

Super-Sizing Sports Dirt:
On the Ethos of Communicative Dirt and the Characterized Reader in Super Bowl
Commercials

Lawrence A. Wenner
Von der Ahe Professor of Communication and Ethics
College of Communication and Fine Arts
School of Film and Television
Loyola Marymount University
1 LMU Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90045
(310) 338-3754
lwenner@lmu.edu

Paper for presentation at the
37th World Congress of the International Institute of Sociology
“Frontiers of Sociology”
Research Committee on the Sociology of Sport
Session on Sport and Media
Stockholm, Sweden
July 2005

ABSTRACT

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This study uses the concept of communicative dirt as articulated in the work of Leach (1976) and Hartley (1984) in a critical assessment of how the logic of sports and the Super Bowl event is imprinted to impose and empower meaning in commercials across a variety of product categories seen in the 2005 Super Bowl broadcast. Following on the work of Wenner (1989, 1991, 1994) on the super-hype of the Super Bowl, the use of sports dirt in alcohol advertising, and the dirty characterizing of the reader in television commercials supporting the U.S. Dream Team basketball game broadcasts, this study uses reader-oriented criticism to center on both the characterized fictional reader in the text and the implications made about the reader at home consuming the text. The study concludes by identifying the changed dynamics of communicative sports dirt when the marketing moment has been super-sized in its efforts to maximize brand identity.