A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY OF MEDIA LITERACY OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

ENROLLED IN A NORTH TEXAS MIDDLE SCHOOL

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Dissertation Prepared for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

December 2008

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Payne, Sara M. <u>A Phenomenological Inquiry of Media Literacy of Middle School Students Enrolled in a North Texas Middle School</u>. Doctor of Philosophy (Curriculum and Instruction), December 2008, 184 pp., 8 tables, 3 illustrations, bibliography, 125 titles.

This dissertation investigated the media literacy experiences of middle school students enrolled in a Texas school. The literature review suggested that middle school students may be overlooked as a distinct population in media literacy research. The primary guiding questions for this inquiry were (1) How is media literacy exhibited by middle school students within a formal school context? (2) How does an elective film and media class impact middle school students' media literacy? And (3) How do middle grade students' responses to media correspond with theoretical models for media literacy? The phenomenological research methodology included a reflective analysis of students' textual responses to non-print media clips (N=24) and a reflective analysis of follow-up personal interviews with a smaller group of middle school participants (n=5). A questionnaire completed by participants provided descriptive statistics about the sample group. Additionally, theoretical models of media literacy were used to evaluate participants' media responses in relation to theoretical constructs for media literacy. The findings resulted in 11 emergent themes which can be used to further discourse about media literacy and its role in middle school curriculum. The dissertation includes implications for educators based upon the emergent themes, as well as recommendations for further research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Literacy is a cornerstone of the American school system, but as technology creates new outlets for information sharing, media texts represent a larger portion of resources that people use for information and entertainment. Literacy practices in schools need to reflect the literacies required in a technologically advanced society.

Elements of media literacy, defined as the ability to analyze, evaluate and communicate messages, are included in national and state standards (National Communication Association [NCA], 1998; National Council of Teachers of English [NCTE], 2008; Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2007; The College Board, 2006). Therefore, schools must incorporate media literacy instruction into their overall literacy programs. Current accountability schemas measure print-based literacy skills, but they offer little insight to the media literacy habits and competencies of students in schools. Furthermore, few research studies provide any information about the media literacy skills of students within a public school setting, much less a public middle school. This study attempted to capture the phenomena of media literacy of middle school students enrolled in a Texas public middle school. The research process involved a textual analysis of written responses to media clips by students, which were administered as part of their regular instruction. I conducted follow-up interviews with a smaller sample of student participants to gain a richer understanding of students' school experiences with media. Participants provided information about ethnicity, gender, and prior school experiences through a survey (Appendix C). On the survey, participants also provided a self-rating for media literacy competency.

Background

Today's children live in a mediated world. The current generation of children has been

called the "M Generation" because of the amount of media consumed by them (Kaiser Family

Foundation, 2005). Technological innovations have eliminated media boundaries, allowing

individuals to download audiovisual files on demand to play in portable devices. Portable

gaming systems allow children to play video games wherever they happen to be as long as

batteries, or a charging source, are accessible. Television monitors with promotional

programming have been installed inside large retail stores and at gas pumps. Medical offices

have installed televisions and/or video systems to keep patients entertained in waiting rooms.

According to Nielsen statistics (2006), the average American household has more television sets

than people. Cellular telecommunications devices offer internet access, games, and audiovisual

playback, in addition to telephone and texting capabilities. It is no wonder then that students in

grades 3-12 spend an average of six hours and twenty-one minutes attending to some form of

media every day, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation study *Generation M: Media in the*

Lives of 8-18 Year-olds (2005). Kids spend more time with audiovisual media than they do in

school when their video gaming and television viewing habits are combined (Ellis, 2005). The

omnipresence of media in American society cannot be denied. Yet within the field of education,

media seems to be treated as a societal ill which exerts too much influence upon American

youth and contributes to increasing levels of childhood obesity and academic failures. Barack

Obama (2008), campaigning for President on a platform for change, perpetuates an attitude

which values print literacy above media literacy in a speech about his vision of a 21st Century

education:

But in the end, responsibility for our children's success doesn't start in Washington. It starts in our homes. It starts in our families. Because no education policy can replace a parent who's involved in their child's education from day one, who makes sure their children are in school on time, helps them with their homework after dinner, and attends those parent-teacher conferences. No government program *can turn off the TV, or put away the video games, or read to your children* [emphasis is mine].

Despite the public perception that increased media usage by young people is a cause of academic and social failures, which is ironically fed in part by media reports, research reviews have shown such cause-and-effect links to be faulty. Turning off the media will not prepare American youth for the future. Instead, education policymakers and practitioners should be advocating for teaching American youth how to be more thoughtful consumers of media – through media literacy education. The value of media research for the field of education is not in what students are viewing or the degree of their exposure; the value of media research for the field of education will not be fully realized until the focus shifts to studies about how students are viewing media.

Educational Problem

Technology has altered the modes of human communications, and the concept of literacy in theory has evolved from being able to read and write printed text to being able to read and write multidimensional socio-cultural texts including formats such as television, film, internet and other electronic communications. Today's young adults have grown up with multiple forms of media and believe that using non-print media give them additional tools to communicate what they are learning. Specifically, students see media as being inseparable from their ability to communicate (Kist, 2005). Literacy researchers contend that literacy instruction should include a critical reflection of texts (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Beck, 2005;

Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Braun, 2007). A critical pedagogical perspective of literacy relies on

the transformative potential of experiences with texts, including media texts. Critical literacy

> involves decoding the ideological dimensions of texts, institutions, social practices, and
> cultural forms such as television and film, in order to reveal their selective interests. The
> purpose behind acquiring this type of literacy is to create a citizenry critical enough to
> both analyze and challenge the oppressive characteristics of the larger society so that a
> more just, equitable, and democratic society can be created. (McLaren, 1989, p. 196)

Organizations with interests in education have expanded definitions for literacy to include the

ability to "read" media texts and incorporate media literacy as an integral aspect of schooling

for grades kindergarten through twelve (National Communication Association, 1998; NCTE,

2007; The College Board, 2006; United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

[UNESCO], 2005). However, curricula in schools often fail to address media literacy skills and

aesthetics which would encourage students to think critically about, and creatively

communicate with, media formats (Ellis, 2005). A 2006 survey of educators suggested that a

majority of educators believe more classroom instruction should be used to address media

literacy skills (Cable in the Classroom, 2006). A divide seems to have developed between

literacy theory and literacy education practices in schools. More research needs to be pursued

as a means of illuminating the praxis, or the practice of theory, particularly in relation to how

media literacy is exhibited by students within American public schools.

Media literacy instruction may be affected by a variety of factors. Epistemologies are

basic beliefs about the nature of knowledge and how it is developed. Media literacy instruction

may be complicated by epistemological differences among educators, policymakers, and

parents about the role media should play in school settings. These epistemological differences

may be based in individuals' beliefs about media and its effects upon children (Alvermann &

Hagood, 2000; Buckingham, 2001; Hobbs, 1998, 2008). Buckingham addresses the polarized

views related to effects that mass media have upon children in a policy paper prepared for

UNESCO:

> The formation and development of 'youth culture' – and, more recently, of a global 'children's culture' – are impossible to separate from the commercial operations of the modern media. Both in research and in public debate, children are frequently seen to be most vulnerable to media influence; yet they are also seen to possess a confidence and expertise in their relations with media that are not available to the majority of adults. They are defined both as innocents in need of protection, and as a competent, 'media-wise' generation. Yet whichever view we adopt, the fact remains that adults are less and less able to control children's access to the media. (Buckingham, 2001, pp. 3-4)

Media effects research suggests that media viewing may be a transactional process, wherein

individuals accept or resist messages based upon contextual measures, such as the

environment in which they are watching, their purpose for viewing, and their prior experiences

and knowledge (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Buckingham, 1993; Marsh & Stolle, 2006; Wood,

1993). Media literacy instruction may be further complicated by the multiple pedagogical

perspectives about how to teach media literacy in schools (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Semali

& Hammett, 1999; Silverblatt, Ferry, & Finan, 1999). Finally, teacher preparation and

professional development programs often fail to include media literacy instruction as part of a

comprehensive literacy curriculum (Brabazon, 2007; Morrell, 2008; NCTE, 2006), so teachers

may lack the necessary training and background to teach literacy skills to their students.

Media literacy practices in schools may also be hindered by education policies that

continue to restrict literacy to print-based standards, as well as by assessment practices that

measure literacy and reading abilities with print-based standardized testing schemes (Gallego &

Hollingsworth, 2000; Wixson & Pearson, 1998) and the ways by which literacy is measured

during censuses (UNESCO, 2005). If "…teachers can only progress as far as the [Institution of

Old Learning] and national policy allow them" (O'Brien, 2006, p. 43), then policies must be

updated to reflect the real mediated world in which students live. Media literacy skills are

included in the Texas English Language Arts standards adopted September 1, 1998, for grades

4-12. However, standardized testing in Texas continues to measure reading and writing with

print-based text. Furthermore, few media literacy measurement tools exist (Hobbs & Frost,

2003). Media literacy accountability measures need to be developed or added to existing print-

based literacy accountability assessments, in order to fully evaluate the literacy of students.

Schools, teachers, and students cannot be held accountable for media literacy education

objectives without consistent and reliable media literacy assessment tools.

Need for the Study

Media literacy standards have been advocated by national teaching groups and

educational researchers for decades (Buckingham, 2001). In fact all 50 states include

components of media literacy in their education standards for public instruction. Texas included

media literacy objectives in the English Language Arts standards for grades 4-12 since 1998

(TEA, 2007). However, media literacy skills are not measured by standardized testing measures

currently in place. Only five states include media literacy assessments in their statewide

education assessments (State Educational Technology Directors Association, 2007). Research

has shown that skills that are not tested may be neglected in classrooms (Sunderman, Kim, &

Orfield, 2005). A survey of educators suggested that media literacy was not being sufficiently

addressed by current educational practice in classrooms across the United States (Cable in the

Classroom, 2006). In her dissertation, Linder (2008) used a case study approach to examine the

impact of media literacy instruction on at-risk seventh-grade girls' responses and

interpretations of print advertising found in popular magazines. Spires, Lee, Turner, & Johnson (2008) used a mixed methodology with middle school students to find out their perspectives about what classroom instruction should be like in the 21st Century, but their surveys failed to include mass media or media production as technological elements of instruction. My study is unique by examining how students respond to television and film clips in a classroom setting and using those responses and follow-up interviews to gather more information about the media literacy competencies and experiences of middle school students. The phenomenological research methodology is appropriate for examining a complex phenomenon like media literacy by examining the lived experiences of individuals like middle school students.

Research on media literacy that does include the middle grade representation have focused on the content of the media to which students are exposed, or how middle school teachers have used or could use media forms as an instructional tool. Although research has been published about the media literacy of high school students (Hobbs, 2007; Morrell, 2008), information about media literacy within the context of middle grades is still in its infancy. More attention needs to be paid to the subject of media literacy, particularly within the fields of literacy and adolescent literacy, since early research indicates that media literacy is critical to adolescent literacy (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Kellner & Share, 2007) and could support academic achievement in other areas (Hobbs & Frost, 2003; Linder, 2008). As Nixon (2003, p. 409) states "We need studies of the textual features and dynamics of the new media genres children and young people use, as well as studies of how and why they engage with, control, construct, and critique these new texts and genres in specific contexts." Students can only be considered as literate when they can speak through the language of images and the language of

words (Feldman, 1978). If Feldman is correct, then one way of examining media literacy is through the language used by students to describe media and its meaning. Experts in the field of education agree that media literacy is an important aspect of contemporary society, but there is little research available about how young adults examine media or how adolescents recognize and explain the ways in which media messages are constructed and consumed in American public middle school settings. Rather than basing my research on assumptions, as Juvonen (2004) contends often happens when it comes to research about the middle grades, I collected and analyzed texts produced by middle school students. Phenomenology is a traditional qualitative research methodology that is well-suited to examining the perspectives of others, so my study applied a phenomenological research methodology for this study of media literacy of middle school students.

Middle schools are a relatively new developmental configuration in education. Despite recommendations by the National Education Association at the turn of the 19th Century that secondary education should begin at the seventh grade rather than the ninth grade, middle grades largely remained grouped within elementary schools. In the 1960s junior and middle schools generally arose from pragmatic concerns about crowded conditions in elementary schools after the Baby Boom which followed World War II, rather than developmental or educational concerns for those particular grade levels (Juvonen, 2004). Like the students they serve, middle schools are still struggling to be recognized as their own entity. Literacy research is more likely to examine high school or elementary school as contexts than middle schools. Middle schools may be classified with either elementary or secondary education, reflecting the split personality of middle schools in the field of education and literacy studies. Roe (2004)

relates: "The school climate and culture of students housed in middle schools differ in significant ways from students in elementary or high schools. Those differences demand separate attention to consider, rather than overlook, their impact on literacy instruction and attainment." The results of this study will add to the shallow pool of knowledge about media literacy of middle school students – a population that is often overlooked by researchers in the field of education.

The purpose of this study was to examine media literacy as a lived experience by middle school students in their formal schooling. Using a phenomenological research methodology offered language used by middle grade students to explain how meaning is derived from media and to create a conceptualization of media literacy in the middle grades. In addition to the written media responses, I collected information on demographics of participating students and prior media studies coursework taken by participants, as well as a self-rating by students about their own media literacy competency through a survey instrument. The information I collected with the survey suggested explanations for differences in media literacy conceptualizations among the middle school students who participated in this study.

Research Questions

While prior studies have focused upon teachers' uses of video in the classroom (Clark, 1983; Hobbs, 2006), few studies have examined media literacy from a middle grade student's point of view within the context of schooling. Some researchers have looked into the literacies of adolescents outside of school (Hobbs, 2008; O'Brien, 2006; Shannon, 1995; Stevens, 2006), while others have documented media literacy from a high school student's point of view (Hobbs, 2007; Morrell, 2008). Although researchers advocate for media literacy as an essential

9

aspect of literacy, specifically adolescent literacy, very little research is available about the practices of media literacy in a middle school context (Linder, 2008; Nixon, 2003; Tyner, 1998). Specifically, the guiding questions for this research were:

- How is media literacy exhibited by middle school students within a formal school context?
  - What language do middle school students use to describe media they view in a classroom setting?
  - How do students explain the meaning of a media clip?
- How does an elective Film and Media class impact middle school students' media literacy?
  - How do students think that their classroom experiences affect their media literacy competency?
  - What value do students place on media as part of their educational experience and learning?
- How do middle grade students' responses to media correspond with theoretical models for media literacy? Specifically, how do media responses and students' self-ratings of their own media literacy correspond to the following models:
  - Deep Viewing Guide (Pailliotet et al., 2000)
  - Keys to Interpreting Media Messages (Silverblatt, 2001)
  - Conceptual Tenets of Multimedia Literacies (Hobbs, 2008)
  - Assessment Principles for Media Learning (Haworth, Turner, & Whitely, 2004)

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited in several ways. The sample of students came from a single Texas middle school site which was selected for its convenience and the presence of a media and film studies course, rather than any scientific methodological reasoning. The sampling method limits any generalizability to a broader population of middle school students. Likewise, the students from the school were not selected as a representative sample, therefore the results apply to the students who participated, but may not be generalizable to other students within the same middle school campus or other middle school campuses within the same school district.

