging adults. The final chapter of this study presents a discussion of these findings and their implications for the study of brand placement, consumption behavior, and identity formation. Chapter six will also discuss the study’s limitations and present some concluding remarks.
CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND LIMITATIONS

This chapter contains further discussion of the results presented in the previous chapter. The findings related to the various aspects of connectedness will be discussed using the lens of the social identity perspective, as reviewed in chapter three. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the study’s limitations and several propositions for future research.

As Kleine, Kleine, and Kernan (1993) note:

Social-identity theory has been suggested as a way of looking at consumers because it seems to have a good deal of ecological validity. It recognizes people as multifaceted beings (not lumps of self) who, in the best spirit of rationality, do what they do best. It emphasizes that people are social but does not regard them as neurotic. And it places products in a realistic perspective, as artifacts which enable the many pursuits of people’s day-to-day existences. The paradigm appears to be a sensible way to regard consumer behavior. (p. 229)

Escape

Wednesday night—the premiere—I had a huge O-chem test that morning; I had O-Chem lab the next day and it was just a stressful day, that was the one hour of my day where I just sat down and enjoyed it for the sake of enjoying it—I sat down watched my show and went to bed. It was actually the first night this week I actually slept a full night. (Male, 20, High Connectedness)

The idea of using media as an escape is prevalent in communication research including studies utilizing the Uses and Gratifications and Media Dependency paradigms. While those who scored highest on the connectedness scale did mention they occasionally used television to help them relax and unwind, the time spent viewing their favorite shows was essentially sacred.

As mentioned in chapter three, people also use consumption patterns such as reading a book or listening to music when they want to avoid social interaction (Kleine, Kleine, & Kernan, 1992). In this case, the highly connected participants interviewed used their consumption of
their favorite television programs as a way to avoid social interaction with those around them; they used their devotion to their favorite show(s) as a different type of escape—one used to set themselves apart and distinguish themselves from others. The highly connected, emerging adults interviewed frequently self-identified as “superfans” or “huge fans” of their favorite television show. They saw this as a key element of their identity.

The idea of viewing as sort of a religious-like devotion surfaced frequently in the follow-up interviews with those who scored highest on the Connectedness Scale. “I really don’t watch that much TV because I don’t have the time—unless it’s something like *Supernatural* or *Invader Zim*, then I’ll make the time—I’m really loyal to those shows in that kind of way. I will actually take the time to watch them,” explained a 19 year-old female participant. A 20 year-old female participant, who was highly connected, even described a pilgrimage to a place connected to her favorite show, “When I went to Miami over break I made a point to go to the Kardashians boutique because I love *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*.”

This spiritual-like connection was taken very seriously and, as alluded to in the last chapter, those who scored highest on the connectedness scale frequently watched their favorite program alone because “…no one likes that show as much as me,” (Male, 18, High Connectedness) and “…no one I know really gets it…” (Male, 20, High Connectedness). Comments such as these are evidence that a strong para-social relationship has developed between these highly connected individuals and their favorite characters. As Horton and Wohl (1956) note “In time, the devotee—the ‘fan’—comes to believe that he ‘knows’ the person more intimately and profoundly than others do; that he ‘understands’ his character and appreciates his values and motives,” (p. 216).
However, this behavior is often puzzling to those on the lower end of the Connectedness Scale. A 21 year-old female participant’s comments about a former roommate really summed up the sentiments of those who scored lowest on the Connectedness Scale:

My old roommate was a superfan of *Top Chef* and *Next Top Model*. She would have to watch them every day. If she couldn’t watch them she would watch them as soon as she got back to the room on Hulu or wherever she could get a hold of them. I thought it was a bit strange, I mean, yeah, you missed a show but do you have to watch it the minute you get back to the room? Can’t you wait a few hours? She’d be upset that she missed it but I never understood why she was so upset when she knew she could watch it in a few hours or a few days on the Internet.

Looking at the religious-like importance of Escape for those who are highly connected versus those who are not, one can see that escape is not about relaxation, it is about differentiating oneself from others. The devotion expressed by those who are highly connected is an aspect of their identity that they enact—it is the role of the “superfan.”

**Aspiration**

Because these “superfans” frequently watched their favorite shows alone, they developed meaningful relationships, but not with other fans; they developed key relationships with the characters portrayed on the programs. “…according to social-identity theory, external social influences are more important than internal processes in determining who we are,” (Kleine, Kleine, & Kernan, 1993, p. 213). These social influences include possessions and they influence identity formation “from outside-in” (Kleine & Kleine, 2000, p. 279). As part of social identity perspective, “the way we negotiate life’s daily tasks depends on how we think about ourselves and our place in society; the feedback we get from social interaction (and from our own introspection) is filtered through the mental structure of our schemas” (Kleine, Kleine, & Kernan, 1993, p. 214). Russell, Norman, and Heckler (2004a, 2004b) noted how easily individuals who scored highest on the Connectedness Scale were able to “construct consumption
schemas around characters, which they then use for self-expression” (p. 155). This was also evident with the highly connected participants interviewed as part of this study. “Well, if I see a specific brand I think, oh—so and so likes Coke, for example—you know, that might be kind of cool to try—I’m kind of weird like that. In one episode they were eating Fun Dip so it made me want to eat it too,” commented a 19 year-old female participant.

Researchers have shown that as a result of the development of a para-social relationship with a television character, the television character or personality may serve as a role model and viewers may model their behavior after those with characteristics or personalities to which they feel connected (Bandura, 1976; Churchill & Moschis, 1979; McCracken, 1986; Russell, Norman & Heckler, 2004b; Stern, Russell & Russell, 2007). One of the highly connected male participants provided a perfect example of this influential relationship, “My roommates and I have pre-party rituals like they do on Jersey Shore—‘the shirt before the shirt,’” he explained.

