

Discussion Starters and Topics

"The paradox of "cool hunting" is that it kills what it finds."

-Douglas Rushkoff

What are the implications of cool hunting for the development of new ideas, new music, new art forms, etc.?

"In much the same way that the British Empire tried to take over Africa and profit from its wealth, corporations look at [teens] like this massive empire they are colonizing and their weapons are films, music, books, CDs, Internet access, clothing, amusement parks, sports teams."

-Robert McChesney

Are "cool hunters" and those who use the information they supply similar to colonial powers? Do they exploit teens or are they providing desired benefits and services?

"They don't call it "human" research or "people" research, they call it "market" research."

- Douglas Rushkoff

Did the marketers in "The Merchants of Cool" get it right? Do they really know you? If MTV was really based on understanding you as a person, what would it look like?

"The MTV machine doesn't listen to the young so it can make the young happierãThe MTV machine tunes in so it can figure out how to pitch what Viacom has to sell."

- Mark Crispin Miller

Are marketers concerned with the well-being of the consumer? Do they answer to consumers? If not, who do they answer to? Is marketing to teens different from marketing to adults?

1. **"Quite simply, every company with a powerful brand is attempting to develop a relationship with consumers that resonates so completely with their sense of self that they will aspire, or at least consent, to be serfs under these feudal brandlords."**

- Naomi Klein*

Has seeing "The Merchants of Cool" led you to think about how you express your identity? What questions do you have? *This quote does not appear in the film, but is related to its content.*

2. What struck you most about this film?

3. In one word, describe how you felt while watching this film. Explain your answer.

4. Think about your self-concept. What aspects have been socialized by media outlets? What aspects are "authentic?" Think back to part of "The Merchants of Cool" where it is discussed whether "cool" was something being sold to you, or something that came from you? Is "cool" an act of expression or of consumption? Has that boundary been completely erased?