The surveys were mailed to students to complete on their own, therefore assumptions have been made that students understood each question on the survey document and personally answered each item truthfully.

The media response essays were completed as part of students' regular classroom instruction. Assumptions have been made that the acting teachers in those classrooms faithfully followed the protocols for this study.

Participation in the study was voluntary. Therefore, the students who assented to participate may differ from the students who were also eligible but declined to participate.

Because I had a prior relationship with the selected research site and its surrounding community, some of the student responses may have been influenced by previous interactions with me. For example, students may have supplied answers or information that they thought I wanted to hear.

Although every effort was made to eliminate preconceptions from coloring the analysis

and results, which is referred to as *bracketing* in phenomenological research (Slavin, 2006), it is impossible to completely remove my ideological assumptions and personal philosophies from the purpose and design of my study.

Definitions of Terms

The following definitions were used in this study:

Clip: A portion or segment of a complete *media* form. For this study, a seven minute and 41 second portion of the documentary was used beginning 51 minutes into the film, and a segment of a longer broadcast television news program was taken from the Cable News Network (CNN) website. The documentary film clip featured Morgan Spurlock, as he questioned school personnel, students, and food industry representatives about school lunch programs. At the end of the clip, Morgan Spurlock orders dinner at a fast food restaurant in Texas, and the experience is followed by a graphic showing the number of cities in Texas that are considered some of the nation's fattest cities. The news media clip was a digital video clip located on CNN.com. The clip had also aired as part of a CNN television news broadcast. The CNN clip is a report about the Democratic presidential nominee race between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. Clinton had just won the Pennsylvania primary.

Core curriculum: Mandatory academic courses in the disciplines of English Language Arts, Social Studies, Science and Mathematics.

Elective: A course offered that is offered to students in a school, but one that is not offered as part of the school's *core curriculum*. The site selected for this study offered Band,

Orchestra, Choir, Art, Theater, Technology Applications, Yearbook, Peer Mediation, Film

and Media, Student Aide, Health, Speech, and Spanish.

Film and Media Course: An *elective* course students may take as seventh or eighth grade

students at the research site. According to the teacher's description, the course covers

the history of motion pictures, the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), film

genres, and the production process of making a motion picture. Students use video

editing equipment and digital video cameras while they work on various film projects

that may be entered in state and local film competitions.

Media: A text which can be technologically manipulated and transmitted through a

technological device. In this study, media is represented by a documentary film, *Super

Size Me* (2004), available through mass distribution and a segment of a CNN broadcast

news program that was available as streaming video on the CNN website.

Media literacy: the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate messages. This term is

often used interchangeably with visual literacy (Feldman, 1978; Hobbs, 2007; Kellner &

Share, 2007; Kist, 2005; Thoman, 2003). In this study media literacy is exhibited through

media responses (Appendix B) and follow-up interviews (Appendix D). I evaluated the

media responses to determine a rating for media literacy, using the same scale that the

students used for their self-determined media literacy rating. In an effort to enhance the

reliability of the media literacy ratings and corroborate my ratings, the responses and

interview transcripts were then screened using 4 theoretical media literacy models:

deep viewing guide (Pailliotet, Semali, Rodenberg, Giles, & Macaul, 2000), keys to

interpreting media messages (Silverblatt, 2001), conceptual tenets of multimedia

literacies (Hobbs, 2008), and the assessment principles for media learning developed by the British Film Institute (Haworth et al., 2004).

Middle school (or middle grades): According to the National Middle School Association (NMSA), the middle grades encompass grades 5-8. The most common configuration for middle schools serves students in grades 6-8, including the site selected for this research study. This study only included seventh and eighth grade students from the middle school campus selected as the research site.

TAKS: Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, a state-wide standardized test for students enrolled in public schools

TEKS: Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, state-wide standards and objectives organized by grade levels and disciplines

Overview of Chapters

This chapter presented an overview of the educational problem and foundational need for exploring media literacy perspectives through the lens of a middle school student. Despite the pervasiveness of media in the lives of middle school students and an acknowledgment in education standards for the importance of media literacy instruction, there is a gap in the research about the media literacy habits of students in a middle school setting. In Chapter 2 I provide a review of the literature pertaining to media literacy in schools. The literature review looks at media literacy as it relates to conceptualizations of literacy and examines how education policy and practice may affect curricular implementations of media education in American public schools. Additionally, Chapter 2 explores research about media and its effects on children. I outline my research design and provide information about the school and

students selected for this study in Chapter 3. Then in Chapter 4, I present the results of the study based upon data collected from middle school students at the end of the 2007/08 school year and interviews completed in September of 2008. Finally, in Chapter 5, I discuss the relevance of my findings and offer suggestions for future areas of study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to develop a literature review that will provide context for an exploration of media literacy as it is experienced in a Texas middle school. This chapter is divided into sections: (1) Media Literacy, which introduces (a) conflicting conceptualizations of literacy and ideological assumptions which may influence literacy policies, (b) an analysis of policies related to literacy and media literacy, (c) educational practice in relation to literacy and media literacy; (2) Media Effects, which discusses research involving media and children in terms of (a) exposure, (b) identity and (c) behavior; and (3) Summary.

Media Literacy

Conceptualizations of Literacy

Literacy is in the midst of an identity crisis. New technologies have changed the ways by which people receive and share information and entertainment. Whereas the printing press made the copying and distribution of printed materials more efficient and, in turn, accessible, broadcast and digital technologies have changed not only the accessibility of various texts, but their formats as well. Among literacy researchers, the concept of literacy has evolved from one of print to a multidimensional reflection of socio-cultural texts (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Tyner, 1998). Media literacy, or the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate messages (Feldman, 1978; Hobbs, 2007; Kellner & Share, 2007; Kist, 2005; Thoman, 2003), has become an integral part of literacy in the 21st Century. Literacy has become the ability to competently decode, understand and use various symbols and codes as a means to improving a person's ability to actively participate in society (Braun, 2007). Furthermore the word *literacy*

16

has been appropriated by a variety of disciplines, and new terms have emerged in research

literature to reflect the shape-shifting properties of literacy. Terms such as financial literacy,

health literacy, information literacy, computer literacy, visual literacy and media literacy, are

commonly used in educational and popular discourse (Hobbs, 1996). As literacy evolves to

reflect a changing world, educators may find it increasingly difficult to meet, much less teach to,

the literacy demands of their students.

A recent statement produced by the NCTE Executive Committee avoids a definitive

explanation of literacies. Instead, *Toward a Definition of 21st-Century Literacies* (2008) presents

a conceptualization of literacy through a description of competencies displayed by a literate

person. Furthermore, as the title suggests, literacy is a concept that may be rooted in past

practices but is growing and changing as a reflection of the society in which it is planted.

> Literacy has always been a collection of cultural and communicative practices shared
> among members of particular groups. As society and technology change, so does
> literacy. Because technology has increased the intensity and complexity of literate
> environments, the twenty-first century demands that a literate person possess a wide
> range of abilities and competencies, many literacies. These literacies—from reading
> online newspapers to participating in virtual classrooms—are multiple, dynamic, and
> malleable. As in the past, they are inextricably linked with particular histories, life
> possibilities and social trajectories of individuals and groups. (NCTE, 2008)

Of the six competencies, media literacy plays a part in four: (1) developing proficiency with the

tools of technology; (2) designing and sharing information for global communities to meet a

variety of purposes; (3) managing, analyzing and synthesizing multiple streams of simultaneous

information; and (4) creating, critiquing, analyzing, and evaluating multi-media texts (NCTE,

2008).

The evolving nature of literacy has also been documented in a 2006 global monitoring

report produced for UNESCO (2005). Since 1978, UNESCO has defined functional literacy as an

extension of a person's lived experiences and their ability to function within their community, which allows for literacy and its function to reflect the changes within societies. Because mass media plays such a large role in modern society, it cannot be excluded as a valid text in terms of functional literacy. In a comparative study of national conceptions of literacy, numeracy and life skills published by UNESCO's International Bureau of Education, which compared data collected from 60 countries in 1990 and 2004, Mancebo found that definitions for literacy changed over time. Perhaps most surprising was the failure of countries to define literacy at all. Statistics suggest that the concept of literacy may have become more complicated than a definition could explain. In 2004, 83 percent of the countries in the study did not offer a standard definition for literacy (Mancebo, 2005). The CIA World Factbook (2008) provides literacy rates but provides the following caveat on a hyper-linked definition for literacy:

> There are no universal definitions and standards of literacy. Unless otherwise specified, all rates are based on the most common definition - the ability to read and write at a specified age. Detailing the standards that individual countries use to assess the ability to read and write is beyond the scope of the *Factbook*. Information on literacy, while not a perfect measure of educational results, is probably the most easily available and valid for international comparisons. Low levels of literacy, and education in general, can impede the economic development of a country in the current rapidly changing, technology-driven world.

Literacy research and statistics may misrepresent reality by projecting assumptions about the very nature of literacy upon data and its interpretations. Failing to acknowledge cultural and contextual aspects of literacy, although easier, may fail to adequately measure literacy throughout the world.

Couched in terms of reading and writing, literacy is often associated with successful outcomes in terms of engaged and productive citizens. The CIA statement referenced in the previous paragraph suggests correlations between literacy levels and a country's economic

development. "Low levels of literacy…can impede the economic development of a country…"

(Central Intelligence Agency, 2008). In a Preface statement within *To Read or Not to Read*

(2007), Dana Gioia, the Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), declared that

declines in reading habits among the nation's youth "have demonstrable social, economic,

cultural, and civic implications" (p. 5). Although Gioia stated that research only provided

correlations rather than any proof of cause and effect, he blatantly defied the statistical

evidence and concluded:

> To Read or Not To Read is not an elegy for the bygone days of print culture, but instead is a call to action—not only for parents, teachers, librarians, writers, and publishers, but also for politicians, business leaders, economists, and social activists. The general decline in reading is not merely a cultural issue, though it has enormous consequences for literature and the other arts. It is a serious national problem. If, at the current pace, America continues to lose the habit of regular reading, the nation will suffer substantial economic, social, and civic setbacks. (National Endowment for the Arts, 2007, p. 6)

The NEA report and CIA statement presented statistical correlations as cause and effect

relationships between literacy and socio-cultural factors. The relationship between print-based

literacy and social factors has become an urban legend, which is perpetuated in public spheres

by government agencies and public figures, despite the fact that "alphabetic literacy historians

have become increasingly tenuous over the years about creating cause and effect relationships

between literacy and other social acts such as behavior, crime, employability, family life, and

values" (Tyner, 1998, p. 48). Educational policies and practices based upon flawed conclusions

must be challenged and held to higher standards.

Ideological assumptions about the very nature of literacy further complicate discussions

about literacy and make it difficult to create a common conceptualization. As Lankshear (1999,

Part I, para. 22) states: "The myriad literacies that play out in social life should be seen as

integral components of larger practices, simultaneously reflecting and promoting particular values, beliefs, social relations, patterns of interests, concentrations of power, and the like." Is reading just a matter of decoding symbols on a page, or is it a transformative process of interpreting codes as a means for learning? Do canonical assumptions about texts used for the purposes of literacy instruction limit the scope of literacies for students in schools? Ideologies are beliefs and values shared by a group of people. Essentialists share a belief in "essential" or basic education skills, often characterized by the Three R's – Reading, wRiting, and aRithmetic (Gutek, 2004). From an essentialist perspective, literacy would be comprised of a series of technical skills which could be efficiently transmitted from teacher to student. In addition, reading would result in one correct interpretation of text. Based in a different ideological perspective than essentialist practices, liberation pedagogy, developed by Brazilian educator Paolo Freire, situates learning within the realm of the learner's experience. Rather than viewing literacy, specifically reading and writing, as skills, Freire believed literacy was a means of enabling minorities and lower classes to challenge existing power structures (Gutek, 2004). In direct opposition to an essentialist transmission, or "banking," model of pedagogy, Freire proposed a *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1971), which theorized that a transmission model of pedagogy only served to validate the status quo and situate the transmitter of knowledge as an authority, in turn perpetuating existing class statuses. Liberation pedagogy empowered the student by framing the student as being capable of inquiry and a creator of knowledge (Freire, 2004). Critical literacy is another example of a literacy conceptualization representative of a specific ideology. Similar to liberation pedagogy, critical theorists are also interested in challenging the status quo to empower disenfranchised or subordinate groups of people within

a society (Gutek, 2004). Luke (1988) addressed the conflicts of ideological constructions of

literacy in his book *Literacy, Textbooks and Ideology*:

> [W]ithin such debates lies a stratum of normative assumptions not only about what is to count as literacy but about what the ultimate social purposes and political potential of literacy: whether this be the ethos of, for instance, individual empowerment and personal voice, of basic morality and skill, or of rudimentary 'functional' job skills and the maintenance of an industrial order. (p. 17)

Ideological perspectives can shape classroom practice through public policies that may

influence education objectives, textbooks, standardized measures for knowledge and

pedagogical practices. Curricular debate revolving around proposed changes for English

Language Arts standards in Texas illustrate the impact of conflicting ideological perspectives on

educational policy. A member of the Texas Board of Education who was aruing for a back-to-

basics approach to English Language Arts TEKS was quoted as saying that "critical thinking stuff

is gobbledygook" (Falkenberg, 2008). The proposed TEKS, which the essentialist members of

the board supported, did not include any specific media literacy components.

Literacy, Media Literacy and Educational Policy

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Any review of current education policy would not be complete without addressing

NCLB. Federally funded programs such as Head Start and Reading First concentrated on early

reading strategies that relied upon simple decoding strategies and word recognition skills. As

standardized reading scores for younger American readers climbed, secondary students failed

to realize similar increases in reading achievement. Standardized testing results suggested that

early reading interventions did not fully address the literacy development of secondary

students, including those students in the middle grades. The words used in policy documents

guide the interpretations of that policy and its ultimate practice.

In March of 2007 Senators Sessions and Murray introduced H.R. 2289, known as the Striving Readers Act of 2007 (SRA), to address the needs of adolescent readers. This act was subsumed by NCLB as Subpart 3 of Part B of Title 1 (20 U.S.C. 6381 et seq.). The use of the phrase "adolescent literacy" differentiated literacy for adolescents from other categorical age groups, suggesting that literacy contexts change according to developmental levels. "Striving readers" replaced "struggling readers" to describe older readers who were not performing at grade level on standardized testing measures. The SRA reinforced the understanding of literacy as a school construct, as is evidenced by the way Senator Sessions introduced his resolution to the Senate:

> Mr. President, today Senator Murray and I [Senator Sessions] are pleased to introduce the Striving Readers Act, for the eight million middle and high school students across the country who are not reading well enough to succeed in school…Better literacy is the cornerstone to improving student achievement in all subjects, lowering dropout rates, and ensuring students do well when they go on to college or the workforce. A recent study by the American College Testing Program found that students with better literacy skills in high school do better in their math, science, and social studies courses both in high school and in college. (Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions, 2007)

The purposes for improving reading skills, according to Senator Sessions, were directly related to furthering academic or school achievement. As mentioned previously in this chapter, literacy historians have determined that any cause and effect relationship between print-based literacy measures and social outcomes cannot be explicitly determined. Furthermore, Sessions did not present literacy as a social construct or as a means to achieve personal development goals.