French and Raven (as cited in Reed, 2002) developed the idea of referent power, where one desires to take on a role or behave similar to that exhibited by the “referent other.” Since, as Kleine, Kleine, and Kernan (1993) explain, each of our identities exist on a “real” level and at an “ideal” one, the para-social bond between the participants in the follow-up interviews and their favorite characters provides “an idealized version of everyday performances” and the “exemplification of conduct one needs to understand and cope with others as well as those patterns which one must apply to one’s self” (p. 222). Kleine, Kleine, and Kernan (1993) use the example of a person who likes to fish; at the “real” level his or her identity consists of what he or she does when fishing, but at the “ideal” level one’s identity consists of how the person would like to be when fishing. Because of their para-social relationship these fans are “instructed variously in the behaviors of the opposite sex, of people of higher and lower status, of
people in particular occupations and professions,” (Horton & Wohl, 1956, p. 223). One female, elementary education major, who scored on the low end of the Connectedness Scale, noted that she sees people aspiring to be like television personalities on a regular basis. “I’ve been to a lot of schools and kids are talking about shows and wanting to be like this character or that character; they probably stay up all night watching TV,” she commented. In fact, participants on both ends of the Connectedness Scale were able to discuss instances where television characters or personalities served as that “ideal:”

My old roommate really liked Pam Anderson and she would try to emulate her a lot…she would comment on how great her body was…She tried to have what she thought was that ideal; she was really striving for that kind of look. (Female, 20, Low Connectedness)

She [referring to a former roommate] had got in to cooking; she might have even taken classes—she thought about going to culinary school but then took a different route. I think it was a desire to cook that led her to become so obsessed with Top Chef. (Female, 21, Low Connectedness)

…that’s why I started taking Aikido. There was a show call Fight Quest where guys went around and did the different martial arts in their native areas…Also, mechanics—a lot of shows like Overhaulin’, and what not, make me want to work more on my vehicles and actually I’m a mechanic now—I do it in the summer.” (Male, 20, High Connectedness)

When I was younger I wanted to be like Samurai Jack or Batman…(laughs)…because it was kind of the apex of honor and righteousness and doing the right thing in the face of adversity. (Male, 20, High Connectedness)

With the increasing reliance on brand placement as a promotional strategy, it is inevitable that these referent others actions involve brands, meaning that these characters—these referent others—become highly stylized and commodified examples of ideal selves. So, why would these individuals see television characters as ideal selves? Based on the previously mentioned comments, these characters and television personalities are portrayed in a way that is appealing
to emerging adults in a number of ways. For some, the characters may embody certain values or ideals. However, for most of the participants in the study, the characters or personalities present an idyllic upper-middle class or wealthy lifestyle with plenty of materialistic comforts that one hopes to acquire as he/she transitions to adulthood, providing a nice segue to the next aspect of connectedness.

**Paraphernalia**

As Belk (1988) said, “…we regard our possessions as part of ourselves,” (p. 139). One of the big problems that arises when people develop para-social relationships with television characters and personalities and those characters serve as referent others is that people may become dissatisfied with their current appearance, style, lifestyle, etc. (Hirshman & Thompson, 1997). They may feel the need to acquire, or even be socially pressured to consume based upon their aspirations to emulate a character or personality. Under the social identity perspective, “what we consume, in the performance of even mundane activities, both contributes to and reflects our sense of identity—our sense of who and what we are,” (Kleine, Kleine, & Kernan, 1993, p. 210).

All of those interviewed who scored low on the Connectedness Scale were able to recall people in their lives who were obsessive connoisseurs of items associated with brands or television programs. For one participant, it was her former roommate who was such a fan of *Top Chef* and America’s *Next Top Model* that she had posters associated and other items associated with the shows all over their dorm room. Another female participant reported similar behavior with her former roommate as well, “she would watch *Girls Next Door* and she would always get Playboy stuff, her side of the room was covered with it.”
However, the sentiments of those who scored lowest on the Connectedness Scale regarding others’ accumulation of “stuff” were probably best summed up by a 21 year-old female participant:

I knew someone who was so loyal to Pepsi that their whole house was decked out in Pepsi decorations—it make you wonder—it was like an obsession for them. They’ve got Pepsi clocks, and shelving units, and Pepsi cars, and Pepsi salt shakers. It’s puzzling to me because I can’t understand, I mean I understand liking the Pepsi brand, but like, to decorate your whole house and to spend that much money one brand—just because it says Pepsi?

The key phrase here is “obsession” and it frequently surfaced in interviews with those on both ends of the Connectedness Scale when it came to discussing paraphernalia. The aspect of Paraphernalia was one of those that helped to distinguish those who were highly connected. Highly connected participants saw the possessions that were associated with their favorite shows as an integral part of who they were. Consistent with Kleine, Kleine, and Allen (1995) and Laverie, Kleine, and Kleine (2002), the artifacts and possessions associated with the highly connected participants’ shows are investments of limited time and resources that represent their commitment to aspects of their identity, especially considering a typical college student’s limited income. As a 19 year-old female participant explained in reference to the amount of money spent on items related to her favorite program, “Oh—way too much…shirts; I pre-ordered the rerelease of the DVDs; key chains; all sorts of stuff like that…I’m either watching an episode, checking a forum site, or watching an episode on Netflix, or something like that, or checking the Hot Topic [a retail clothing store] web site to look for merchandise.” Another 20 year-old participant rolled his eyes and laughed before responding that he spent “probably close to a grand in cash—easily and if you add up the time searching for stuff, a lot of hours—it probably
adds up to three or four days of my life. I mean that’s really time I could have spent doing other things.”

The aspect of Paraphernalia having a higher mean score among highly connected participants highlights how they seek out objects associated with characters and shows with which they have developed a para-social relationship. These items enabled highly connected participants to enact an identity and provide physical evidence of that identity. “I actually own a lot of stuff. I have all of the season DVDs, a few shirts…I probably spend a day and a half per week wearing stuff or looking online for DVDs, and you know, whatever is connected with the show [referring to *It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia*]” explained a highly connected, 19 year-old male participant.

So what does this reliance on items associated with a television show mean for enacting an identity? As emerging adults begin to set up their own households and begin to earn more disposable income they look for symbolic ways to assert their new places within society. They are using their consumption behaviors as part of the way they assert themselves. Whether it’s purchasing a new designer outfit similar to one worn by a character or simply spending $100 or more on DVD box sets, these behaviors are guided by what they see in their favorite shows.

