TO: Professor Grigelevich and Professor Greco

FROM: James, Angel, Kareem, and Antonio

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SUBJECT: Ethics in Advertisements

To be or not to be like Mike, that is the question. When it comes to basketball and the greatest of all time there is only one who almost unanimously comes to mind. Michael Jordan. Everyone wants to be like Mike. My research looked at the Nike/Jordan sneaker line for their advertising schemes and targeting tactics. It wasn’t long until I figured out that at first the targets for the shoes where males around 25 and under, student-athletes, or just regular boys playing ball at the local basketball court. Pretty much anyone who wanted to be like Mike was a target, but was it the shoes?

Tracing back commercials I began to see just how they got there point across. They showed lots of flashes of the shoes because of course that was the main focal point, they wanted to sell shoes but the fact what Jordan was doing had nothing to do with the shoe had to be brought up; that is what they tried to get across in the first few commercials. It wasn’t until the commercial for the fifth shoe in the Jordan series where Mars Blackmon also known as Spike Lee repeatedly asked Michael Jordan if it was the shoes that made him so great and Mike repeatedly said no but the most interesting part wasn’t until the end of the commercial when Nike had a little comment for the viewer putting “Mr. Jordan’s opinions do not necessarily reflect those of Nike.” Meaning that though Michael says it’s not the shoes that make him good his opinions on what makes him the best does not reflect that of Nike. Saying it’s the shoes so go and buy them. This helped answer my research question because it shows where the Nike/Jordan brand stand ethically. One of Terkels quotes was “the extraordinary dreams of ordinary people” and that is what this company is preying on, and that is unethical because it is not the shoes that make a person as good or better than Michael Jordan it’s the hard work put in. Nikes comments after the commercial threw any ethical leverage they had out the window.

The work issue that this topic focuses on is ethics. Many people purchase products because their sellers misrepresent these products and that is unethical and can have different effects on the lives buyers.

This relates to the Terkel quote “status... becomes important… society, they feel, looks upon them as lesser.” Status can be viewed as a big thing to the Nike/Jordan brand, why just in 2007-08 about 40 of the top 50 signature basketball shoes sold were Jordan styles. Michael Jordan’s success on the court has had such a tremendous effect on his status off the court that to many kids to teenagers, even some adults, look upon other shoes as lesser brands. This carries over to how people view each other. In many schools all across the country if you don’t have the latest Nikes and Jordan’s you are looked down upon. In today’s society the difference between cool and uncool is a jump man/check sign away. It goes even further to kids getting jumped for their shoes even people being killed. Hip-Hop artist J.Cole even briefly addresses the subject using it in one of his lines in a song called *Nobody’s Perfect feat. Missy Elliot*, he says “I step over piranhas, death over dishonor. They killin people for J's, that's death over designer.”

This issue connects to today’s society and current times because just a few months ago during the holiday season Jordan released another pair of shoes, the concord 11’s. The media attention quickly went from how many people stood outside stores for the shoes to the amount of chaos caused by the shoe. “Customers engaged in fights and vandalism. A Jersey man was stabbed during a brawl that broke out while people were waiting in line to buy the shoes. A mother was arrested for leaving her two children, ages 2 and 5, in the car while she went inside a mall to buy a pair of Jordan’s in Georgia. And gunshots rang out at one mall in California, causing thousands to be turned away” (espn.go.com). The ethics of the advertisement is important to me, my family, and my community is because they are not bad shoes, with the help of Looney Tunes, Spike Lee and etc. the Jordan brand is not aimed at the same demographic it issued to be. It is more widely popular and for that reason many more people in my community would want to purchase these Jordan shoes; my brothers and I may even want to purchase the shoes but when all is said and done and a person is walking out of the mall or down the street with these shoes, what’s to say they won’t end up on the news just like Mike, but for a completely different reason.