When they first introduced the SRA on the Senate floor, Senators Sessions and Murray also thanked the Alliance for Excellent Education (AEE), the International Reading Association

(IRA) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP). The agendas of each of those organizations potentially affected the shape of the legislation. A comparison of adolescent literacy frameworks appears in Table 1.

Table 1

Literacy Frameworks of NCLB Stakeholders

Term	Definition	Source
Adolescent literacy	The possession of grade level appropriate reading and writing skills required in grades 4 through 12 to construct and communicate meaning from text and to become actively engaged in the learning process.	NCLB
Adolescent literacy	Reading and writing skills	NASSP
On adolescent literacy	Even when they have mastered the basics of reading and writing, adolescents have much to learn about the spoken and written language.	IRA
Adolescent literacy	Ability to read and comprehend words accurately	AEE

AEE is a national advocacy and policy organization that is focused on the idea that every American needs to graduate from high school. Therefore, the group's efforts are geared toward middle and high school education. An examination of AEE's website revealed a market perspective and the use of the market metaphor for education. The information on their website focused on the reported economic impacts of high school dropouts upon American society, citing a drain on welfare services and lack of economic production. AEE's agenda seemed to be based upon a framework of crisis and spotlighted schools with high rates of student dropouts as "drop-out factories" which imposes an industrial metaphor upon

educational institutions (Alliance for Excellent Education, [nd]). Lack of reading and writing skills were highlighted as a main reason that secondary students do not graduate. The organization presented SRA as a necessary extension of Reading First initiatives which have seemingly resulted in higher reading proficiencies for grades K-3, but have not resulted in higher rates at secondary levels. Literacy was framed by traditional print-based constructions.

In conjunction with the Carnegie Corporation, AEE also published *Reading Next* which proposed an adolescent literacy initiative as an extension of Reading First. The publication set up adolescent literacy performance as a crisis. Surprisingly, the proposal cites the changing demands of our technologically evolving society as a basis for needing to address adolescent literacy. The paper also stated that older readers do not struggle with reading because they cannot decode words; they struggle with reading because of other reasons. The report recommended that adolescent literacy research should not focus on the basic reading skills but on the other reasons that adolescents might not be performing at grade level in reading (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). In spite of the report's recommendation, national education efforts continue to narrowly focus on reading as the barometer for literacy abilities.

According to the organization's website, the IRA was founded for professionals who teach reading. The goals of the organization are to improve reading instruction, share research and information about reading, and promote reading as a life-time habit. These goals are exemplified by the organization's logo, a symbol of a person reading print-based text. The focus on reading is not surprising considering the title of the organization. The stated goals serve as a guided reading of the more general statements that make up the organizational mission statement. Whereas as the simply stated goals specifically use the term reading, the mission

statements use the term literacy and mention the changing contexts of reading in a technological age. The use of the word literacy rather than the word reading in the mission statement acts as an acknowledgement of the ideological differences that shape educational practice. "Whether your interest is research or practice, traditional print-based reading and writing or the 'new literacies' of the Internet age, new readers or those acquiring higher level skills, we offer something for you" (International Reading Association [IRA], 2008). Appealing to a wider membership base is in the best interest of the organization, where increased membership equates to more membership dues and more collective bargaining power. The logo, mission statements and stated goals reflect a lack of consensus about what literacy is.

In their position statement on adolescent literacy, the IRA hints at the premise that adolescent literacy happens beyond the context of school and print materials through a fictional account of two teens' daily activities. The position paper places a high value on reading as an activity. For example, one of the foundational statements for providing students with a wider selection of reading materials is that "Readers can find comfort and delight in print" (Commission on Adolescent Literacy of the IRA, 1999, p. 5). Another example of the emphasis toward a print-based interpretation of literacy can be found within the discussion advocating for instruction that builds an adolescent's ability and motivation to read more complex materials. The use of materials would seem to suggest a framework that would include multi-modal texts. However, the discussion goes on to mention pre-reading passages to determine meanings of unfamiliar words and questioning the author's intent for writing. To illustrate how this position would look in practice, the section describes a teacher who provides various books for students' self-selected reading purposes in addition to the class novel study. The position

statement does nothing to promote or connect students' outside mediated literacies with the school-sanctioned print-based conceptualization of literacy.

Secondary schools address the education of adolescents, so it should be no surprise that the NASSP should be involved in adolescent literacy policy-making. By concentrating on early literacy development, NCLB funds were distributed to schools that served grades K through 3. Reading First funding specifically prohibited any spending for teacher development or programs that served grades beyond grade 3. While students in the early grades raised their reading proficiency scores, the older students continued to struggle with reading proficiency. NASSP position statements seem primarily concerned about the lack of equity in funding for literacy programs between elementary and secondary levels of instruction and associated the lower proficiency scores for reading at secondary level with a lack of access to federal funding.

In this section I contended that NCLB relies on a traditional print-based conceptualization of literacy, thereby marginalizing the inclusion of media as a sanctioned form of text in public schooling. In a review of public policy, Conley and Hinchman (2008) also found that the majority of policy statements reflected a traditional, print-based view of literacy. In the next section I examine policy at the state level by analyzing state-mandated learning objectives in Texas.

TEKS

State standards also frame literacy instruction by providing standards for a minimum level of knowledge and skills attainment for the graduates of its public school system. Although states may receive additional funding to follow federal education initiatives, states retain the right to educate their citizens. The TEA is comprised of the commissioner of education and

agency staff. The TEA and the State Board of Education guide and monitor activities and programs related to public education in Texas. In Texas middle schools, media literacy skills and knowledge are included in English Language Arts, Social Studies, and Health strands. The middle school objectives for media literacy as mandated through TEKS are presented in Table 2. The inclusion of media literacy competencies in three separate disciplines, including two core subject areas, suggests that all middle school students are receiving media literacy instruction as part of their regular instruction and not in isolated elective courses. At middle school level, the state does not provide any curricular guidance for a middle school elective involving media studies.

Despite the presence of media literacy standards in TEKS, accountability measures in place fail to account for students' acquisition of media literacy skills. Texas uses TAKS as the standardized measure for student performance. Although some of the test questions require some amount of visual literacy skill to find information in charts, figures, or graphs, the reading test does not. It is interesting to note that reading passages examined in released tests for 8th grade on the TEA website were accompanied by pictures and illustrations, but none of the questions referred to the images provided. Texas includes media literacy components in its current version of TEKS as Viewing/Representing Knowledge and Skills, but state testing schemes do not hold teachers accountable for these elements. Some research suggests that teachers have increased the amount of time they spend on tested content at the expense of non-tested subject matter (Sunderman et al., 2005). There are no measures in place to assess the media literacy education Texas public schoolchildren are receiving, so how can anyone be sure the objectives are being met?

Table 2

Media Literacy TEKS for Public Middle Schools in Texas

Discipline	Objectives
English Language Arts	(23) Viewing/representing/interpretation. The student understands and interprets visual images, messages, and meanings. The student is expected to: (A) describe how illustrators' choice of style, elements, and media help to represent or extend the text's meanings (4-8); (B) interpret important events and ideas gleaned from maps, charts, graphics, video segments or technology presentations (4-8); and (C) use media to compare ideas and points of view (4-8). (24) Viewing/representing/analysis. The student analyzes and critiques the significance of visual images, messages, and meanings. The student is expected to: (A) interpret and evaluate the various ways visual image makers such as graphic artists, illustrators, and news photographers represent meanings (4-5); and (B) compare and contrast print, visual, and electronic media such as film with written story (4-8). (25) Viewing/representing/production. The student produces visual images, messages, and meanings that communicate with others. The student is expected to: (A) select, organize, or produce visuals to complement and extend meanings (4-8); and (B) produce communications using technology or appropriate media such as developing a class newspaper, multimedia reports, or video reports (4-8).
Health	Grade 6, Influencing Factors 6.8- identify and analyze various media and technologies that influence individual and community health such as computer software and the World Wide Web Grade 7-8, Influencing Factors A. Explain the role of media and technology in influencing individuals and community health such as watching TV or reading a newspaper or a billboard B. explain how programmers develop media to influence buying decisions.
Social Studies	25) Social studies skills. The student applies critical- thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology. The student is expected to: (B) locate and use primary and secondary sources such as computer software, databases, media and news services, biographies, interviews, and artifacts to acquire information; (C) analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions; (D) explain and apply different methods that historians use to interpret the past, including the use of primary and secondary sources, points of view, frames of reference, and historical context; (E) use the process of historical inquiry to research, interpret, and use multiple sources of evidence; (F) evaluate the validity of a source based on language, corroboration with other sources, and information about the author; (G) identify bias in written, oral, and visual material;

Policies, such as NCLB or TEKS, may shape teacher practice in the classroom, but education policy is only one aspect of schooling contributing to classroom experience. Other factors affect the final interpretation and implementation of a policy in a classroom, such as the teachers' personal and professional experiences, the culture of the school and the surrounding education community, as well as the expectations and accountability attached to the policy (Wixson & Yochum, 2004). In the next section, I will present elements of teacher practice that may affect how public policies dealing with literacy and media education may affect the interpretation and implementation of media literacy components of curriculum in public school classrooms.

Literacy and Educational Practice

According to English (2000), there are at least three types of curriculum in schools: formal curriculum, informal curriculum and hidden curriculum. The formal curriculum is generally explicit in its statements, such as through state mandates like TEKS or scope and sequence charts. Informal curriculum is an interpretation of the formal curriculum, such as the ways through which the formal curriculum is delivered. Finally, hidden curriculum encompasses behavior and knowledge valued within the culture of the school, such as being prepared for class or being quiet in the library.

In the previous section, I presented examples of media literacy within the formal curriculum as TEKS. Now I turn to elements of informal and hidden curricula.

Epistemologies

Educators may have different interpretations of what media literacy should prepare students to do, which create a variety of media literacy teaching and learning objectives within

a school. Some educators believe that media literacy will protect students from the potentially

negative influences of mass media. Although educators have used educational practices to

protect children from exposure to media perceived as harmful, others now use media and its

study to counteract negative media messages (Buckingham, 2001). Counselors may have

students examine media portrayals of violence and substance abuse in efforts to dissuade

students from emulating positive portrayals of delinquent or unhealthy behavior. Other

teachers may want students to be more aware of media as an industry. Journalism and

technology courses may have students analyze the mass media system and disclose some of

the political and capitalist forces behind the images and messages presented through mass

media. Meanwhile, political and social studies educators might promote the inclusion of media

literacy as an effort to produce informed and engaged citizens who will transform the media

system. Depending upon their personal political beliefs, teachers could present the media

system as either "liberal" or "oppressive" (Hobbs, 1998). Religious beliefs or personal morality

codes of teachers and/or parents could also affect the ways in which content is, or is not,

presented to students. Finally, educators may also differ in their opinions about the type of

media to use in a classroom. As Brabazon (2007) states:

> Throughout the history of universities and formal education, popular culture has been
> intentionally and actively excluded. The separation of pop from art, without overtly
> addressing embedded class-based notions of cultural value, served to disenfranchise
> generations of students from their own social frameworks and literacies. (p. 132)

Critics of popular culture in the classroom may dismiss media as a commercial production. This

argument seems to be ignorant of the fact that books and literature are also commercial

products. Publishing is as much of an industry as broadcasting or filmmaking.

Teachers may use films or media programming for substandard teaching objectives or as a reward for perfect attendance, rather than as opportunities for students to critically examine media and delve beneath the glossy surface of mainstream media to find socio-cultural messages and meaning. In a study of non-optimal video usage in classrooms, Hobbs (2006) used data from six years of observations and a telephone survey of 130 middle and high school teachers to determine the least effective ways in which video is used in classrooms. Teachers reported that films were being used in schools as a way of keeping students occupied while teachers were involved in lesson planning, participating in professional development or catching up on administrative paperwork. Teachers also used video as a means by which to control student behavior or keep students busy. As Peter McLaren documented in *Life in Schools: An Introduction to Critical Pedagogy in the Foundations of Education* (1998),

> I found Rod in his office and asked him if I could borrow a TV for my room; there were three sets circulating. The one I asked for had a broken stand and was usually left idle in the stockroom. Teachers were unlikely to ask for it because it was large and heavy and a big pain to move. No one would get upset about me monopolizing *that* set! And maybe it would keep my class quiet after lunch when kids were usually at their rowdiest. (p. 77)

In McLaren's entry dated a week later, he has his students watch a program about children's books during which "the class sat and watched the show quietly. As soon as the set was turned off, however, the kids became more hyperactive than ever" (p. 78) and he arranged to have the TV returned to the stockroom. Hobbs (2006) also determined that most teachers used video in their classroom for content delivery, but they were unable to state any educational objectives for the video. These situations may lead to students passively receive content, rather than engage with it (Csikszentmihalyi & Kubey, 1981). In addition, teachers used media clips as attention grabbers, rather than authentic tools for learning (Hobbs, 2006). Kist (2005) also

31

found that media was often used to motivate students and their teachers as an alternative to "boring" traditional methods of teaching and learning. In fact, Hobbs (2006) documented a teacher who frequently used media clips to introduce lessons for their attention-grabbing qualities, rather than any intrinsic educational value for the media viewing itself.

When media is purposefully and thoughtfully used by teachers as an integrated component of curriculum, it can be a powerful agent for student learning. In 2003, Hobbs and Frost evaluated the impact of an integrated media literacy instructional program upon high school students' comprehension of print, audio and visual media forms; writing skills; and abilities to analyze messages. The sample included all 293 students enrolled in an 11th grade English course that integrated media literacy instruction throughout the course of a school year. The control group included 89 students randomly selected from a site with similar representative characteristics. Using a pre-test/post-test design, Hobbs and Frost (2003) found that the media literacy treatment group performed better statistically on measures for comprehension of reading, viewing and listening materials. Additionally, the treatment group demonstrated statistically significant gains for all message analysis measures but one – the ability to recognize omissions in a listening passage. The study provided empirical evidence that the inclusion of media literacy skills as part of a comprehensive language arts course supported traditional script-based academic goals. The findings were further supported by Kist (2005) who concluded that adolescent students believed that using non-print media gave them additional tools to communicate what they were learning.

In a case study that examined the impact of media literacy instruction on seventh grade girls' critical interpretations of media representations of heterosexuality in magazine

advertisements, Linder (2008)

> concluded that the girls who were able to read the advertisements more critically were also more skilled in comprehending non-media texts. This investigation demonstrated that media literacy instruction within middle school classes should be developed, as skills involved in the analysis of media texts are similar to effective comprehension skills utilized with non-media texts. (p. 33)

Linder described her award-winning dissertation as

> unique to the field of literacy because it incorporated a media analysis model as the basis for the intervention, addressed the importance of adopting a critical approach to literacy, and utilized a group of participants often marginalized in a traditional middle school setting. (p. 35)

Linder's contention of her study's uniqueness within the field of literacy research underscores the need for more research involving middle school students' literacies. However, her use of magazine advertisements as media continues to ignore broadcast-based media texts.