Paraphernalia is one thing that can help participants physically enact an aspect of their identity, but the participant quotes above provide a nice segue to one of the most telling aspects of connectedness. In this study, it is also the aspect where the impact of brand placement on identity formation was most noticeable—Fashion.

**Fashion**

Kleine, Kleine, and Kernan (1992) note that “consumption has to be recognized as an integral part of the social need to relate to other people, and to have mediating materials for
relating to them” (p. 411). Among the mediated materials mentioned are clothes, which play an important role in helping one enact aspect of his or her identity. Clothing is a conscious display of identity and is frequently used by others to form opinions about people and influence interpersonal interactions. Lurie (as cited in Holbrook & Grayson, 1986) notes that aspects of clothing are indicators of psychological age, geographical location, status, opinion, mood, gender, and sexual inclination.

The Fashion aspect of connectedness not only includes clothing but also includes elements of personal style, such as hairstyles, and whether or not one purchases items associated with one or more characters’ appearances. The conversations associated with fashion and personal style were the lengthiest and most interesting of the study. Fashion and personal care brands that are placed within shows are clearly impacting the highly connected viewers in this study. Those who weren’t highly connected were easily able to describe one person, if not more, whose style they felt was influenced by television. The previously mentioned female participant whose former roommate was “obsessed with The Girls Next Door and with Playboy” described how her roommate’s platinum blonde hair color and style, excessive tanning, and clothing “were all influenced by the programming on the E! network” [E! was the cable network that broadcast The Girls Next Door from 2005-2010].

This aspect was also a bit unique in that some of those who scored lowest on the Connectedness Scale admitted—both on the survey and in follow-up interviews—to being highly influenced by television characters’ or personalities’ style. “I have to admit, I bought slippers like the ones that Snooki [from the MTV series Jersey Shore] wears,” confessed a 20 year-old female participant who scored low on the Connectedness Scale. “I know this sounds kind of dumb, but I’ve tried makeup because I’ve seen it used on TV shows. On the one show they had
some Maybelline stuff and I went and got it,” commented a 21 year-old female participant whose score was low on the Connectedness Scale. Shows such as Gossip Girl and Keeping Up with the Kardashians were cited by female participants on both ends of the scale as being influential to fashion and personal style. “Keeping Up with the Kardashians—I like that show. I know people try to dress like the fashion on that show. I don’t know, I just kind of like it; they just always seem to look nice and pretty. Their clothes just always seem to look nice,” commented a highly connected, female participant.

The small screen’s influence on fashion and personal style was not exclusive to the female participants of this study. It was interesting to see how television characters also influenced the male participants’ enactment of their identities through their fashion choices. A 20 year-old male participant, who was highly connected to the classic television show M.A.S.H., reported it influenced him at a very early age, “…Converse with B.J. because he wears them in the last four seasons [of M.A.S.H]. I’ve always worn Converse, since I was about 14…,” he went on to explain that “…when I was in the 7th grade and I first started watching it, one of the things I asked for at Christmas was a bathrobe that looked like the one that Hawkeye wore on the show.” While M.A.S.H., clearly influenced this participant at a young age, there was another participant who sees his identity as being very closely tied to his favorite character.

Raylan Givens is the main character on the FX show Justified. The show began its run in 2010 and follows Deputy U.S. Marshall Givens as he struggles to do his job in the poor, Appalachian area of Kentucky where he grew up. The series is based on Elmore Leonard’s short story Fire in the Hole. A 20 year-old male participant felt a very close bond with the character Raylan Givens, played by Timothy Olyphant, and openly admitted to incorporating parts of the character’s style into his identity. “All of my boots are Ariat—with the exception of one pair
that was a gift. I wear Harley-Davison T-shirts and American Eagle jeans and I only drink Jack Daniels whiskey,” he explained. This participant also felt a strong tie to the X-men series of films and went to extreme lengths to also incorporate elements from the movie into his personal style. “The belt buckle off my pants is from the X-men movie. I actually traced it back to the original manufacturer, which was Burkemont Brass works in Wisconsin, and they’re making me two right now that are just like Wolverine’s in the X-O [referring to the movie X-men Origins] and X-1 movies [referring to the first movie in the X-Men franchise titled X-Men].”

When asked why he felt these articles of clothing were essential to helping him express his identity he replied, “I’ve always been kind of unorthodox with the way I dress [referring to his cowboy boots and rodeo-style belt buckle] and what not, and to see somebody on the screen like that who wears cowboy boots—ya know, he [referring to Raylan Givens] kind of has this little bit of a cowboy attitude to him…it kind of makes me feel more confident with how I dress in daily life.” The boost of confidence these items of clothing provide is a perfect illustration of the social identity perspective—people use certain products to enact their identities and they learn how to use those products by watching others. This 20 year-old man understands how to enact aspects of his identity by watching his favorite character. He uses his boots, his belt buckle, and his hat, all to embody that confidence and that “cowboy attitude” that he sees portrayed weekly.

Since the advent of visual forms of mass media people have seen celebrities and media personalities as icons of style. Fashion and personal style cues are just an additional example of the way television characters serve as ideal self. Transitioning from the casual sweat pants and blue jean wearing days of college to a professional, career-oriented world could be a bit daunting without guidance. Many television characters can provide that guidance because they are often
portrayed as well-dressed, successful people. Quite a few sitcom characters have high profile, well-paying careers. However, the influence on attire isn’t strictly related to the working world. By noting how other characters and other television viewers react to a character’s clothing and personal style, emerging adults are seeing what is sexy, what is masculine, and what is casually hip, all because of carefully calculated choices made in Hollywood wardrobe departments.

While fashion and style are perhaps the most personal, visible way to enact an identity, they are not the only visible ways that people express their identities. A person’s behavior is another indicator of how one enacts an identity. As with clothing, behavior is key to developing an identity because what one does and says receives direct feedback from others. It is other people’s reactions to our physical appearance and behavior that determine if one is successful in enacting a particular aspect of identity.

