“Factory Girl”

This is the story of Edie Sedgwick

“One person in the 60’s fascinated me more than anybody I had ever known. The fascination I experienced was probably very close to a certain kind of love.”

— Andy Warhol

My experiential paper is on the movie “Factory Girl”. “Factory Girl” is the story of Edie Sedgwick. She was a young woman during the 60’s who moved to New York to become an
artist. While she was there she met Andy Warhol and became his muse for the majority of his art that brought him fame. The movie “Factory Girl” tells the untold story of how Andy Warhol used her, drugged her and ultimately destroyed her life for his own personal gain.

In the beginning of the movie the business world is portrayed in a very positive light at least from Edie’s perspective. She is young, excited and doesn’t see how cruel the world can be. She meets Andy at a party and he is immediately taken by her. The two of them begin working together and Edie becomes the “IT” girl of the 60’s. Edie has fame and the world seems to be at her fingertips. As the movie continues the business world is definitely portrayed in a much more negative light. Andy and Edie both rose to fame but only Andy got the fortune. Edie starred in every movie, every “living art” piece and was the source of inspiration that got Andy the fame and publicity we know him for today. Edie worked as hard has she did because she was manipulated into thinking that she would eventually be paid for her work. She begins to struggle financially as the movie goes on. She begins to realize that a lot of profit has been generated through the work she has done and starts to ask Andy when she will be paid. People on the outside see what is really going on in Andy’s “factory” and try to make Edie see that she is being used. They tell her she is disposable to Andy and nothing more than an object to him. By this time she is so involved in heavy drug use and so controlled by Andy Warhol that she doesn’t see what everyone is trying to protect her from. As predicted, Edie is kicked to the curb by Andy after she has been completely exploited and of no more use to him. Edie soon sees the truth of it all and realizes he has made all the profit, gotten all the fame and never intended on paying her what she had rightfully earned. The movie shows the dark side of business and how easily you can be taken advantage of if you do not protect yourself.
The first main marketing ethic issue was the fact that Andy Warhol did not pay any of his actors or models for their work in his art and movies. Andy would seek out young women who were vulnerable and enchanted by the idea of being famous. He saw a use for Edie and told her she would be his superstar. Andy knew that Edie loved the attention she was receiving and knew that he could get away with not paying her anything as long as the attention was enough for her. He put her in every project he could and constantly manipulated her by telling her she was gorgeous, famous and “had it all”. Edie came from a very wealthy family and Andy exploited her for her money as well. Even though Andy made money off of the work he sold he always pretended to be broke. Edie paid for everything in the beginning. Her family finally cut her off and that was when she started asking to be paid. Andy continued to fool her into thinking that he was not making the money she thought he was and that pretty soon the money would start coming in. Edie continued to work without pay. She never received the money for her work. I obviously feel that not paying Edie, or any of his other models/actors for that matter, was unethical. Andy should have paid Edie her fair share of the profits. At the same time, Edie should have stopped working for Andy when he didn’t pay her. I would have paid Edie and the people who helped me achieve fame. I couldn’t use people like that.

The second main marketing ethic issue was that Andy would exploit Edie by drugging her up before filming. Andy’s movies were not actually movies with a story or script. Andy claimed that he just liked to film people because he said that people fascinated him. He never gave any direction to Edie or contributed anything to what Edie said or did on film. When he realized how vulnerable Edie was and how many problems she had from her dysfunctional childhood he realized she hid a lot from the public and had a lot of secrets. He gave her so many drugs that she didn’t even know what was going on. He put her in front of the camera and asked
personal questions, embarrassed her and even let men violate her. He allowed other film makers to use her, drug her and rape her all on camera. She became so addicted to drugs and so messed up that she almost died. By this time Andy had ruined her reputation so badly that no one would hire her and to be honest she was not physically or mentally able to work. Andy never tried to help Edie and no one was ever brought to justice for the multiple raping, physical abuse and mistreatment of Edie. This issue should have been resolved right away by someone at the “Factory” saying something. Everyone who worked there and knew what was going on is at fault because they did nothing. I would have called the police right away and I would have done everything in my power to get Edie out of there. The idea of anyone doing that to another human being is unthinkable to me.

The third main marketing ethic issue would be Andy’s manipulation and control over Edie. Andy made it so that the “Factory” was all Edie had. He made it so her entire world revolved around him and his business. After a certain period of time Edie’s only friends were the people from the “Factory”, she had no one outside that circle of people. She was so addicted to drugs because of Andy and the “Factory” people that she was unable to help or defend herself. He controlled everything about Edie. When Edie was at the peak of her fame she met a famous folk singer. They fell in love. Andy realized the threat this posed to his business and he became even more manipulative. He had everyone at the “Factory” treat her like an outsider because of her fling with the singer. Andy brainwashed Edie into thinking that she could not make it without him. He told her that the singer would leave her and she would be left with nothing. Andy knew if he could make Edie believe she was nothing without him he could control her completely. As a result Edie left the singer. Edie claimed later “It was the biggest mistake of my life”. This ethical issue should have been resolved by never taking place. No one should ever take advantage of
someone like that in the first place. People are not property and Andy did not own Edie. Andy took away from Edie her right to choose through drugs, manipulation and blackmail. If I were Andy Warhol I wouldn’t have treated Edie that way. The workers at the “Factory” should have helped Edie and I also put some blame on her family for not stepping in when they realized she was in trouble. This is an example of many people making unethical decisions simply for their own gain.

Those were the main three marketing ethic issues I found in the movie “Factory Girl”. The entire movie is full of people being treated unethical, not just in the marketing sense. Even Edie’s friend who went to New York with her used her and exploited her for personal gain. Toward the end of the movie Edie was living on the street and a complete junky. She went to the restaurant Andy was eating at with his new “IT” girl and broke down in front of him. She was dirty, homeless and crying. At this point she was begging for the money he owed her. Without any emotion he responded “Well I gave you 50 bucks that one time… did you spend it already”? At this point she could no longer function and Andy knew it yet he did not care because she was of no use to him anymore. She finally was admitted into treatment in 1968. She was in treatment on and off until she was released for the last time during the summer of 1970. That fall she died at the age of 28 from a drug overdose. Andy Warhol gave no recognition of her death and when asked about it referred to her as “someone from the past who I hardly thought about anymore”.

At the heart of this story I feel that Andy Warhol himself was the main unethical issue. He made money off of people for being nothing more then themselves. He found interesting, beautiful people to take pictures of and film without pay and made a lot of money in the process. That would be like me walking around Duluth filming and taking pictures of people and selling my art for money. Andy did not create any of his art himself. His most famous and recognized
art would be his “Pop Art” which we all know today as the multicolored prints of people such as Marilyn Monroe. Even if he is credited for “creating” those he did not create the original art. Andy took art that already existed and repackaged it. Andy Warhol’s art may be iconic but he should never have been given the amount of credit has received for it. He did it with the help of many talented individuals, Edie Sedgwick being one of those.

*All information in this paper came from the movie “Factory Girl”.

*Pictures are from Google images, key words Andy Warhol & Edie Sedgwick.

Overall I learned from this exercise that people are capable of doing some pretty unethical things in order to make money and become famous. I also realized that Andy Warhol is
only in the second stage of Kohlberg’s Stages of Moral Development. Andy uses other people to get what he wants and where he wants to be. As long as it benefits him he doesn’t see anything wrong with it. I also learned that even though I put a lot of emphasis on personal responsibility there are certain situations when individuals can be so manipulated that they are not completely at fault for what happens to them. Edie could have gotten out early in the business and that was her main mistake but it doesn’t mean that what happened to her was deserved in any way.