Educators with more traditional curricular perspectives may place a higher value on literature-based reading materials, suggesting that the inclusion of media will debase literacy standards (Brabazon, 2007; Coward, 1990). Furthermore, new literacy proponents suggest that "[m]edia has been demonized because it presents a threat to a preferred (in their view) set of ideological imperatives" (Haworth et al., 2004, p. 129). One example of the demonization of media can be found in the opening paragraph of an IRA position statement on adolescent literacy:

> Ironically, the Board approved this statement in the aftermath of the shattering violence at Columbine High School in Colorado – a vivid and horrible testimony to the ever-deepening crises in adolescent literacy. If only these young men had been touched by a book or a teacher, or had felt more connected with their school, perhaps none of this would have happened. As teachers and parents, we have to do things differently. (Commission on Adolescent Literacy of the IRA, 1999, p. 1)

At the time of the Columbine tragedy, there was public speculation about how video games,

internet use and violent movies may have contributed to the shooters' states of mind. The IRA

position statement reflects an ideological assumption that had the young gunmen spent time

with books instead of media, they would not have followed the same decision-making path.

Media is sometimes blamed for increased levels of obesity among children. If children read

books as much as they used electronic media, I doubt they would be any more active or any

less obese. By dismissing media as a sanctioned form of text, a traditional literacy perspective

disenfranchises adolescents by dismissing the literacies they choose to use outside of school

and leads to a dichotomous relationship between students' school and personal literacy

practices.

As was discussed earlier in this section, literacy does not hold the same meaning for all

people. In an effort to explain the various forms of literacy, Linda Braun theorized that literacy

could be viewed in three ways: as a skill, as school knowledge, and as a social and school

construct (Braun, 2007). The literacy of schooling is based upon the abilities to read and write

literary or expository prose. Textbooks revolve around specific bodies of knowledge and

content-specific vocabulary. Adolescents who may be literate in ways outside of school opt out

of school literacy, because they fail to see a connection between the "grammar of school"

(O'Brien, 2006) and the grammar of their lives outside of school.

> To claim that knowledge is socially constructed usually means that the world we live in
> is constructed symbolically by the mind through social interaction with others and is
> heavily dependent on culture, context, custom, and historical specificity…We do not
> stand *before* the social world; we live *in the midst* of it. (McLaren, Life in Schools: An
> Introduction to Critical Pedagogy in the Foundations of Education, 1989, p. 174)

In order to meet students' educational needs, literacy instruction needs to evolve to reflect and

include elements of the social world in which students live.

Despite growing empirical evidence about the relationship between adolescents, media and literacy, the acceptance and practice of media literacy as an American curricular experience is dependent on educators' values and beliefs about literacy and media. In the next section I will discuss how varied perspectives are further distilled in actual pedagogical practices.

Media Literacy Pedagogies

Media literacy education is further confounded by the variety of approaches that can be used to analyze media and its messages and its integration across disciplines. Silverblatt et al. (1999) categorized possible approaches to media literacy instruction as: production, autobiographical, nonverbal, ideological, and mythical. The categories are not exhaustive, nor do the authors apply value judgments to any of the approaches. Educators should be careful to not view these approaches as the only approaches to teaching media literacy, but as openings for discussion on ways to integrate media literacy instruction across multiple curricular disciplines.

Production.

Media literacy skills can be taught through the media production process. Students are expected to produce their own messages through original productions. All media are constructions, and production techniques allow students to understand how messages are constructed through production elements of camera angles, camera shots, genre coding, sound and narrative text (Burn & Durran, 2006; Kist, 2005; Olsson, 2006; Silverblatt et al., 1999). As an example, Table 3 provides the formal elements of film as explained in a textbook for an undergraduate film studies course.

Table 3

Definitions of Terminology for Formal Elements of Film

Term	Definition
Narrative form	A type of filmic organization in which the parts relate to each other through a series of causally related events taking place in time and space.
Mise-en-scene	All of the elements placed in front of the camera to be photographed: the settings and props, lighting, costumes and makeup, and figure behavior.
Cinematography	A general term for all the manipulations of the film strip by the camera in the shooting phase and by the laboratory in the developing phase.
Editing	1. In filmmaking, the task of selecting and joining camera takes. 2. In the finished film, the set of techniques that governs the relations among shots.
Diegetic sound	Any voice, musical passage, or sound effect presented as originating from a source within the film's world.
Nondiegetic sound	Sound, such as mood music or a narrator's commentary, represented as coming from a source outside the space of the narrative.

Source: Bordwell & Thompson, 2004, pp. 501-506.

Despite its foundation in technology and the growing availability of free media editing programs, media production can be overlooked by education tetchnology proponents as a form of communication and information sharing for students. Media production capabilities have become easily available as videorecording devices become cheaper and more readily available to American consumers. Media editing also has become readily available as part of common software packages. However, a recent study (Spires et al., 2008) which sought the perspectives about middle school students and 21st Century schooling failed to include any aspects of video production as a technological means of entertainment or communication for middle school students. The researchers also neglected to include media presentations as means of classroom

instruction when asking students about their classroom instruction preferences. During one of

the interviews, a student injected media production into the picture of what she wanted as part

of her schooling.

> Students were able to creatively represent their ideas about technology in authentic
> "real-world" contexts. When asked to imagine new uses of technology, students
> constructed uses that were interactive and media-oriented. For example, one student
> suggested that she would like to use digital video cameras to create an oral history of
> her town. (Spires et al., 2008, pp. 509-510)

Media production should be an integral piece of core curriculum and not an ancillary

course taken by a minority of students (Morrell, 2008; Burn & Durran, 2006). Productions allow

students to synthesize information in their formation of a message. Since all thought

formations are a synthesis of the senses and each sense available affects any given human

experience to an extent beyond other animals, a relationship can be developed between

aesthetic sensibilities and cognitive thought (Eisner, 2002, 2005).

Autobiographical.

Autobiographical methods encourage students to reflect upon how media relates to

their sense of self (Silverblatt et al., 1999). This model of media education is aligned with the

concept of spectatorship in film studies. Spectatorship is the idea that films can be

deconstructed and analyzed through multiple viewpoints: the angles and proxemics

represented through the cinematography, the characters perspectives presented through the

narrative text and the actual interpretations created by the individual audience members'

personal experiences and desires (Chaudhuri, 2006; Shannon, 1995). Media messages are

negotiated messages between the media narrative, the viewer and the construct of the

surrounding environment. Digital media allows audience members to interact with the media

and manipulate its use for their own pleasures and/or purposes, in a way that traditional media did not (Olsson, 2006). By creating experiences for students to analyze, reflect upon and acknowledge their personal experiences with media, educators can empower students to become more knowledgeable consumers of media (Thoman, 2003).

Nonverbal.

Media is also a source for studying the ways in which messages are relayed through nonverbal cues. Students can study media for visual cues with which actors and models relay meaning with eye movement, facial expression, and physical gestures. Aural cues, such as accents, pitch and tone of voice and pacing of dialogue can also be evaluated for meaning (Silverblatt et al., 1999). This technique has been used by counselors and teachers of emotionally-disturbed students who analyze media as practice to attain better social skills. This approach is also indicative of health instructors who have students analyze visual materials for positive and negative portrayals of alcohol, drug, and/or tobacco use or sexual activity.

Ideological.

Ideological analysis of media is typified by an examination of text for ideological messages and their contextual meaning for audiences and society (Hobbs, 2007; Silverblatt et al., 1999). One example of ideological analysis would be analyzing media from a feminist perspective, which deconstructs film narratives to show how mainstream Hollywood supports an image of a society ruled by patriarchal, consumerist, heterosexual middle class values (Chaudhuri, 2006; Tuchman, 1979). Children need opportunities to discuss and analyze media for constructed messages. (Buckingham, 1993; Feldman, 1978; Hobbs, 2004; Singer & Singer, 1998) An ideological approach gives students that opportunity.

Mythical.

A mythical examination of media involves understanding the coding and qualities of genres, and how media can perpetuate societal stereotypes or myths. The study of mythical components of media requires the study of semiotics, or the symbolic representations used to create additional meaning (Hobbs, 2007; Silverblatt et al, 1999). An example of mythic qualities would be in the study of the 1950s melodrama and the use of mise-en-scène to create meaning. *Mise-en-scène* is a term used to describe the props and settings used to create a sense of place. Douglas Sirk used architecture and color to define his characters social status in his film *All That Heaven Allows* (Halliday, 1972; Klinger, 1994). The 1950s style of middle class representation with the pastel-colored houses in suburban neighborhoods perpetuated the myth of a calm and complacent era in American history that is challenged by the reality of the time (Dwight D. Eisenhower Foundation, 2000). Audiences must be aware of critical discourses that revolve around media types and genres (Olsson, 2006).

As I have documented so far, media literacy education is multi-faceted and complicated by the variety of influences upon its final implementation in classrooms. However, the educational complexity of media literacy is also compounded by a lack of intersection with other fields of study which offer equally conflicting views about media, its effects and its purposes. The next section discusses research about media effects and differing perceptions about the influence of media upon children. Mass media communication models offer theoretical models of mass media as a communicative process, while film studies more closely follows literature studies by examining the uses and gratifications of media viewers. Although media effects research has been unable to conclusively identify the extent to which individuals

are affected by media programming, media education practice may benefit by looking to other fields of study to inform media literacy policy and practice decisions that may affect student learning in the current era of mediated lifestyles.

Media and Children

Media Effects

Media studies and the idea of being able to read media stems from paradigm shifts in thoughts about encoding and decoding within the communication process. Traditionally, mass communications research saw the relationship between media and viewers as a closed process – one in which the producers of media encoded specific meanings that would be perfectly decoded by audience members. The traditional model has been criticized for assuming a symmetrical relationship between the encoders and decoders of texts. As reading theorists like Fetterley (1978) and Rosenblatt (1994) theorized, the reading process was multidimensional and reflective of a reader and her motivations and purposes for reading. As Hall explains, the degree of understanding a media producer's intended meaning has to do with the degree of similarity, or symmetry, with the viewer. Furthermore, codes embedded within communications are culture-specific (Hall, 1996). For example, the use of the expression *lol* to indicate *laugh out loud* is only understandable to a culture that is familiar with texting and instant messaging lingo. Because mass communications are disseminated to a wide audience, the potential for alternate readings is inevitable. Children's culture is produced for children but not by them (Bignell, 2002; Giroux, 1999), so the asymmetry between encoder and decoder may be greater. In addition, media effects studies rely on an adult researcher interpreting children's responses to media produced by adults, which adds an additional layer of

asymmetrical communications to any findings.

Exposure

Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8-18 Year-olds documented the pervasiveness of media in children's lives. (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2005). Students in grades 3-12 spend an average of six hours and twenty-one minutes attending to some form of media every day. According to Nielsen statistics (2006), the average American household has more televisions than people. Children who have a television, video game console, and/or computer in their bedroom are exposed to media nearly two hours more per day than children who do not. (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2005). Combined with video gaming and television watching, kids spend about eight and a half hours of day with audiovisual media, which amounts to more time than they spend in class on a normal school day (Ellis, 2005). Although studies document the amount of exposure of children to media, they do not offer any insight as to how that exposure translates to children's behavior.

The "M Generation" is a natural extension of modern society, and they do not escape the attention of the marketing industry. Marketers theorize that the more exposure a person has to a message, the more likely they will believe the message (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). Recent estimates show that advertisers spend more than $10 billion targeting kids (Common Sense Media, 2007). According to one study, children are exposed to 40,000 commercials per year through broadcast television (Common Sense Media, 2007). In fact, the American movie industry has increasingly marketed movies to teenage audiences during the past fifty years (Leitch, 1992). Furthermore, marketing strategists have created "guerilla advertising," the embedded placement of branded products within movies and television productions (Graydon,

2003). The marketing message extends beyond the traditional space of a movie theater through cable systems, pay-per-view options, and video rental and sales. Box office sales only account for twenty percent of the billions of dollars of total film revenues (Stern, 2005). How do the marketing ploys and media exposure affect children? The assumption is that media has a large influence upon children and their behavior, but the research findings are mixed.

Identity

Adolescence and the middle grades represent a time of development during which individuals are shaping their identities. Media, particularly media exemplified by popular culture, may further solidify young people's sense of self. In a phenomenological study about how texts interact with adolescent performances of identity, Neilsen (2006) interviewed two adolescents from rural Nova Scotia. After six hours of interviews with the teenagers, both individually and together, Neilsen concluded that teenagers seek texts to find an identity. The texts in the adolescents' lives were both print-based and media-based. Neilsen also determined that mastering literacy required a sense of agency and a critical awareness that texts were constructions.

An Australian study suggested that adolescents are selective in how they use media for sociological purposes. Among the subjects in the study, programming genres, such as a soap opera or drama, were viewed as purveyors of sociocultural expectations for appearances, rather than as strictly for entertainment purposes. Girls who watched *Desperate Housewives* were more likely to desire an idealized thin body type, exhibited by Hollywood stars and mainstream models who are often 20% underweight, exceeding the criteria of 15% underweight for the eating disorder anorexia. In the same study, boys who watched music

videos were more likely to idealize a muscled body type (Tiggemann, 2005).

Cultural representations are influenced and shaped by films, and viewership for films and mass media expands with every new technology device capable of downloading, uploading and playing video (Lake Sosin Snell Perry and Associates; Motivational Educational Entertainment, 1998; Levin & Carlsson-Paige, 2003; Stern, 2005; Stroman, 1984). Studies have demonstrated an overrepresentation of Caucasian males in media (Chaudhuri, 2006; Couch, 1994; Erens, 1990; Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, 2007; Milkie, 1999; Lake Sosin Snell Perry and Associates; Motivational Educational Entertainment, 1998; Shannon, 1995; Stroman, 1984; Tuchman, 1979). Figures 1 and 2 provide comparisons that demonstrate some discrepancies betweeen actual United States population demographic make-up and population representations as they appear in mass media. Latinos seem to be significantly underrepresented in primetime network programming (Figure 1), and women are significantly underrepresented in media targeted to children (Figure 2).