**Modeling**

Horton & Wohl (1956) note that para-social relationships can provide “a model of appropriate role performance—as husband, wife, mother, as ‘attractive,’ middle aged, ‘remarkably youthful’, old aged and the like,” (p. 223). The Modeling aspect of connectedness examines how one incorporates ideas from a television show into everyday life. It also is concerned with how one relates his or her everyday experiences to those experienced by a character or characters on a television show. The social identity perspective sees it as how people learn how to use consumption patterns to enact their identities.

Participants on both ends of the spectrum realize the potential influence television has on behavior when it comes to incorporating ideas from a television show into everyday life. For some it was simply using television programs to relate to others, “I’ve given my friends nicknames based on South Park characters,” noted a 20 year-old male participant who scored
low on the Connectedness Scale. For others, the ideas incorporated into everyday life were much more impactful, “honestly, I think it maybe sets a standard of normalcy…it definitely sets up gender roles, like what’s expected of men and women. I think it serves to set trends too, especially like the E! network,” commented a 20 year-old female participant also on the low end of the scale. A prime example of this was offered by the 21 year-old woman whose roommate was previously described, because the roommate was a fan of Pam Anderson and The Girls Next Door “she would exercise a lot and model her behavior after them, they were all in Playboy, so yeah, it was interesting,” she said sarcastically rolling her eyes.

Participants also provided some examples of positive behaviors that they incorporated into their lives based upon what they witnessed television characters do. “I remember I never used to do any sports but then I started watching TV and a couple of characters [couldn’t remember the exact show] played tennis so I decided maybe tennis was kind of fun and I started playing tennis in high school,” said a 19 year-old highly connected female participant who credited television with helping her overcome “being a couch potato.”

Relating the situations and actions from a television program to one’s own life is another key component of the aspect of modeling. Several of the highly connected participants were able to provide vivid examples of ways situations from their favorite television shows corresponded with their own lives. A 20 year-old participant described how the main character from M.A.S.H. influenced his approach to life, “Hawkeye has the profound ability to not only be comical with what he does, but he took a job that was hell on earth and he made people happy while he did it. Above all he put the patients and well-being of life above any and all prejudice in a time when that was unheard of.” Interestingly, this quote did not come from the participant who was highly connected to M.A.S.H. “I definitely see a lot of me in Raylan [the character Raylan Givens on
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*Justified*—maybe that’s wishful thinking—but he always has a screwed up love life, which is just like me…and I have an awkward sense of humor, but I’m good at what I do, and I’m confident about that. I notice he is [confident] a lot on the show,” commented another 20 year-old male participant.

Whether it’s an outlook on life or a way to handle one’s love life, modeling ideas and behaviors after television characters indicates that one has really incorporated the world of the small screen into his or her identity. As the social identity perspective posits, we learn how to enact certain aspects of our identity by watching others. When highly connected individuals aspire to be like those on television they begin incorporate certain behaviors in to their daily lives. To be able to adopt those behaviors, they need consumption patterns similar to those they see. This is where brand placement’s power is evident. If even the most mundane consumption behaviors are branded, one would need to consume those brands in order to attempt to reach their aspirations. Again, one can see how the para-social relationship between a character or characters and a viewer is creating the notion of the ideal self. The brands placed within a favorite show become essential to being able to become more like those on television. Therefore, if one can incorporate the same brands as the ideal life portrayed on television in to his/her real life, the brand can be used in an attempt to enact certain aspect of an ideal identity. The brands then serve as a bridge between the reality of one’s existence and the television fantasy to which they aspire.

**Imitation**

A more superficial manifestation of behavior occurs when one imitates his or her favorite characters. “Para-social relationships ‘play back’, as it were, in to the daily lives of many” (Horton & Wohl, 1956, p. 228). Quoting lines and sharing advice are among the ways that these
relationships “play back” into fans’ lives. “Oh, I definitely do that!” exclaimed one female participant, “I know that my brother and I are both in to *Invader Zim* so we’ll both quote lines from it just for fun, and I do have a friend named Nicole who likes all the shows I like so I know I’ll quote lines and she’ll know what I’m talking about.” There was no shortage of examples of imitation from interview participants on both ends of the Connectedness Scale. Those who scored highest reported frequently borrowing their favorite lines. “Jabroney” was added to a 19 year-old male participant’s regular vocabulary simply because he heard it used on his favorite show, *It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia*. Another male participant, age 20, said that he uses jokes or references to *M*A*S*H* but often gets discouraged because few of his friends have actually seen the show. “I know I remember myself quoting ‘I didn’t order assholes with my whiskey’ at one point—I probably shouldn’t swear in this thing, huh?” laughed another 20 year-old male participant when asked if he ever quoted lines.

Those on the lower end of the scale recounted instances of others infusing conversations with lines from various characters and television personalities, most often to the participant’s dismay. “It’s a little frustrating, it’s a little unoriginal. I have a lot of friends from high school who would just imitate comics; you would know that it wasn’t their jokes, it wasn’t something they came up with so it got a little old,” explained a 21 year-old female participant.

The aspect of imitation isn’t only focused on whether or not one quotes his or her favorite lines. Imitation also explores whether or not one incorporates gestures and phrasing from a character into his or her identity such as one 19 year-old male participant does, “Sometimes I’ll change the tone of my voice or say things that they’ve [referring to the characters on *It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia*] done before because I think it’s funnier than some of the things I think of.” Another 20 year-old, highly connected, male participant added “I know my sister has said to
me ‘Oh, that’s a Hawkeye face’ and my friends and I have been watching Dexter so sometimes we’ll take on certain speech patterns or idiosyncrasies that those characters have.”

Imitation is a fairly superficial aspect of connectedness which probably accounts for its low mean among all participants in the study. For those who are highly connected to a television show, there are more meaningful ways for their identities to be enacted than simply referencing lines from a character. Also, since the highly connected participants in this study tended to watch their favorite shows alone, as some of the previous quotes alluded to, others wouldn’t be able to understand the reference or the humor of the situation. Those who scored lower on the connected scale may fall into the category of not getting the reference or the joke because they haven’t seen the content, they don’t feel it is meaningful to who they are, or they may only see a show as entertainment. Perhaps, as with some of the participants in this study, they may even feel that imitating a character is annoying, unoriginal behavior.

