

Thoughts on *Deadly Persuasions* by Jean Kilbourne

Ads. They fill our world. But we know that. We understand that companies sell products and that advertising is their means of communicating with the public. I mean, who really falls for ads?

We all do. If we were fish, advertising would be part of the water filtering through our gills. Advertising is entirely embedded in our environment, so that actually, we are influenced all the time, continually, always.

A direct connection for our school's community resonates for me. Not only are adults bombarded by advertising, but that same drive to influence, to sell, directly affects our children as they become aware of the larger culture through exposure to television and especially to the virtual world of the internet. Recently a pre-literate child drew ".com" in scraggly letters that were hardly legible. He told me, "when you see this, it means it's a place with games for kids." My breath stopped, but the influence of marketing on that very young child didn't.

For our children's sake, we need to attune ourselves to the subtexts in advertising; we need to embrace the fact that this media is always driving toward the sell. We need to understand how advertising dollars influence what is and is not included in the informational articles we read. Consider the many years and the continued influence of the tobacco industry. However, public awareness is far less attuned to the daily ways food and diet advertising interplay to keep us eating but wanting to lose weight. Yet in many ways the news about advertising's affect on young women's self-image seems like old news. Unless you are twelve.

Kilbourne's well-researched book explores how advertising manipulates women and girls in particular because that is her area of dedication. But men and boys are certainly not immune. The recent email exchanges among our Grade 3 and 4 parents about boys and online gaming poignantly reveals how every household is grappling with the influence of the virtual world. This is a direct parallel to advertising and other huge cultural voices that want our loyalty for life.

Kilbourne's book is a call to get street smart about advertising. We can't escape from the many ads that daily bombard us. But we can know ourselves better, love ourselves better, and use the real connections we have with other significant people in our lives. By embracing our realities, by being happy with who we are, by knowing how to set and maintain realistic personal boundaries, we are all better equipped to withstand the desperation, the loneliness, the disconnection advertising needs to perpetuate us buying.

Mary Menacho

Hear Jean Kilbourne speak – *What Advertisers Really Sell Our Kids*
November 13 at Castilleja School 7PM; November 14 at Crystal Springs Uplands School 7PM; November 15 at Harker Middle School 8:45AM

Join Lana Harkness for a Trinity community discussion Wednesday November 14 at 8:30AM in the Library.