In a survey of 1,200 children, equally representative of race (African American, Asian, Latino, and White), a majority of all children believed that White characters in entertainment programming were more likely to be portrayed in positive ways than characters of other races, while Latino characterizations were seen to be more negative than any other race (Lake Sosin Snell Perry and Associates; Motivational Educational Entertainment, 1998). In addition, children of all races associated positive characteristics, such as being economically advantaged, well-educated and being a leader, with White characters seen on television. Qualities more associated with minority characters on television included illegal activities and being economically disadvantaged. Researchers also questioned children about news coverage and

racial representation. Children in the study were more likely to believe that African Americans

and Latinos were featured doing illegal or problematic activities. When young Latinos were

asked about how they saw themselves portrayed on the news, they responded with answers

such as: "Gangs. Accidents. Drug dealers. Churches. When they go to jail. Murders" (Lake Sosin

Snell Perry and Associates; Motivational Educational Entertainment, 1998). Although it was

clear that children recognized the importance of seeing representatives of their own race on

television, the study's results failed to provide a relationship between the children's

perceptions of themselves and the racial representations they perceived in television

programming.
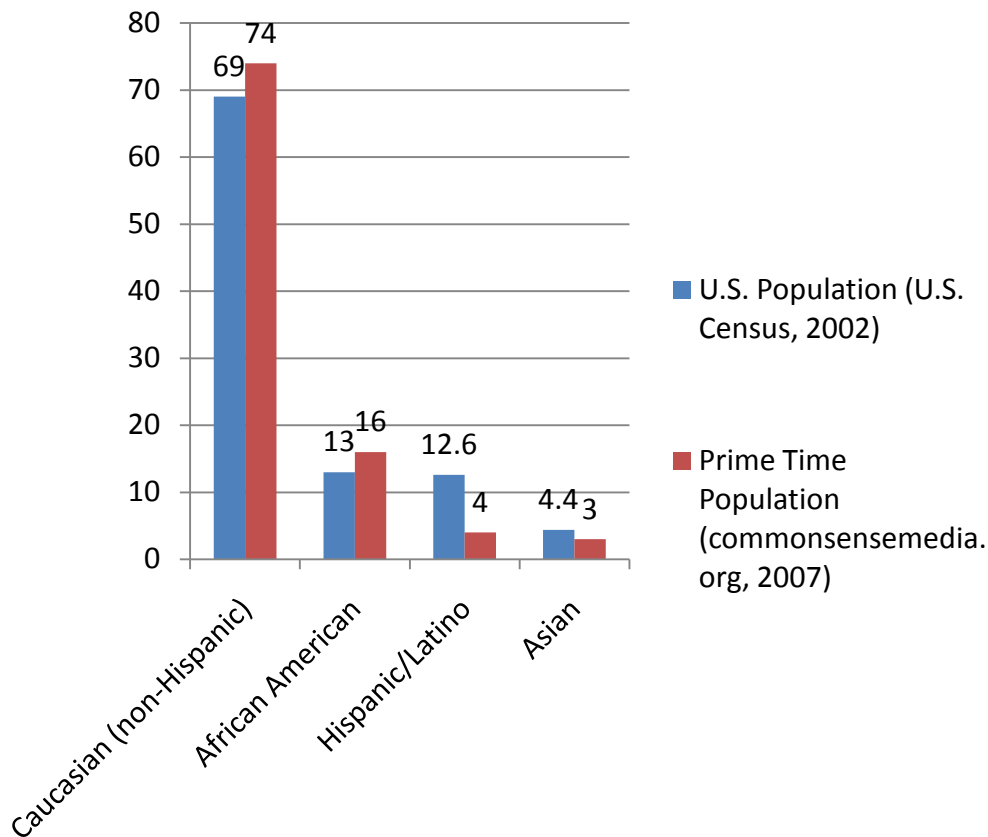
Figure 1. Percentages of racial representations in the US population vs. prime time television
characters.
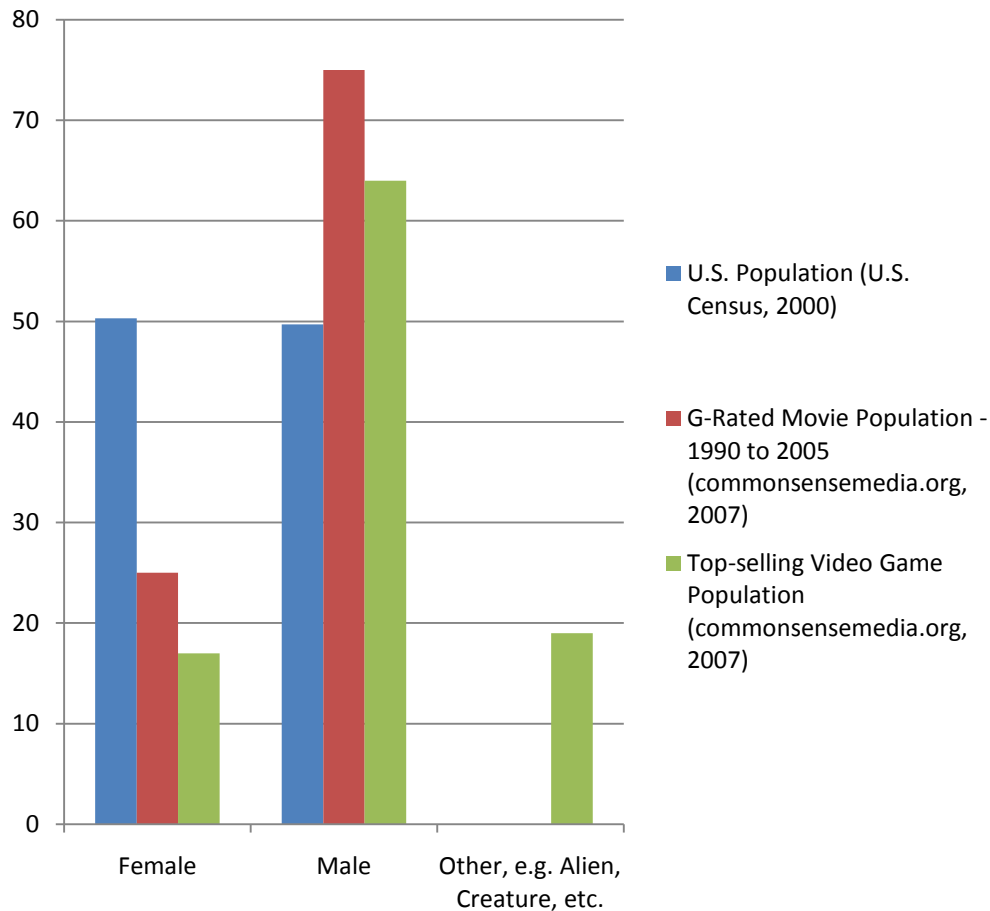
Figure 2. Percentages of gender representations in US population, G-rated movies and video games.

Behavior

According to social cognitive theory, one way people learn is through observation. In a classic study, known for its use of Bobo dolls, Bandura, Ross and Ross (1963) studied the modeling influences of visual media. The subjects in the study were 48 boys and 48 girls whose ages ranged from 2 to 5 years old. The average age was 4 years old. The children were divided into three experimental groups and one control group. Each group was composed of 24 children, equally composed of males and females. Experimental groups were exposed to varied

models of aggression. One group was exposed to a live model pounding and pummeling the Bobo doll. A second experimental group was exposed to a filmed enactment of people beating on a Bobo doll, and a third experimental group was exposed to a cartoon program of an animated cat acting aggressively with a Bobo doll. The control group was not exposed to any models of aggression with respect to the Bobo doll within the context of the experiment. The results revealed no statistical significance between groups exposed to live, filmed, or animated aggressive models and their displays of behavioral aggression. However, statistical significance was present between the control group and the experimental groups (Bandura et al., 1963).

The Bobo doll experiment reflects an assumption that media serves as a negative influence upon the behavior of children. Despite the presence of statistical significance between incidents of aggression among the experimental subjects of the live modeling group, the title of the article, *Imitation of Film-Mediated Aggressive Models*, makes no reference to the experimental group exposed to live models. In similar vein, many studies about the media effects upon children are also designed to study the influence of media upon adolescent behaviors that are considered morally, if not socially, unacceptable, for their age level, such as promiscuous sexual activities, violent behavior, or drug, alcohol, or tobacco use (Buckingham, 2001; Finders, 2000; Levin & Carlsson-Paige, 2003; Stroman, 1984). However, research has resulted in little consensus about the impact of media upon adolescent behavior. Research indicates that some adolescents under some conditions exhibit some behaviors they viewed in the mass media (Gauntlett, 1998; Roberts, 1993). Media studies are often predicated on the idea that vulnerable populations, such as children, racial minorities, and women are somehow

more susceptible to the influence of media than a more dominant group like white males (Bignell, 2002).

Media may provide social cues about acceptable, or expected, behavior for groups of people. Unchallenged stereotypes may lead to a false sense of reality for children who do not have personal experiences with which to compare with media experiences. In the course of Morrell's observations while implementing media literacy components into a high school curriculum, a group of high school students planned and implemented a multi-method research project to discover the ways in which students were politically active in their communities. In their analysis, the students suggested that media played an important role in the socialization of students as political agents (or not). "In an analysis reminiscent of the work of pioneers in cultural studies such as Gramsci and Adorno, the students point toward the harmful narratives of urban youth that are proliferated through television and film. These harmful narratives serve to create and legitimate stereotypes among dominant sectors of society but according to this analysis, they also *teach* young people how to be" (Morrell, 2008, p. 201). On the other hand, Marsh and Stolle (2006) found that some young adults may resist media images that are contrary to their own personal experiences. In any case, the prevalence of media in modern society makes it difficult for any experimental design to isolate particular media exposures from the contextual experience of everyday life, leading to problematic interpretations of causal relationships between media and human behavior (Baudrillard, 1996; Gauntlett, 1998).

The fundamental issue with prior research about media effects and children, or media effects and adults, is that its design and analysis are based upon varied ideological,

epistemological, and theoretical constructions of the socialization effects of media, as well as

the essence of childhood or adolescence (Bignell, 2002; Gauntlett, 1998; Mastronardi, 2003).

> The disparate fields of study that contribute to what we know about the relationship
> between young people and media have built up a rich literature spanning multiple
> disciplines and paradigms, making it difficult to characterize precisely. What constitutes
> "mediation," for example, and how to observe its effects may vary tremendously
> depending on a how particular research tradition defines its object of study, the
> methods it considers appropriate for generating knowledge, and the values that
> undergird the very questions it asks. At the same time, even researchers who operate
> from within the same research tradition, for example, a media effects model, may
> disagree about the nature of the media in question and how best to evaluate its impact.
> (Mastronardi, 2003, pp. 83-84)

Summary

If the conceptualization of texts has expanded to include forms of media, then literacy

encompasses media literacy. Early empirical research about the impact of media literacy as part

of an integrated instructional approach in English Language Arts has indicated that students

demonstrate larger gains in reading, viewing and listening comprehension measures than

students who were not exposed to the same integrated instructional program. In other

research, adolescents view media as a necessary text for learning and communicating.

Furthermore, global, national and state standards include media literacy as necessary

educational objectives. The implementation of media literacy in classrooms, however, can vary

according to conflicting ideological, epistemological, institutional, and cultural values held by

the stakeholders of any given classroom experience. Meanwhile, research is inconclusive about

the degree to which children learn behaviors from media, and media effects research suggests

that the media viewing experience is affected by a variety of factors, including the context of

the viewing and a viewer's prior experiences. Viewing media in school situations is an example

of an environmental context which may influence the viewing experience, but there is a lack of

information about the media literacy habits of middle school students within the context of school.

Overall, the research about media literacy in schools is largely made up of theoretical positions about media literacy's place within public school curriculum and suggestions for teachers about ways to incorporate media literacy as components of instruction. Research about adolescents and media often focus on content analysis of youth culture or document the role media plays in the literacies of adolescents outside of school. If middle school students are studied at all, they are included with high school students as "adolescents." This study begins to fill a gap in the literature about media literacy by concentrating on the media literacy of middle school students within the context of their school experiences.

The prevalence of media in modern society and the variety of factors that may contribute to how media literacy is addressed in public schools make the study of media literacy problematic for experimental research designs. The purpose of this study was to capture the lived media literacy experiences of middle school students within the context of their regular school instruction, in an effort to build some deeper understandings about what media literacy is and what media literacy means to middle school students. The best way to capture the lived experiences of middle school students is to solicit the information directly from the students. Phenomenology was selected as the research design, because it is particularly suited to capture complex phenomena through the perspectives of individuals experiencing the phenomena (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2002; Slavin, 2006). Chapter 3 will further explain the procedures and methodology used for this study.

CHAPTER 3

PROCEDURES AND METHODOLOGY

The literature review revealed that research about children and media may be tainted by researchers' prior assumptions about the influence of media upon the nature of childhood. In addition, the review of literature presented the complex nature of literacy and media literacy within the realm of education. Although Chapter 2 suggested that a variety of factors may complicate how media literacy may be addressed in schools, the literature revealed a lack of information about how students are experiencing media literacy in schools. The purpose of this study was to capture the lived media literacy experiences of middle school students within the context of their regular school instruction, in an effort to build some deeper understandings about what media literacy is and what media literacy means to middle school students. Phenomenology was selected as the research methodology, because it is particularly suited to capture complex phenomena through the perspectives of individuals experiencing the phenomena (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2002; Slavin, 2006).

The following questions were used to guide this research study:

Specifically, the guiding questions for this research were:

- How is media literacy exhibited by middle school students within a formal school context?
    - What language do middle school students use to describe media they view in a classroom setting?
    - How do students explain the meaning of a media clip?

- How does an elective Film and Media class impact middle school students' media literacy?

  o How do students think that their classroom experiences affect their media literacy competency?

  o What value do students place on media as part of their educational experience and learning?

- How do middle grade students' responses to media correspond with theoretical models for media literacy? Specifically, how do media responses and students' self-ratings of their own media literacy correspond to the following models:

  o Deep Viewing Guide (Pailliotet et al., 2000)

  o Keys to Interpreting Media Messages (Silverblatt, 2001)

  o Conceptual Tenets of Multimedia Literacies (Hobbs, 2008)

  o Assessment Principles for Media Learning (Haworth et al., 2004)

This chapter describes the methodology and procedures used to complete this research study. The chapter is organized into the following sections: phenomenological inquiry, description of the sample, data collection, and analysis of results.

Phenomenological Inquiry

"Phenomenology is a disciplined, rigorous effort to understand experience profoundly and authentically…The phenomenological investigator questions how phenomena—'the things themselves'—present themselves in the lived experience of the individual, especially as they present themselves in lived time" (Pinar et al., 2002, p. 405). Phenomenology, a traditional qualitative approach to education research, is based upon the premise that individual

perceptions are the basis for how people experience the world in which they live (Fraenkel &

Wallen, 2003; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007; Gutek, 2004; McMillan & Schumacher, 1997), which

makes phenomenology an approach that was well-suited for the purposes of this educational

inquiry into the media literacy of middle school students. A phenomenological approach often

starts with the desire of a researcher to better understand a phenomenon he may have

personally experienced. Once a phenomenological researcher identifies the phenomenon she

wishes to investigate, she then seeks out participants who have experienced the phenomenon

and are willing to share their experiences. Slavin (2006) recommended that the number of

participants in a phenomenological study should range from 5 to 25 individuals in *Educational*

Research in an Age of Accountability. Often the experiences are collected through open-ended

interviews between the researcher and each participant. Once the data is collected, the

researcher then looks for patterns within the participants' collective experiences which could

offer insights about the essence of the phenomenon (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003; Gall, Gall, &

Borg, 2007; Gutek, 2004; McMillan & Schumacher, 1997).

Open-ended interviews are a common way to collect data for a phenomenological study

(Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003; Gall et al., 2007; Slavin, 2006). This study incorporated interviews as

one means of gathering participants' experiences. The interviews embedded within the

phenomenological research process may elicit relevant information that may not have been

gathered through other, more narrowly defined, data collection methods (Gall et al., 2007).

The open-ended nature of the interviews for this study addressed some of the issues of

previous studies which may have limited students to scripted responses, which may have been

more indicative of researchers' assumptions than students' experiences (Spires et al., 2008).

Written responses are another form for data collection within a phenomenological approach

(Van Manen, 2002).