By examining the six aspects of connectedness: Escape, Aspiration, Paraphernalia, Fashion, Modeling, and Imitation, this study has shown how some emerging adults’ decisions to use possessions and consumption behaviors to enact an identity can be influenced by their connectedness to a television show. As result, the brands placed within that show can have an impact on one’s identity formation. This means that emerging adults are susceptible to “branding” their identities in order to be perceived in a certain way. As a result of this, there are several important implications that will be examined as part of the study’s concluding remarks.

However, there are several limitations that need to be addressed before those remarks.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

As with any research driven by qualitative methods, the results are not generalizable to the entire population of emerging adults in this country. The lack of diversity at the college used
in the study is a definite drawback. Similarly, because of the participants’ schedules, most only reported watching 1-3 hours of television per day which more than likely impacted their ability to become highly connected to a television show. An obvious suggestion for future research would be to conduct research involving a more racially diverse group of participants and those who are not full-time college students. If one has more free time to watch television or has established a bit more of a regular viewing schedule because of work, etc., he or she will probably score higher on the Connectedness Scale.

DeLorme and Reid (1999) explain that all research, regardless of whether it is qualitative or quantitative, sacrifices generalizability when nonprobability sampling techniques, such the ones used in the multiple phases of this study, are employed. This study provided a richly detailed view of how one’s identity formation may be impacted by brand placement in television; however, since identity formation is a uniquely personal experience, the qualitative methods employed by this study were more warranted than strictly empirical methods.

Additionally, there are several biases that must be addressed. As with any study that seeks out volunteer participants there was the possibility a self-selection bias (DeLorme & Reid, 1999). There was also the possibility of a social desirability bias during each phase of research. In order to reduce the possibility of a social desirability bias, the questions on both the online survey and the interview guide were carefully worded and many were derived from previous research studies.

The primary limitation to the study which must be addressed is the lack of findings in reference to the study’s two hypotheses. The first hypothesis was posited to determine if gender might play a part in one’s identity being susceptible to influence by brand placement. It was based on research that found that women tend to look to fashion models and celebrities for
inspiration regarding style and behavior and other studies which examined women’s consumption patterns (Carrigan & Szmigin, 2004; Curasi, Hogg, & Maclaran, 2004; Fiske, 1992; Richins, 1991; Thomsen & Sorensen, 2006). The way the hypothesis was operationalized made it difficult to really measure this potential influence. Instead of using only one’s connectedness score as a way to gauge whether or not he or she may be influenced, it may have been helpful to examine additional items such as one’s score on the Para-social Attachment Scale (Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985).

The second hypothesis was proposed in response to research conducted by Pompper and Choo (2008), which found that those on the higher end of the socio-economic spectrum tend to be more influenced by brands that they see on television or film, and O’Guinn and Shrum (1997), which found that those with less income and education tended to be more affected by televised consumption practices. Given the opposing nature of the findings from earlier research, this study sought to contribute more to the knowledge surrounding economic status and the likelihood of being influenced by placed brands. It is important to note that the earlier research did not solely involve emerging adults.

There are several issues with asking emerging adults to estimate their family income, which the researcher considered when developing the survey instrument. Unfortunately, some of the concerns regarding estimates of family income did materialize. Members of the Millennial Generation are known for their close ties to their parents and the fact that their parents tend to be heavily involved in various aspects of their lives (Arnett 2000, 2004). Anecdotal evidence gathered by the researcher suggests that many students had their parents fill out paperwork relating to financial aid and federal student aid. Therefore, as evidenced by the lack of survey responses to the question asking participants to provide an estimate of family income, most
students aren’t able to provide an estimate. Additionally, there may have been some confusion as to what constitutes the participant’s “family.” Younger emerging adults, typically those 18 or 19, still think of their family unit as consisting of a parent(s) and possibly siblings. However, as Arnett (2000, 2004) points out, older emerging adults, especially those getting ready to graduate from college, often see themselves as autonomous from their parents and when asked about family income may not know how to respond—do they include their parent’s income in the estimate or just their own?

**Concluding Remarks**

Despite the lack of statistically significant findings with regard to its two hypotheses, this study has been able to reaffirm some findings from earlier research and presents some new findings with regard to brand placement’s potential influence on the consumer—specifically in the area of identity formation. It sought to move beyond research that simply examines the attitudes about and effectiveness of brand placement in order to examine the potential impact of placement on the consumer.

In regards to viewer’s attitudes toward brand placement, participants in follow-up interview had attitudes consistent with the findings from prior research discussed in the second chapter. Most participants did not mind brand placement and felt that added a sense of realism. However, as with earlier research, the modality of brand placement and the fact that the placement must be congruent with the character, plot, or scenery surfaced as indicators of acceptance. “Their method of putting the brands in the show is important; I don’t like it when they are tied to the commercials,” explained a 20 year-old female participant. Similarly, “I don’t like it when I see the brand used and then see the commercial for it. I used to watch 24 and
Ford trucks did that all the time. There’d be Ford trucks in the show and then the first and last commercial would be for Ford,” added a 20 year-old male participant.

The study also found that highly connected participants were able to recall more instances of brand placement than those who scored lowest on the Connectedness Scale which was consistent with Russell, Norman, and Heckler (2004a). The ability to recall instances of brand placement also turned out to be one of the key characteristics of someone who is more likely to have his or her identity influenced by instances of brand placement, in addition to very selective viewing habits, and the tendency to watch a favorite program alone. These three keys aspects also surfaced as part Russell, Norman, and Heckler’s (2004a) findings:

At one end of the connectedness spectrum, a TV program may be viewed simply as a form of mindless entertainment. Viewers may feel positively toward the program and be attentive when watching it, but the extent of their connection stops there. At the other end of the spectrum, TV programs and their characters can become an obsession with which viewers constantly interact and around which they model their lives. Viewers may identify with the situations in the program, vicariously participate in the characters’ experiences or even develop para-social relationships with the television figures. (p. 151)

The study also reaffirmed findings from Russell and Puto (1999); Karrh, Firth, and Callison (2001); and Russell and Stern (2006) which note the influence of brand/character pairings. However, it did go a step beyond their research in exploring some of the aspects of that influence.

