# CHAPTER 6

# SUPPORTING IDENTITY: THE PRESENTATION OF SELF

# SUPPLEMENTARY TEACHING RESOURCES

## A. Literary and Visual Resources

### 1. Literature

Canin, Ethan. 1994. “The Palace Thief” in Ethan Canin’s *The Palace Thief: Stories*. New York: Random House. An affluent student at a boarding school attempts to portray himself as an intellectual. His

behavior has profound effects on an instructor’s life.

Donofrio, Beverly. 1990. *Riding in Cars with Boys: Confessions of a Bad Girl Who Makes Good*. New York: Penguin Books. A working class mother rebels against authority but ends up succeeding at an elite New England university. This is a semi-autobiographical novel about class mobility and making compromises between personal identity and conformity with society.

Parravani, Christa. 2013. Her: A Memoir. Christa and Cara Parravni were identical twins. After Cara died of a drug overdose, Christa had to consider what it meant to be a twin and what it means to live without the woman who was her mirror image. This poignant memoir offers readers a glimpse inside a relationship that few will experience—twinness—and offers astute observations on the construction and presentation of a self that is, in many ways, shared with another.

Smiley, Jane. 1993. *Duplicate Keys*. New York: Fawcett. A murder mystery which depicts the pressures of group membership and the presentation of self as a group of young people adjusts to their adult roles.

Strauss, Darin. 2011. Half a Life: A Memoir. New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks. Days before he was scheduled to leave for his first year of college, Strauss accidentally struck and killed a girl from his high school who was out riding her bike. In this memoir, Strauss describes how the event shaped his understanding of himself and how he managed information about the event in his relationships. The story opens up questions about how a single event can irreversibly alter one’s sense of self and relationships to others.

Wolfe, Tom. 2001. *A Man in Full.* New York: Dali Press. The story of a group of men and their attempts at

negotiating various statuses.

Geoffery Wolff. 1990. *The Duke of Deception: Memories of My Father*. New York: Vintage. Geoffrey Wolff’s father rarely told the truth about his ethnic heritage, his upbringing, or his credentials. He invented his autobiography as he went along and went as far as to create his own family creed and insignia. This memoir is Wolff’s attempt at making a sense of his father’s life. This book raises questions about authenticity and truth in the presentation of self, specifically the often blurry distinction between editing and fabricating.

### 2. Film

#### **a. Educational Films**

*The Ad and the Ego.* 1996. 57 minutes. California Newsreel. The first comprehensive examination of advertising and our culture of consumption. Scholars point out that advertising’s constant stream of messages is a powerful socialization tool that is meant to create consumers who are dissatisfied with who they are and what they have.

*The Merchants of Cool*. 2001. 60 minutes. PBS. Frontline journeys into the world of the marketers of popular culture to teenagers. Marketers sift through reams of market research data, conduct endless surveys and focus groups, and comb the streets, the schools, and the malls; always hot on the trail of the “next big thing” that will snare the attention of their prey—a market segment worth an estimated $300 billion a year.

#### **b. Feature Films**

*Can’t Buy Me Love*. 1987. 94 minutes. Buena Vista. Ronald Miller is tired of being a nerd, so he makes a deal with one of the most popular girls in school to help him break into the “cool” clique. He offers her $1,000 to pretend to be his girlfriend for a month. It succeeds, as “he went from totally geek to totally chic.” Of course, he soon learns that the price of popularity may be higher than he expected (www.imdb.com).

*Catfish*. 2011. 88 minutes. Universal. In this documentary a young writer begins an online romance with a woman he has never met. The trouble is that the woman doesn’t exist. This film examines the “reality” of the personas created on social networking sites.

*Dumbo*. 1941. 63 minutes. Walt Disney. An animated feature in which a young elephant is ostracized because of his huge ears. This film may also facilitate discussions about the consequences of racial and gender stereotypes.

*Elephant Man*. 1981. 124 minutes. Paramount. A 19th-century victim of neurofibromatosis fights against public reactions to his stigma.

*Exit Through the Giftshop*. 2010. 87 minutes. Oscilloscope Laboratories. The film bills itself as a documentary, but there is debate about the authenticity of this claim. And that is precisely the point the film intends to make. Using “footage” of urban graffiti artists and interviews with the popular Banksy, this film examines artists and art as social creations.

*Heathers*. 1989. 102 minutes. New World. Depicts high school students struggling with popularity issues through various impression management techniques. One member of the clique of stuck-up high school girls gets tired of the scene and goes on a murder spree disguised as teen suicides.

*Mask*. 1985. 120 minutes. MCA/Universal. A young boy with a disfiguring ailment struggles to gain acceptance in society.

*Miss You Can Do It*. 2013. 75 minutes. HBO Documentary Films. Abbey Curran (Miss Iowa 2008) was the first woman with a disability to compete in the Miss USA Pageant. She also started an alternative pageant for young women with disabilities, the Miss You Can Do It pageant. This documentary centers on the pageant and several of its contestants.

## B. Classic/Exemplary Sociological Studies

Nina Eliasoph, *Avoiding Politics: How Americans Produce Apathy in Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Stewart Ewen and Elizabeth Ewen, *Channels of Desire: Mass Images and the Shaping of American Consciounsess* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982).

Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1959).

Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1963).

Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Methuen, 1979).

Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: MacMillan, 1899).

Clinton Sanders and D. Angus Vail. *Customizing the Body: The Art and Culture of Tattooing* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2008).

Emma Tarlo. *Visibly Muslim: Fashion, Politics, Faith*. (Stanford University Press, 2010). This ethnographic study explores the multiplicity of meanings women assign to the hijab.