Because phenomenology attempts to collect authentic experiences of others, the

researcher must be careful to not inject any personal biases into the research process. The

suspension of personal beliefs can be referred to as bracketing (Slavin, 2006). Van Manen

(2002) explains the methodology of phenomenology in terms of reductio and vocatio. Reductio,

or reduction, requires a bracketing of theory and theoretical knowledge, in an effort to focus on

the concrete experience of a phenomenon. Phenomenological reduction requires that the

researcher temporarily suspend any personal biases or pre-understandings, in order to capture

the experiences of others in as an authentic form as possible. The researcher accepts the

participants' information as true reflections of the particpants' experiences. As the literature

review revealed, prior research about media effects and children, or media effects and adults,

are designed and analyzed according to various ideological, epistemological, and theoretical

constructions of the socialization effects of media and the very essence of childhood or

adolescence (Bignell, 2002; Gauntlett, 1998; Mastronardi, 2003). Phenomenological inquiry

demands that ideological, epistemological, and theoretical constructions that may affect

conceptualizations of media literacy be set aside in order to see media use and media literacy in

schools as middle school students do. The other prong of phenomenological inquiry is vocatio.

The purpose of vocatio is to examine the language of open texts for meanings that might not

otherwise be communicated through quantitative data or scripted responses. The lack of

information about middle grades students and media literacy suggested that middle grades'

students' voices may be overlooked by media literacy researchers. Phenomenology requires

that the texts give voice to the lived experiences of middle grade students. Since media

researchers are probably not middle grade students, phenomenology allows for the otherness

of researcher and participant, making it appropriate for studying the perspectives of others

(Slavin, 2006).

For the purpose of this study, empirical evidence was gathered through written

responses and interviews. Although the participants' voices and experiences are important,

phenomenology uses participants' narratives "…to collect examples of possible experiences in

order to reflect on the meanings that may inhere in them" (Van Manen, 2002).

Using a phenomenological approach to study the media literacy habits and experiences of

middle school students may reveal patterns of experience that lead to new hypotheses for

media literacy education or support theoretical constructs put forth in the literature.

Furthermore, the findings should offer a starting point for further research and discussion

about media literacy and its place in formal education.

I drew upon Van Manen's four procedural activities, which are outlined in Table 4, to

guide phenomenological research as a model for my research process. I will use Van Manen's

activities and steps to present the procedures and findings of this study.

Turning to the Nature of the Lived Experience

Turning to the nature of the lived experience, the first procedural activity recommended

in Van Manen's procedural guide to phenomenological inquiry, involves orienting to the

phenomenon; formulating the phenomenological question; and explicating assumptions and

pre-understandings.

Table 4

Van Manen's 4 Procedural Activities to Guide Phenomenological Research

Procedural Activity	Steps	Sub-steps
Turning to the Nature of Lived Experience	Orienting to the phenomenon; Formulating the phenomenological question; Explicating assumptions and preunderstandings.	
Existential Investigation	Exploring the phenomenon: generating 'data;' Consulting phenomenological literature.	Using personal experience as a starting point; Tracing etymological sources; Searching idiomatic phrases; Obtaining experiential descriptions from subjects; Locating experiential descriptions in literature, art, etc.
Phenomenological Reflection	Conducting thematic analysis; Determining essential themes.	Uncovering thematic aspects in lifeworld descriptions; Isolating thematic statements; Composing liguistic transformations; Gleaning thematic descriptions from artistic sources.
Phenomenological Writing	Attending to the speaking of language; Varying the examples; Writing; Rewriting (A) to (D), etc.	

Source: (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2002, p. 408)

Orienting to the Phenomenon

Pilot Study

A pilot study (Appendix E), conducted among college undergraduates enrolled in an introductory film study course during the spring semester of 2008, demonstrated that the data collection procedure was well-suited to the investigation of media literacy among middle school students.

The undergraduate students who participated provided ungraded essays based upon assigned media clips for me to analyze. The analysis consisted of reading the essays, followed up with electronic communication using a smaller sample of participants to validate my interpretations of the meanings of their essays. An important finding revealed that participants used specific terminology and technical language in terms of production elements and their relation to affective meaning, rather than in relation to ideological or mythical observations. However, the essays used as data sources may have been affected by the nature of the assignment. Therefore, the media response protocol for this study was designed without references to specific requirements for film or media deconstruction.

The undergraduates in the pilot seemed to rate themselves higher in terms of their media literacy competency than their essays displayed through language and composition. In this study with middle school students, I added the component of using four theoretical models for the media literacy analysis. This modification to the research procedures added rigor to the analysis of the participants' written media responses.

The essays in the pilot study provided some insight about the media literacy of undergraduates, but the essays were produced as a graded assignment for the course.

Therefore, students may have been providing answers they believed the instructor wanted, rather than a reflection of their lived experience with the media. The follow-up interviews included in the research design for this study provided an added layer of reliability.

Personal Experience

As a middle school educator, I served students as a reading and journalism teacher for one year and as a librarian for eight years. Teachers would sometimes complain that students' backgrounds had not prepared them to be successful in school. It seemed to me that too many educators are concerned with who the students were not, rather than looking at who their students were. Additionally, sometimes teachers' accounts of what they were doing in their classrooms was often different than their students' accounts of what was going on in their classes. This suggested that teachers assumptions about what their students were learning or experiencing were not always synchronous with their students' perspectives. Phenomenology allows the students to present their own narratives about their media literacy experiences in schools.

While working as a middle school librarian, a theater teacher and I applied for, and received, an education grant through the school district to institute a filmmaking program at the middle school. The extracurricular program became an elective class at the middle school, known as Film and Media. The program received two additional grants to expand. Comments from students and parents suggested that the course was changing the ways in which students were watching films outside of school. I experienced similar changes in my media viewing habits, as I participated in graduate film studies courses that explored how film forms can produce socio-cultural meanings.

As a doctoral student, I became cognizant of the lack of information available in the research literature about media literacy and middle school students. Literacy experts suggested that the concept of literacy had changed from a print-based reading philosophy to concept of literacy that included the ability to read print-based and multi-media texts; education policy documents provided frameworks for literacy instruction; teacher researchers documented how media literacy was introduced in high schools; media studies research demonstrated that kids were exposed to media and documented the content of children's media; but none of the research seemed to reflect the lived experiences of middle school students themselves. The research seemed to be based on biased assumptions by researchers, rather than the authentic experiences of students.

As a research participant, I have been frustrated by fixed-response measures. Often, the choice I would like to make is not listed as a possibility, and I am forced to be unresponsive which may cause my data to be left out of the analysis, or I am forced to select a response that does not accurately reflect my perspective which, unbeknownst to the researcher, means that my data is unreliable and should be left out of the analysis. Either choice marginalizes my voice and skews the interpretation of results. In either case, the data is suspect. I wanted the student participants' reflections to reflect students' perspectives instead of mine.

Formulating the Research Questions

The literature review revealed a lack of information about the media experiences of middle grades students within the context of school. Some studies indicated that adolescents demonstrated a broader range of literacies outside of their school experiences and suggested a dissonance between school-sanctioned literacies and the real-world literacies of adolescents

(Brabazon, 2007; Braun, 2007; Coward, 1990). Undergraduate participants in the pilot study believed that media education empowered them to find meanings embedded in films that were hidden from unschooled eyes. Undergraduates used specific production terminology in their descriptions of a film clip and used the descriptions to derive meaning.

Phenomenology asks that the details of a phenomenon be stripped away to reveal an essence. Theorists have constructed models for media literacy. Media literacy has been further defined through educational policy decisions that guide classroom practices. Teachers' personal and professional experiences could also determine the media literacy instructional practices experienced by students. This study focuses on how students actually experience media literacy in the course of their regular school instruction and willl use phenomenological methodology to explore the following questions:

- How is media literacy exhibited by middle school students within a formal school context?

  - What language do middle school students use to describe media they view in a classroom setting?

  - How do students explain the meaning of a media clip?

- How does an elective Film and Media class impact middle school students' media literacy?

  - How do students think that their classroom experiences affect their media literacy competency?

  - What value do students place on media as part of their educational experience and learning?

- How do middle grade students' responses to media correspond with theoretical models for media literacy? Specifically, how do media responses and students' self-ratings of their own media literacy correspond to the following models:

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  o Assessment Principles for Media Learning (Haworth et al., 2004)

Existential Investigation

Existential investigation was the second procedural activity in Van Manen's guide and involved generating the data. This stage included selecting participants, following the requirements of UNT's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for the study, selecting appropriate instrumentation, addressing aspects of reliability, and outlining procedures for the investigation.

Participants

The sample was comprised of students who were enrolled at Lone Tree Middle School (a pseudonym) as 7th or 8th grade students at the end of the 2007/08 school year. Lone Tree Middle School is located among multiple rural bedroom communities northwest of the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area. The school serves students from at least eight different named communities. As part of the growing Pecan Grove ISD (a pseudonym), Lone Tree Middle School has seen significant increases in their enrollment over the past few years. The most recent data available from TEA at the time of publication was for the 2006/07 school year. According to TEA reports, the campus enrollment for 2006/07 was 665 students. (According to the campus

website, the enrollment for 2008/09 includes 1000 students, reflecting a 33% increase over the past two school years.) The ethnic makeup of the student body is shown in Figure 3. Over one-third of the student population is considered at-risk and slightly more than one-fourth of the student population is considered economically disadvantaged. The campus was commended by the state of Texas for student performance of reading and writing on the TAKS, as well as for gains made on mathematics scores. Specific information about TAKS scores for Lone Tree is located in Table 5.
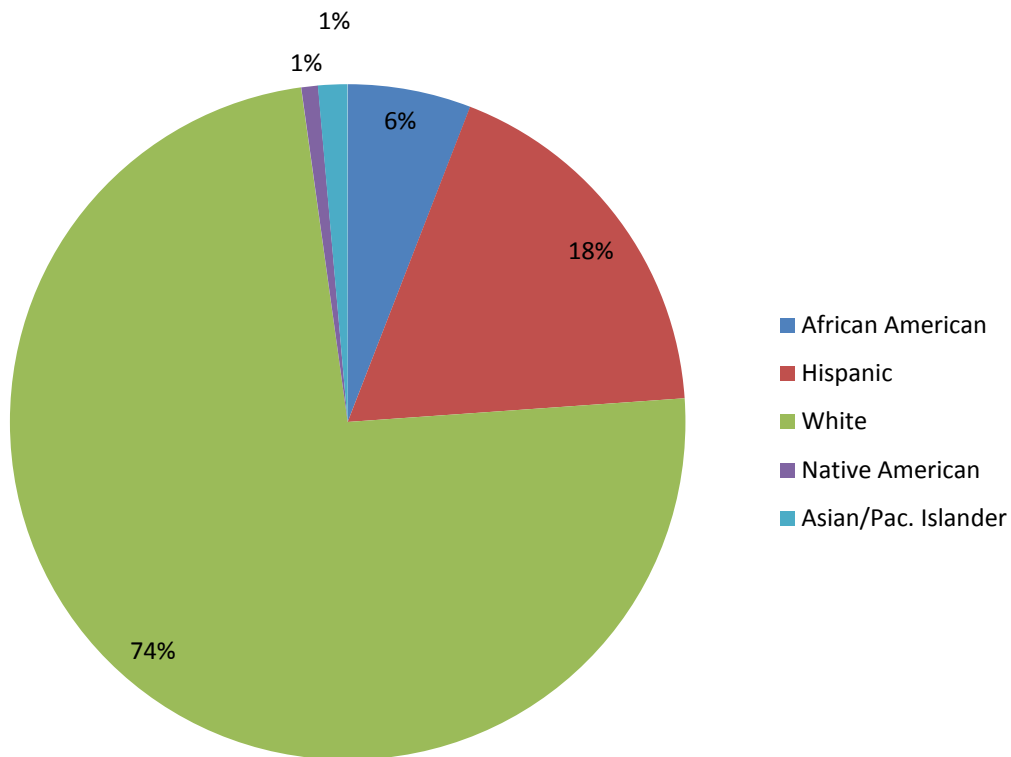
Figure 3. Ethnicity of site student population.

Table 5

2007 TEA Accountability Report Card for Lone Tree Middle School*

Demographic group	Passing percentage
Reading scores	
All students	95
African American	85
Hispanic	93
White	96
Economically Disadvantaged	91
Writing	
All students	95
African American	86
Hispanic	92
White	97
Economically Disadvantaged	91
Social Studies	
All students	88
African American	80
Hispanic	72
White	91
Economically Disadvantaged	81
Mathematics	
All students	84
African American	82
Hispanic	80
White	85
Economically Disadvantaged	78

*Pseudonym.

The campus was selected as the site for the study, because it offers a Film and Media studies course as an elective. Permission to use the campus as a site for this study was obtained by district and campus administrators. District permission stipulated that the media responses be part of students' regular classroom instruction.

Pecan Grove ISD instituted procedures for the use of media in their classrooms during the 2006/07 school year. The adoption of the media procedures stemmed in part from a prior incident involving differences in opinions between parents, administrators, faculty and students about the appropriateness of media used in a classroom situation. The Media Usage Procedures document is located in Appendix F. The media clips used in this study complied with the District's procedures. I used my prior knowledge about the campus curriculum and media usage procedures to identify potential media sources. The media clips were previewed by campus teachers and the appropriate forms were submitted to campus personnel for media usage approval.

I originally approached the campus Language Arts coordinator about having eighth grade Language Arts students do media responses as part of their regular instruction, since the Language Arts TEKS contain media literacy components. Circumstances changed and the media responses were completed as work in two separate elective courses. The electives did not have any predetermined TEKS. The television media clip was supported by ELA TEKS and Social Studies TEKS:

ELA

(23) Viewing/representing/interpretation. The student understands and interprets visual images, messages, and meanings. The student is expected to:

(A) describe how illustrators' choice of style, elements, and media help to represent or extend the text's meanings (4-8);

(B) interpret important events and ideas gleaned from maps, charts, graphics, video segments or technology presentations (4-8); and

(24) Viewing/representing/analysis. The student analyzes and critiques the significance of visual images, messages, and meanings. The student is expected to:

(A) interpret and evaluate the various ways visual image makers such as graphic artists, illustrators, and news photographers represent meanings (4-5);

Social Studies

25) Social studies skills. The student applies critical- thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology.