When research is able to replicate or reaffirms existing research it is noteworthy, but the ability to add to the existing body of knowledge surrounding a particular subject is key. Using the social identity perspective as a lens, this study was able to examine some of the ways in which identity formation may be influenced by brand placement. “…social-identity theory conceptualizes consumer behavior as it occurs naturally. It focuses on three ideas that underpin daily life: (a) that most of it constitutes doing (eating, sleeping, working, recreating); (b) that this
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doing requires having (possessions); and (c) that such having/doing is largely social in nature (our behavior is influenced by the physical or symbolic presence of others)” (Kleine, Kleine & Kernan, 1993, p. 211). It provides the ideal lens for examining the aspects of connectedness: Escape, Aspiration, Paraphernalia, Fashion, Modeling, and Imitation to show how a group of highly connected participants both learn to use their possessions and consumption patterns and actually use them to enact aspects of their identity. The various aspects of connectedness help illustrate the exact ways in which “possessions and consumption are used to obtain the esteem-enhancing feedback necessary for identity development and maintenance” (Kleine, Kleine, & Kernan, 1993, p. 231).

In terms of new contributions, this study has provided information regarding brand placement and the consumer identity. The study has also added to the knowledge regarding the ways that mass media use may be related to identity formation. If viewers see brands placed within shows they feel connected to, they are likely to seek out those products and use them not only as part of their mundane consumption but also as an aspect of their identity. Essentially, brand placement is contributing to the branding of a new generation of adults who function as walking, talking billboards for their favorite companies and products. These findings clearly have implications for scholars and educators interested in media literacy as well as those interested in regulatory policy regarding brand placement.

Should media literacy be a required part of a school curriculum? Should brand placement be heavily regulated? This study does not propose to definitively answer these questions but it does hope its findings contribute to the dialogue surrounding these issues.

With instances of brand placement increasing throughout media, it is vital to understand how those instances may be impacting the consumer. This study has shown that brand
placement can indeed influence identity formation, particularly among emerging adults. With this knowledge, it is now important to expand the scope of examination in order to see how brand placement may be impacting other media consumers.

These findings lead to several potential avenues for future research. Despite this study’s lack of findings related to connectedness and gender, this hypothesis warrants further investigation. As previously mentioned, to further explore any potential link between gender, connectedness, and brand placement, it may be helpful to look at additional variables possibly including para-social attachment and amount and type of media consumed. Additionally, could shifting gender roles within society be an intervening factor between gender and connectedness?

Other populations should also be included in future research. Emerging adults who are not college students were not participants in this study, but they should be included in future research. Adults at other transitions in their life should also be included. Transitioning to married life, parenthood, and retirement all involve shifts in identity and consumption patterns that could potentially be influenced by brand placement. Examining connectedness in a global context is also important because of the amount of media content produced in the United States that is exported.

The connectedness scale itself should also be reexamined. It may be valuable to update the scale; for example, the aspect of Paraphernalia asks about books, among other possessions. With traditional book sales declining while the popularity of readers such as the Nook and the Kindle increase, it may prove beneficial to redesign the Paraphernalia aspect of connectedness. Also, the scale has nothing to capture how social media might play a role in connectedness. The growth of social media has allowed devoted fans of television shows to connect easier than ever before. Clearly, the potential impact of social media on connectedness should be examined.
Additionally, it might be beneficial to determine whether watching a television show live or recorded impacts connectedness levels.

Lastly, this study focused solely on the genre of television. An examination of brand placement associated with recurring characters from other genres of media is necessary to fill the void of research examining the influence of brand placement on consumer identity. Is it possible for connectedness to extend to other genres of media where there are recurring characters? As previously mentioned, the James Bond movie franchise repeatedly has set records for brand placement. Prior to being featured on the silver screen, Bond appeared in novels by Ian Fleming. The Twilight franchise is another series featuring literary characters that later appeared on the big screen. Some video game franchises also feature recurring characters. Given that gamers assume the role of these characters and often have to interact with placed brands to complete missions, future research should examine the link between video game play, placed brands, and identity formation. Could these recurring characters in other media genres also influence consumer identity formation and behavior? Do fans of these or other entertainment franchises experience the same type of connectedness? This study was only the first in a series of studies that will examine the impact of brand placement and consumer identity. It has also demonstrated the need for other scholars to take interest in examining the increasingly popular strategy of brand placement and its impact on consumers.

It is important for scholars to take interest in this vein of research because professionals within the media industry would undoubtedly be interested in knowing exact connectedness formulas for reaching various target audiences with brand placement. If media professionals are able to utilize a connectedness “formula” they could practically guarantee brand placements would influence an audience. Clearly, there are a number of ethical issues that would be raised
by such an idea, but until there is a wealth of research that provides a better understanding of brand placement’s influence it is impossible to advocate for an appropriate course of action in terms of allowing or regulating brand placement.

Despite the fact that brands have been appearing in media content for quite some time, the academic research on the subject has not kept up with brand placement’s growing popularity. This project was designed to examine an under-studied area of importance, the interplay of brand placement, consumption patterns, and identity formation. Ideally, it will serve as a catalyst for the development of an extensive body of research that seeks to understand how we are shaped by one of the most pervasive elements of modern society—branded media content.
References


Dittmar, H. (1992). *The social psychology of material possessions: To have is to be*. New York: Prentice Hall.

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APPENDIX A: HSRB APPROVAL & RECRUITMENT EMAIL

August 5, 2010

TO: Brittany Rowe-Cernevicus
COMS

FROM: Hillary Harms, Ph.D.
HSRB Administrator

RE: HSRB Project No: H10D345GX2

TITLE: Can Brand Placement Influence Identity Formation?

You have met the conditions for approval for your project involving human subjects. As of August 5, 2010, your project has been granted final approval by the Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB). This approval expires on June 21, 2011. You may proceed with subject recruitment and data collection.

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is attached. Consistent with federal OHRP guidance to IRBs, the consent document(s) bearing the HSRB approval/expiration date stamp is the only valid version and you must use copies of the date-stamped document(s) in obtaining consent from research subjects.

You are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the HSRB and to use only approved forms. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures (including increases in the number of participants), please send a request for modifications immediately to the HSRB via this office. Please notify me, in writing (fax: 372-6916 or email: hsrb@bgasu.edu) upon completion of your project.

Good luck with your work. Let me know if this office or the HSRB can be of assistance as your project proceeds.

Comments/Modifications:
Please add text equivalent to the HSRB approval/expiration date stamp to the “footer” area of the electronic consent form (see attached for specific text).

c: Dr. Terry Rentner
Research Category: EXEMPT #2
Hello!

Sharing a few thoughts about your favorite television show could win you a gift card! For taking just 10-15 minutes of your time to complete a survey you could win a gift card to either amazon.com or i-tunes.

Below you will find a link for a survey. It contains various questions relating to media use and television viewing habits along with some questions about the content in the shows that you watch. You will also be asked if you would like to be entered into a drawing for one of the gift cards. If you would like to be entered in the drawing, you will need to provide your email so that you can be contacted in the event that you win one of the gift cards. However, you don’t have to provide your name or email to participate.

Here is the link for the survey: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/6PB76QH

The anticipated risks to you are no greater than those normally encountered in daily life. Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time. You may decide to skip a question or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Deciding to participate or to not participate will not affect your grades/class standing at Westminster.

If you have any questions concerning this research project you may contact me at roweba@westminster.edu or ext. 6024 or my advisor at trentne@bgsu.edu or 419-372-2079.

Thank you very much for your time!
Brittany Rowe-Cernevicius
Instructor; English & Public Relations
Hello!
Sharing a few thoughts about your favorite television show could win you a gift card! For taking just 10-15 minutes of your time to complete a survey you could win one of five gift cards to either Wal-Mart or i-Tunes that range in value from $10 to $25.

My name is Brittany Rowe-Carnevelius and I am a Ph.D. student from the School of Media and Communication here at Bowling Green. I am working on my dissertation with my advisor, Dr. Terry Rentner, and I could use your help.

I am interested in learning more about the role television programs play in undergraduate students' lives and how students relate to them. I'm also interested in how some of the content in those television programs impacts students' lives. By participating in this study you will help provide a better understanding of whether brand placement in television programs can have a positive or negative impact on viewers and also provide information that can contribute to the debate over whether or not it is necessary to implement further restrictions on brand placement in television programs. As previously mentioned, you could win a gift card valued at $10, $20, or $25.

At the end of this email you will find a link for a survey. It contains various questions relating to media use and television viewing habits. The survey should take 10-15 minutes of your time. At the end of the survey you will be asked to submit your email address if you would be interested in participating in any follow-up interviews that may be conducted as part of this research project. You do not have to provide your email address if you are not interested in participating in future research. Additionally, providing your email address does not mean that you are consenting to participate in follow-up research.

You will also be asked if you would like to be entered into a drawing for one of the five gift cards; you will need to provide your email so that you can be contacted in the event that you win one of the gift cards. You do not have to participate in any follow-up research in order to win a gift card. All email information will be removed from project files upon completion of this research by shredding any paper documents that contain email information and deleting the computer file containing email information.

The anticipated risks to you are no greater than those normally encountered in daily life. Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time. You may decide to skip a question or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Deciding to participate or to not participate will not affect your grades or class standing or your relationship with Bowling Green State University. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate. By completing this survey and submitting it, you are indicating your consent to participate in this research study.

The data collected from this survey will be stored in a password-protected database that only I have access to in order to maintain confidentiality. For web-based surveys, such as this, it is important to remember (1) some employers may use tracking software so you may want to complete your survey on a personal computer, (2) do not leave survey open if using a public

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/YCGGHZP

8/5/2010
Welcome!

Hello!
I am interested in learning more about the role television programs play in undergraduate students’ lives and how students relate to them. I’m also interested in how some of the content in those television programs impacts students’ lives. By participating in this study you will help provide a better understanding of whether brand placement in television programs can have a positive or negative impact on viewers and also provide information that can contribute to the debate over whether or not it is necessary to implement further restrictions on brand placement in television programs.

The survey should take 10-15 minutes of your time. At the end of the survey, you will be asked to submit your email address if you would be interested in participating in any follow-up interviews that may be conducted as part of this research project. You do not have to provide your email address if you are not interested in participating in future research. Additionally, providing your email address does not mean that you are consenting to participate in follow-up research.

You will also be asked if you would like to be entered into a drawing for one of two gift cards. You will need to provide your email so that you can be contacted in the event that you win one of the gift cards. You do not have to participate in any follow-up research in order to win a gift card.

The anticipated risks to you are no greater than those normally encountered in daily life. Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time. You may decide to skip a question or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Deciding to participate or to not participate will not affect your grades/class standing at Westminster. By completing this survey and submitting it, you are indicating your consent to participate in this research study.

For web-based surveys, such as this, it is important to remember (1) do not leave the survey open if using a public computer or a computer others may have access to, (2) clear your browser cache and page history after completing the survey.

If you have any questions concerning this research project you may contact me at roweba@westminster.edu or ext. 6024.

Thank you very much for your time!
Brittany Rowe-Cernevicius
Instructor; English & Public Relations
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. What is your age?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>[ ] I do not accept.</td>
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<td>2. In an average week, approximately how many hours per day would you</td>
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<td>spend on the Internet?</td>
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<td>3. In an average week, approximately how many hours per day would you</td>
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<td>spend listening to music?</td>
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<td>4. Do you play video games?</td>
<td>[ ] Yes</td>
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<td>4a. In an average week, approximately how many hours per day would you</td>
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<td>spend playing video games?</td>
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<td>[ ] 7-10 hours</td>
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<td>[ ] More than 10 hours</td>
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<td>4b. What is your favorite video game?</td>
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<td>5. In an average month, how many books do you read (please do not count</td>
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<td>school-related readings)?</td>
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<td>[ ] 2 books</td>
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<td>[ ] 3 books</td>
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<td>[ ] 4 books</td>
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<td>[ ] More than 4 books</td>
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<td>5a. What is your favorite book?</td>
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6a. In an average month, how often do you go to the movies?

- 0 times
- 1-3 times per month
- 4-6 times per month
- 7-10 times per month
- More than 10 times per month

6b. In an average month, how often do you rent DVDs?