The film media clip was supported by ELA TEKS and Health TEKS:

ELA

(23) Viewing/representing/interpretation. The student understands and interprets visual images, messages, and meanings. The student is expected to:

(A) describe how illustrators' choice of style, elements, and media help to represent or extend the text's meanings (4-8);

(B) interpret important events and ideas gleaned from maps, charts, graphics, video segments or technology presentations (4-8); and

(24) Viewing/representing/analysis. The student analyzes and critiques the significance of visual images, messages, and meanings. The student is expected to:

(A) interpret and evaluate the various ways visual image makers such as graphic artists, illustrators, and news photographers represent meanings (4-5);

Health

Grade 7-8, Influencing Factors

A. Explain the role of media and technology in influencing individuals and community health
such as watching TV or reading a newspaper or a billboard

B. explain how programmers develop media to influence buying decisions.

Two Language Arts teachers had volunteered to include the media responses as part of their regular instructional plan, but the District had some concerns about the media responses fitting in with the scope and sequence of the Language Arts curriculum. With support from the classroom teachers and the campus principal, the District gave their approval, stipulating that instructional time could not be used for non-instructional purposes. Therefore, the Informed Consent and Assent forms, the questionnaires and the interviews were completed outside the students' regular instructional days. In the time it took to get approval from the school district and the UNT IRB, Lone Tree Language Arts teachers had changed their lesson plans and no longer had instructional time to complete the media responses in class. Because I wanted to include middle school students who had almost completed the Film and Media course, I approached the Film and Media teacher about including the media responses as part of his instruction. He agreed. I then approached the teacher of a different elective called Peer Mediation. The Peer Mediation class had used media in the past to examine social skills and interpersonal issues like bullying. The Peer Mediation teacher also agreed to include the media responses as part of her regular instruction. Peer Mediation was a year-long elective with only one section, or class, of students. None of the Peer Mediation students had taken the Film and Media class. The Film and Media class also met year-long, but the teacher taught three sections. The Film and Media teacher was given the discretion to use any or all of his Film and

65

Media sections. The Peer Mediation class completed media responses for both the television media clip and the film media clip. The Film and Media teacher had one section complete media responses for the film media clip response and a second section complete media responses for the television clip media response.

Sixty-four students completed media responses at the end of the 2007/08 school year. Attempts were made to contact all eligible students by mail and by telephone. Three envelopes were returned by USPS as undeliverable; 13 participants could not be contacted by phone. Of the 64 students, 24 agreed to participate in the study resulting in a response rate of 37.5%. Because the media responses were collected at the end of the school year, follow-up attempts to gain informed consent occurred during the summer break, when students and/or their families may have been out-of-town or unavailable to participate. Five of the 24 participants were randomly selected for follow-up interviews. One interviewee failed to show up for a scheduled interview and could not be reached to reschedule. Therefore, an alternate random selection was used to obtain the desired number of interviewees for the study. The number of participants for this study (N=24) falls within the acceptable range of 5 to 25 participants for phenomenological studies (Slavin, 2006).

Informed Consent Procedures and Confidentiality

Once they were certified by the IRB, informed consent and child assent forms (Appendix A) were mailed to the homes of each potential participant. Self-addressed stamped envelopes were included in the mailing in order for participants to return the signed consent and assent forms, as well as the completed student questionnaires. A cover letter was included to explain the study. In addition the consent and assent forms included information about the purpose of

the study. Participation was voluntary and consent could be withdrawn at any time during the study. All personal and identifiable information of participants has been protected and will continue to be kept confidential. No foreseeable risks or direct benefits to the participants were determined for this study. However, an incentive was offered to encourage participation. Students who completed media response essays, returned signed consent and assent forms, and returned completed questionnaires were eligible for a random drawing for a $50.00 gift card from a major retailer. Students who were selected for follow-up interviews were each given a single movie voucher for a local movie theater. Following the initial mailing of consent and assent forms and questionnaires, I called potential participants to answer any questions or concerns of parents or students.

Participants were assigned numbers in place of their names. The participants who were interviewed were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identities. Additionally, the Informed Consent and Assent forms were secured in a location separated from the data.

I transcribed handwritten media response essays into digital text form to facilitate textual analysis. Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed by me. As a secondary measure, I also used speech recognition software as a backup in case of any recording failures. Transcriptions were verified by me before the recorded data was destroyed. The transcriptions were identified by the participant's assigned number.

Instrumentation

Packets were created to provide a framework for the students' media responses (Appendix B). The packets allowed space for students to take notes as they viewed a media clip. Students were then asked to write a description of the media clip. Students were given space to

take notes as they viewed the media clip a second time. Finally, students were asked to write a response about the message they received from the media clip.

The questionnaires asked for information about the student's ethnicity; age; prior studies in areas of technology, media and film, journalism, and photojournalism; and prior experiences with text analysis in their middle school Language Arts classes. Additionally, participants were asked to rate their own level of media literacy on a 5-point scale, with 1 being the least media literate and 5 being the most media literate. An open-ended item was included, so students could add additional information about media literacy in school.

Five participants were selected for follow-up interviews. The interviews provided an opportunity for students to expand and clarify their written responses to the media clips. Additionally, the interviews provided an opportunity to seek more information about the student participants' school media literacy experiences. The interviews were framed by an interview protocol (Appendix D). One interview occurred at Lone Tree Middle School; two interviews were completed in my home; and two interviews were completed in participants' homes.

Reliability

Triangulation, or the practice of collecting data through a variety of methods, adds validity to qualitative inquiry (Glesne, 2006). Therefore, the data was collected through written media responses by students, a survey completed by the student, and a smaller random sample of follow-up interviews with student participants.

Qualitative reliability is enhanced by theoretical grounding. In keeping with phenomenological methods, theoretical models were used to identify potential themes for

media literacy. The following models were used: deep viewing guide (Pailliotet et al., 2000), keys to interpreting media messages (Silverblatt, 2001), conceptual tenets of multimedia literacies (Hobbs, 2008), and the assessment principles for media learning developed by the British Film Institute (Haworth et al., 2004). Table 6 outlines each model.

Procedure

Media Response

The media responses were elicited during the course of students' regular instruction in an elective course at the middle school site. The media response protocol was the same for both the documentary film clip and the television news clip. Students were provided with packets (Appendix B), which directed them to watch the clip, taking notes as needed about what they were seeing. Students were then prompted to write a description of the media clip. Students were then directed to watch the clip a second time. Following the second showing of the clip, written instructions directed the students to write down their understanding of the clip's message, along with any supporting information from their previous description and/or notes made as they were viewing the media clip. The protocol was supported by research literature (Pailliotet et al., 2000). The source of the documentary film clip was Morgan Spurlock's documentary *Super Size Me* (2004), which was referenced in multiple resources read during the course of compiling my literature review (Brabazon, 2007; Morrell, 2008). The documentary was checked out from the campus library. The documentary film clip featured Morgan Spurlock, as he questioned school personnel, students, and food industry representatives about school lunch programs. At the end of the clip, Morgan Spurlock orders

Table 6

An Overview of 4 Media Literacy Models

Model	Source	Components
Deep Viewing Guide	Pailliotet et al., 2000	Action/sequence (behavior and duration); Semes/forms (mise en scene); Actors/words; Closeness/distance (types of movement); Culture/context (audience perceptions); Effects/process (visual composition).
Keys to Interpreting Media Messages	Silverblatt, 2001	Process; Context; Framework; Production Values.
Assessment Principles for Media Learning	British Film Institute, as cited in Haworth et al., 2004	Demonstration and application of key areas of knowledge and understanding (Agencies, Categories, Technologies, Languages, Audiences, Representations); Use of specialist language (correct terminology); Formalized reflection; Social and organizational skills; Production skills.
Conceptual Tenets of Multimedia Literacies	Hobbs, 2008	Authors and Audiences (AA): AA1. Text choices meet various needs and gratify different desires; AA2. Text consumers are defined, targeted and conceptualized by text producers; AA3. Texts are actively created and involve coordination of different types of labor; AA4. Texts are often produced and distributed for power, gain and profit; economic and political factors shape the content and format of texts. Messages and Meanings (MM): MM1. Texts use a variety of symbol systems and delivery systems; MM2. Individuals and social groups select, use, interpret and respond to texts based upon personal experiences and knowledge; MM3. People's interpretations of texts influence aspects of their decision-making, attitude formation, world view and behavior. Representations and Reality (RR): RR1. Texts reflect the ideologies and world views of their authors; RR2. Texts use techniques that affect people's perceptions of social reality; RR3. Texts can be examined in relationship to people's different understandings about social reality within various political, social and economic contexts.

dinner at a fast food restaurant in Texas, and the experience is followed by a graphic showing

the number of cities in Texas that are considered some of the nation's fattest cities. The news

media clip was a digital video clip located on CNN.com. The clip had also aired as part of a CNN

television news broadcast. The CNN NEWS clip is a report about the Democratic presidential

nominee race between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. Clinton had just won the

Pennsylvania primary. The students' responses were collected during a 10-day period at the

end of the 2007/08 academic calendar year by the regular classroom teacher. Copies of the

particpants' responses were given to the researcher. Media responses of nonparticipants were

returned to the students or destroyed.

Questionnaire

The participants filled the questionnaires (Appendix C) on their own. The completed

questionnaires were returned to the researcher through the mail.

Interview

Five students were randomly selected for interviews. The interviews were arranged by

phone and were conducted in August and September of 2008. One interview occurred at Lone

Tree Middle School; two interviews were completed in my home; and two interviews were

completed in participants' homes. Although the interviews were framed by an interview

protocol, which is located in Appendix D, they were free-flowing. The interviews ranged in

duration from 35 to 75 minutes. All of the interviews occurred outside of the participants'

normal school day.

Phenomenological Reflection and Writing

Reflection

Reflection is Van Manen's third procedural activitiy to guide phenomenological

research. Reflection involves a thematic analysis of the collected data and determining essential

themes by thoughtfully reading the data.

> The object of phenomenological research is to "borrow" other people's experiences. We
> gather other people's experiences because they allow us, in a vicarious sort of way, to
> become more experienced ourselves. We are interested in the particular experiences of
> this child, this adolescent, or this adult since they allow us to become "in-formed,"
> shaped or enriched by this experience so as to be able to render the full significance of
> its meaning. (Van Manen, 2002)

Efforts were made during the transcription process to maintain the authenticity of the students'

narratives and bracket, or suspend, any prior assumptions about the media literacy experiences

of middle school students.

In phenomenology, reflection has more than one meaning. The students' narratives told

in their media responses and through the follow-up interviews offer the reader a reflection of

their lived experience. The original experience is gone and not fully captured in their words. In

order to find the essence of the lived experience of the participants, the reader must

participate in the other form of reflection – considering the meaning of the lived experience.

This form of reflection served as the basis for the textual analysis. Students' texts were read

and re-read many times. Each time the texts were read, notes were recorded about possible

themes and patterns. The findings were derived through the reflections of participants and my

own reflections of the participants' reflections of their experiences with media and media

literacy in their middle school. I use reflections to present the findings in Chapter 4.

Writing

Van Manen's final procedural step is phenomenological writing. Writing involves varying the examples, writing and re-writing. Through writing, reflecting and rewriting, a phenomenological researcher is able to explore another person's journey through life. The process of writing and rewriting is time-consuming and mentally exhausting. I created many narratives of my own as I struggled to present and interpret the participants' middle school media literacy experiences. This dissertation is the culmination of the writing and re-writing stage of the phenomenological inquiry process.

Summary

This chapter outlined the methodology and procedures used for this phenomenological inquiry of middle school literacy using Van Manen's procedural guidelines for phenomenological inquiry. A textual analysis of media responses collected during participants' regular instruction at their middle school campus and a smaller sample of follow-up interviews was used to develop a picture of media literacy as it is exhibited and experienced by middle school students in one Texas school.

The next chapter will present and discuss the findings of the study using Van Manen's guidelines for phenomenological reflection and writing. I will present the students' reflections for each method of instrumentation and follow the students' reflections with researcher reflections of my own about what themes emerged in answer to the guiding questions. The findings will offer a starting point for further discourse about media literacy and its place in middle school education.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents the results of the study and discussion of the findings based upon the data collected from middle school students regarding media literacy. The findings are explicated in terms of the guiding questions and phenomenological reflections of the participants' lived experiences and of the researcher interpreting the student reflections of their lived experiences with media literacy in middle school. The phenomenological reflections are referred to as ***student reflections***, which are situated in the experiences of the participants; and ***researcher reflections***, which are my interpretations of the student reflections. The guiding questions for this study were as follows:

- How is media literacy exhibited by middle school students within a formal school context?

    - What language do middle school students use to describe media they view in a classroom setting?

    - How do students explain the meaning of a media clip?

- How does an elective Film and Media class impact middle school students' media literacy?

    - How do students think that their classroom experiences affect their media literacy competency?

    - What value do students place on media as part of their educational experience and learning?

- How do middle grade students' responses to media correspond with theoretical models for media literacy? Specifically, how do media responses and students' self-ratings of their own media literacy correspond to the following models:

  o Deep Viewing Guide (Pailliotet et al., 2000)

  o Keys to Interpreting Media Messages (Silverblatt, 2001)

  o Conceptual Tenets of Multimedia Literacies (Hobbs, 2008)

  o Assessment Principles for Media Learning (Haworth, Turner, & Whitely, 2004)

Findings and Reflections

The findings are presented according to the instrumentation used in this study: (1) the *student questionnaire* which provided descriptive statistics about the participants; (2) the participants' written *media responses* to the selected television and film media clips which were completed as part of their regular instruction in an elective course at the middle school; and (3) *follow-up interviews* with selected participants.

Student Questionnaire

Twenty-four out of 64 middle school students agreed to participate in this study by returning signed informed consent and assent forms, as well as completed student questionnaires. Ten participants were female, and 14 participants were male. Through their completed questionnaires, 83% (n=20) of participating students identified themselves as White; 8% (n=2) of students identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino; one student self-identified as African American; and one student self-identified as both White and Hispanic or Latino. The students' ages ranged from 12 to 14 years old. Seventeen of the participants were in seventh

grade at the time they completed their media responses, and the remaining seven participants were in eighth grade. All of the media responses were collected in May and June of 2008. In addition, 37.5% (n=9) of participating students had enrolled in the elective Film and Media course offered at the middle school. When asked about the types of texts that they analyzed in their middle school Language Arts classes, 25% of participants (n=6) responded that they only analyzed written texts in Language Arts, while 75% (n=18) reported analyzing at least one media form of text (television, film, or internet) in addition to written text. Students rated themselves on a scale of 1 to 5 for their perception of their own media literacy competency. A "1" indicated that they were not at all media literate, and a "5" indicated that they were very media literate. The mean self-rating for media literacy competency was 3.54. Two students expressed an interest in media literacy as a response to an open-ended comments section on the survey document. The information collected through completed questionnaires is presented in Table 7.

Media Responses

Written responses to media as part of the students' regular instructional experiences were used to address the following research questions:

- How is media literacy exhibited by middle school students within the context of schooling experiences?
  - What language do middle school students use to describe media they view in a classroom setting?
  - How do students explain the meaning of a media clip?

Table 7

*Participant Responses to Questionnaire Items (*N=*24)*

Questionnaire Item	n
Demographics	
Gender	
Female	10
Male	14
Ethnicity	
White	20.5
African American	1
Hispanic/Latino	2.5
Age (years)	
12	6
13	11
14	7
Education/Experience	
Middle school experiences	
Technology	6
Film and Media	9
Journalism	1
Photojournalism/Photography	2
Texts analyzed in middle school LA	
Written text only	24
Television programming	14
Internet web sites	8
Films	15
Media literacy rating (1=not literate; 5=very media literate)	
2	1
3	10
4	11
5	2
Additional comments	2
I think media literacy is exciting and I hope to learn more about it.	
Children listen more to information that they can relate to such as a funny cartoon that deals with [an] up-to-date situation. Kids would be able to listen more and better if it could be relatable.	