- 0 times
- 1-3 times per month
- 4-6 times per month
- 7-10 times per month
- More than 10 times per month

6c. In an average month, how often do you watch movies online?

- 0 times
- 1-3 times per month
- 4-6 times per month
- 7-10 times per month
- More than 10 times per month

6d. What is your favorite movie?

[Blank space for answer]

7a. In an average week, approximately how many hours per day would you say you spend watching television?

- 0 hours
- 1-3 hours
- 4-6 hours
- 7-10 hours
- More than 10 hours

7b. Do you have access to a DVR or TiVo?

- Yes
- No

7c. In an average week, how often would you say that you record programs on a DVR or TiVo?

- I do not record programs.
- 1-3 times per week
- 4-6 times per week
- 7-10 times per week
- More than 10 times per week

8a. For this next section, please think of a specific TV series that you watch, which airs at least once per week, and refer to it when answering the following questions. Please type the name of the program.

[Blank space for answer]

8b. As a type of television program, how would you classify this program?

[Blank space for answer]

8c. How many new episodes do you watch each month?

[Blank space for answer]
8d. How many repeat episodes do you watch each month?

8e. How many years have you been watching?

8f. When you watch ____, do you typically watch it...
   - [ ] By yourself
   - [ ] With others

If you typically watch ____ with others, what is their relationship to you? (Please mark all that apply)
   - [ ] Friends
   - [ ] Relatives
   - [ ] Significant Other

Other (please specify)
8g. Please complete each of the following statements by indicating whether you:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree/Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watching ____ is an escape for me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>____ helps me forget the day's problems.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>If I am in a bad mood, watching ____ puts me in a better mood.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I like the clothes they wear on ____</td>
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<tr>
<td>I like the hairstyles on ____</td>
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<tr>
<td>I often buy clothing styles that I've seen on ____</td>
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<tr>
<td>I imitate the gestures and facial expressions from the characters on ____</td>
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<tr>
<td>I find myself saying phrases from ____ when I interact with other people.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I try to speak like characters on ____</td>
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<tr>
<td>I learn how to handle real life situations by watching ____</td>
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<tr>
<td>I get ideas from ____ about how to interact in my own life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I relate what happens on ____ to my own life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I would love to be an actor on ____</td>
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<tr>
<td>I would love to meet the characters on ____</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have objects (books, posters, pictures, etc.) that relate to ____</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I read books if they are related to ____</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. What year are you in school?

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior

Other (please specify) ___________________________
10a. Do you live on campus?
   ○ Yes   ○ No

10b. Do you have a roommate(s)?
   ○ Yes   ○ No

11. With which gender do you most identify?
   ○ Female
   ○ Male
   ○ Transgender

12. Is English your first language?
   ○ Yes   ○ No

13. What is your family's approximate household income per year?
   
   Estimated Income
   
   Select One

If you would be willing to participate in any follow-up research that may be conducted as part of this project please type your email address below.

   Email Address:

If you would like to be entered into the drawing to win one of two gift cards valued at please enter your email address below so that you may be notified in the event that you are selected as a winner.

   Email Address:

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research study. If you have any questions or comments regarding the study or your participation in it, feel free to contact Britanny Rowe-Casanovas at roweie@westminster.edu or ext. 6024.
Hi [Student Name],
At the end of last semester, you responded to a questionnaire via a link that I emailed to undergraduate students here at Westminster. Towards the end of the survey you indicated that you might be willing to participate in follow-up research conducted as part of that study.

I would like to interview you to learn more about your relationship with a particular television program and its characters and content. By participating in this study, you will help provide a better understanding of whether brand placement in television programs can have a positive or negative impact on viewers, and also provide information that can contribute to the debate over whether or not it is necessary to implement further restrictions on brand placement in television programs. The interview length may vary but should not take more than an hour of your time. Participants will receive a small thank you gift for their time.

If you choose to participate, please email me with the day and time that would work best for you based on the following schedule. Interviews will take place in Thompson-Clark 208.

[Date 1: Times]
[Date 2: Times]
[Date 3: Times]
[Date 4: Times]
[Date 5: Times]

If none of these days/times are convenient but you would still like to participate, feel free to email me with a day and time that fits your schedule. If you have any questions feel free to email me or call x6024.

Thanks again for your participation!
Brittany Rowe-Cernevicius
Instructor
English & Public Relations
Ext. 6024
Several months ago you responded to a questionnaire via a link that I emailed to undergraduate students here at Westminster. I am conducting some follow-up research regarding the questionnaire you completed. I am interested in learning more about the role television programs play in your life and how you relate to them, as well as how your life is impacted by some of the content in those television programs.

I would like to interview you to learn more about your relationship with a particular television program and its characters and content. By participating in this study you will help provide a better understanding of whether brand placement in television programs can have a positive or negative impact on viewers, and also provide information that can contribute to the debate over whether or not it is necessary to implement further restrictions on brand placement in television programs. The interview length may vary but should not take more than an hour of your time.

I would like your permission to make an audio recording of this interview so that I may transcribe it later for review during my study. Although direct quotes may be used when reporting the study’s results, interview participants will not be identified by name in any reports of the results from this research project. All audio recordings will be saved as .mp3 files on a password-protected computer so that I will be the only one with access to the original recording. The files will be deleted following the completion of my study and publication of the results. All consent documents will be kept separately from interview tapes and transcripts in order to provide confidentiality. Data collected during this research project will also be stored on that password-protected computer so no one else will be able to access it.

The anticipated risks to you are no greater than those normally encountered in daily life. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate. Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time. During the interview, you may decide to not to answer a question or to discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Deciding to participate or to not participate will not affect your grades/class standing at Westminster.

If you have any questions concerning this research project you may contact me at roweba@westminster.edu or 6024 or my advisor at trentne@bgsu.edu or 419-372-2079 if you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research.

I have been informed of the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits of this study. I have had the opportunity to have all my questions answered and I have been informed that my participation is completely voluntary. I agree to participate in this research and have received a copy of this consent document.

______________________________________________________________________________
Participant Name (please print)    Participant Signature    Date