The 24 participating middle school students provided a total of 35 responses, 15 related

to the television clip and 20 related to the documentary film clip. The media responses were

collected during the last two weeks of the 2007/08 school year in separate sections of two

elective courses taught at Lone Tree Middle School. The students completed the media

responses as part of their regular classroom instruction for the two different electives. The

media response protocol (Appendix B) included: (1) a page for notes; (2) two pages for students

to record a description of the clip; (3) another page for notes for the second viewing; and (4)

four pages for students to record their perceptions of the meaning of the media clip.

The findings are presented in accordance with Van Manen's procedural guide for

phenomenological inquiry. The students' media responses are first presented as reflections of

their lived experiences of responding to media clips in a school setting. These are called *student*

reflections. The second aspect of reflection requires that the researcher thoughtfully extract

the themes emerging from the participants' responses to the media clips. Initial readings of the

written responses are used to decontextualize the students' narrative responses. The

deconstructed elements are then further categorized and used to identify emerging themes

through a process of memo writing. The deconstructed elements are then placed back into the

original narratives as a means of validating the emerging themes.

The documentary film clip featured Morgan Spurlock, as he questioned school

personnel, students, and food industry representatives about school lunch programs. At the

end of the clip, Morgan Spurlock orders dinner at a fast food restaurant in Texas, and the

experience is followed by a graphic showing the number of cities in Texas that are considered

some of the nation's fattest cities. The news media clip was a digital video clip located on

CNN.com. The segment had also aired as part of a CNN television news broadcast. The CNN news clip is a report about the Democratic presidential nominee race between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. Clinton had just won the Pennsylvania primary.

How is media literacy exhibited by middle school students within a formal school context?

Student reflection.

Students included sequential events in their notes and descriptions about the news media clip, but provided more general topical summaries as the description for the film media clip. For example, one student gave this description of the television news clip:

> In the video, Hillary Clinton gave a speech in Indiana to gain votes from people in a stadium and outside a huge Victorian building. Barack Obama lost Pennsylvania's votes at a press conference, because people felt insulted by some of the things he said.

However, this same student provided this description about the documentary film clip, which contained longer scenes at various locations:

> In the clip it went to different schools and looked at types of food the cafeteria was giving out. Some were really healthy and some weren't.

Furthermore, the student's notes reveal a larger disparity between how the student synthesized the information presented. For the television clip the student noted:

- Presidential election

- Hillary Clinton

- Barack Obama

- People everywhere

- Indiana

- Giving speeches

- Getting support

- Pennsylvania credit

- Obama lost Pennsylvania votes. fell behind in election

In contrast, the student's notes for the documentary film clip were:

- Clowns

- Fast food

- Some schools healthy. Some not.

- Good decisions

For this participant, the shorter television news clip resulted in 10 specific items that he saw as being relevant, but he found only noted 4 relevant points from the documentary film clip which was nearly five minutes longer.

In the note section from the initial viewing of the television news clip another student wrote:

Hillary was talking. Barack was talking.

The student's following description was:

Hillary was trying to get people on her side. Barack was being questioned about comments that he had said.

That same student's response to the documentary film clip did not contain any notes and included the following statement as the description:

We saw this guy getting information on school lunches in different states.

Some students exhibited language that reflected personal interpretations of the media based upon experiences outside of the school context. One student seemed to be influenced by a personal political opinion in her interpretation of the television clip's message:

The point of the video is to encourage video watchers to vote for Hillary! [Note: This student also added ~! GO HILLARY !~ to the end of her response, which can either be read as the student's personal endorsement or a continuation of her interpretation of the message of the media clip.]

Other students specifically mentioned information they felt was missing from the media clip:

- They didn't talk that much about all [Obama's] wins. They only talked about his downfalls.

- But I really think the message is that John McCain is the way to go, and that the democratic candidates both have serious flaws. [Note: The clip did mention McCain in passing as the Republican nominee, but it did not show him or mention anything specifically about his campaign or character.]

- I mainly notice that they're putting negative things about Obama to show everyone.

- McCain – I don't see much of him…What I've heard about him he wants to raise gas prices so if that's true, he's out of luck.

Some of the statements reflected a personal identification with the message of the clip.

- It tells about how we need to make better choices and how unhealthy foods are.

- I think all schools should offer healthy foods like the last school.

- I also think that [school personnel] need to also watch what kids are eating.

- It needs to change because it's unhealthy.

- School lunches should be healthier because as we get older we will get fatter…

- I think he is trying to show why our society is getting fatter and he is showing that it starts with kids.

Just over one-third qualified their statements about the meaning or message of the media clip they watched:

- I think the meaning is…

- I feel that they are saying…

- I kind of got the idea that…

81

Some student responses attribute the meaning of the media clip to an "Other," using the following language:

- He's trying to show that kids are not…

- He is trying to say…

- I think they are trying to show…

- The video clip tried to tell us…

- The video was to better Hillary Clinton and they talk bad about Barack Obama.

- I think that the video was meant to persuade other viewers to vote for her…

Three students specifically used the terms *CNN*, *news*, or *press conference* in their responses to the television media clip. Students used generic terms like *video* or *clip* to identify or reference the documentary film clip.

None of the students mentioned the reporter for the news clip, and several of them mistakenly attributed words of the reporter to a source pictured onscreen. Students did not refer to Morgan Spurlock, or any of the sources for information provided onscreen during the documentary film clip by name, despite titles provided within the onscreen presentation. Students made no reference to any of the titles that appeared onscreen to identify individuals or sources of information. The only references by middle school participants to any onscreen text was an allusion to text that appeared on a sign that was included in the background at a political rally during the television news clip: *Hoosiers for Hillary*. The allusion appeared in the student's notes about the television news clip, but it did not appear in the student's description or interpretation of the media clip's meaning.

Researcher reflection.

The student reflections contain their lived experiences with media literacy in schools, but that is only part of the phenomenological research procedures. The second dimension of the reflective process requires that the researcher reflect upon the participants' experiences in order to identify emerging themes that may help to explain the media literacy of middle school students in this study.

The language students used in their media responses suggested several themes:

(1) Middle school students may not be aware of how media construction affects their media viewing experience;

(2) Middle school students use personal knowledge as they view media in school;

(3) Middle school students tend to seek a "true" meaning or message;

(4) Middle school students do not connect explicit audiovisual content with implicit meaning; and

(5) Middle school students lack specific vocabulary to effectively communicate their media literacy.

Middle school students may not be aware of how media construction affects their media viewing experience. Some students' descriptions of the media clips seemed to correspond with the duration of scenes or onscreen framing dictated by editing techniques. The information provided by the students also reflected a combination of information presented through audio and visual channels. The television media clip featured more definite editing transitions and changes in visual composition than the film media clip. Unlike the undergraduates in the pilot study who frequently referred to visual editing cues by mentioning a camera shot or a cut to a

different scene and used those phrases to deconstruct a media clip, the middle school students did not make any obvious connections to how the media clip was constructed, nor did they attach any significance to the construction techniques when they provided their interpretation of the media clip's message.

Middle school students use personal knowledge as they view media in school. When writing about the television media clip, some of the students used information that was not presented in the clip to make meaning from the clip. When students perceived an omission of content by the media producer, they filled in the perceived gap with their own knowledge. This was particularly evident in the responses to the television news media clip:

- They didn't talk that much about all [Obama's] wins. They only talked about his downfalls.

- But I really think the message is that John McCain is the way to go, and that the democratic candidates both have serious flaws. [Note: The clip did mention McCain in passing as the Republican nominee, but it did not show him or mention anything specifically about his campaign or character.]

- I mainly notice that they're putting negative things about Obama to show everyone.

- McCain – I don't see much of him…What I've heard about him he wants to raise gas prices so if that's true, he's out of luck.

These students provided their own information that was not explicitly contained in the television news clip, demonstrating that reading media can be a transactional experience for middle school students. That is, that the students do not passively receive media messages, but that they actively construct meaning using their prior knowledge.

Middle school students tend to seek a "true" meaning or message. The student responses suggested that many middle school students recognize the potential for multiple

readings of media text, but reflect a perception that a single, true meaning exists, especially for

the documentary film clip. Many of the students used a single declarative sentence as the

message of the documentary film media clip.

- Kids are eating unhealthy food; schools are thinking otherwise.

- The message of this video is that some school lunches are unhealthy and they should be healthy.

- Kids should eat healthier.

The responses to the film media clip may suggest that students experience the information

presented in a documentary in school as being the truth, rather than a subjective presentation

of an issue.

The media responses also indicated that students place the power for meaning-making

in others' hands. Several student responses suggested that they were distancing themselves as

makers of meaning for the media clips or that the makers of the media were manipulating the

content:

- He's trying to show that kids are not…

- He is trying to say…

- I think they are trying to show…

- The video clip tried to tell us…

- The video was to better Hillary Clinton and they talk bad about Barack Obama.

- I think that the video was meant to persuade other viewers to vote for her…

While the undergraduates in the pilot study were likely to attribute meaning-making power to a

film's director, the students only used pronouns, such as *he* or *they*, when attributing message-

making power to an outside source.

Middle school students do not connect explicit audiovisual content with implicit meaning. Explicit content in media refers to information that is obviously presented as visual or audio content. Implicit content would include information that is withheld or implied in a media presentation. The responses to the television news clips included details and information in terms of the visual presentation. The students seemed to attend to changes in visual setting as an indicator of importance. Students included phrases like "outside a huge Victorian building" or "in a garden" in their descriptions for the CNN News clip. One student offered a bulleted list of items that appeared onscreen as his description for the documentary film clip. Students frequently used the phrases *I saw…* and *She/He/They said…* or synonymous equivalents to describe the media clips. Students echoed words and phrases from the news clip and marked them with quotation marks within their notes and descriptions, such as *Hillary getting her "mojo."* Students interchangeably provided summaries of the onscreen events as both description and meaning for the clips. The undergraduates in the pilot study used the explicit details of a description to support implicit meanings within a film clip in the pilot study.

Middle school students lack specific vocabulary to effectively communicate their media literacy. Students were more likely to label the news clip with a genre-related term. Students specifically referred to CNN, news or press conferences in their responses to the television media clip. Not one student referred to the film clip as a documentary or as a film clip. Instead, students who referred to the clip used the terms video or clip. Students lacked specific vocabulary or terminology to describe and analyze the media clips. Students predominantly used the phrases *I saw…* and *She/He/They said…* to describe the media clips, rather than describing any specific lighting, camera angles, or visual framing techniques.

Interviews play an important role within phenomenological methodology, because they provide a measure of validation for themes that emerged during the researcher reflection phase. The follow-up interviews took place at the beginning of the 2008/09 school year. The interviews addressed these research questions:

- How does an elective Film and Media class impact middle school students' media literacy?

    o How do students think that their classroom experiences affect their media literacy competency?

    o What value do students place on media as part of their educational experience and learning?

The interviews also provided additional data about media literacy within the context of their general education experiences.

The random selection resulted in a sample that consisted of two females and three males. Four of the students had just started eighth grade and one student had just started high school. Two of the five students had taken the elective media and film course at Lone Tree Middle School. All of the names used are pseudonyms to protect the identities of the participants.

Jordan

I met Jordan, a White female who had just begun eighth grade, for her interview in a conference room at the middle school. Because she participated in school athletics after school, we met an hour before the start of the regular school day. She was dressed in a bright pink and

white, name-brand outfit coordinated with matching flip-flops. She appeared to have friendly and outgoing personality.

Jake

Jake, a White male who had just started eighth grade, was interviewed at my dining room table. We scheduled his interview in the evening after football practice. He had gotten caught in a fast, but furious, rain shower between football practice and our interview time, but he was very mindful of not getting my dining room chairs, or floor, wet. Jake changed his self-rating for media literacy to a 3 from a 4 during the interview, because he thought he sometimes was "not really getting the true message out of it."

Taylor

Taylor, a White female who had just started her eighth grade school year, was supposed to meet me for her interview after school in the front office conference room, but she got caught up in the moment of school dismissal and sailed along with the sea of kids to her bus. When I got home later that afternoon, I had a message from Taylor on my answering machine, explaining how sorry she was that she had forgotten our appointment and asking if there was somehow to make it up. We rescheduled the interview to take place at my house the following morning before school.

Lucas

I met with Lucas at his house on a Saturday morning. Lucas was a White male who had completed the Film and Media course as a seventh grade student. He had just begun eighth grade at Lone Tree Middle School. Lucas and his dad welcomed me at the door and offered the family office as a site for the interview. As I set up my recording equipment and laptop, Lucas,

his dad and I chatted a bit about the school and the school district. The family had moved to the rural Lone Tree Middle School area and transferred to the Pecan Grove ISD (a pseudonym) in the 2007/08 school year from a more affluent and developed suburban community. Lucas' dad is an electrical engineer and his mom is a nurse. Lucas has two younger siblings. At one point in the middle of the interview, the family cat roamed in to the office and found a place to rest on my legal pad on the office desk.

Collin

Collin, a White male, had just started high school and had cross country practice in the mornings. Collin had taken the Film and Media course at Lone Tree Middle School during his eighth grade year. We met at his house for his interview, allowing time for him to get home after school. Collin's dad works as a teacher at his high school, and Collin is in one of his classes this year. Collin's mother works at one of the school district's elementary campuses. As I set up my equipment at the kitchen table, Collin's mom brought him a bag of popcorn for snacking. Collin offered to share, but I declined.

Like the presentation and reflections of the media responses, this section will first present the participants' lived experiences as *student reflections*. My interpretations of the participants' experiences and the emergent themes are presented as *researcher reflections*.

How do students think that their classroom experiences affect their media literacy competency?

Student reflection.

Jordan.

Jordan identified different classroom experiences from her theater class and her Math class as being supportive of her media literacy development:

89

I think that most of the teachers understand that they think almost like you do that it's [media literacy is] important…

We write different things and we write different monologs and things like that that helps me a lot and then we also do a lot of projects where we do like videos and stuff, where we video ourselves like that. Like in Math I write a lot of scripts to get the point across.

The classroom experiences that Jordan believed contributed to her media literacy competency were based in assignments for which she produced her own media, rather than experiences of viewing media.

We really don't do, like watch anything. We do like a few like in some things like in science we watch videos a lot...science mostly. Texas history- we do a lot of stuff like for them like last year like for different battles we watched…We watched reenactments of the different battles, and in science about almost everything we do…We watched things. That helps me to see it and that like in Texas history. It makes it a lot easier if you can see it and then you can understand it than if like somebody is saying it, but in math or LA we really don't watch any videos. Mostly like in LA we just read and we can do skits and stuff of the plays and then in math we really don't watch anything.

Jordan shared that she had not experienced anything similar to the media responses in her prior middle school career.

Like I have never really dissected it as much as I did like really break it down and really kind of look at it like watch and watch it again -- because that makes it a lot easier the second time, because you see different things. But like to just read it and take notes as we're going which is kind harder for me, because like you just kind of have to write it down really fast, but if you're like watching it and you take notes you kind of like look at it and think about it and when you do it again you see all kinds of different things.

Jake.

Jake thought media was primarily used to discourage "bad" behavior in middle school:

At school they always run people through telling us how drugs are terrible and they offer youth programs if you're bad into it and other things like that.

Further prompting resulted in more information about his middle school experiences with media.

Like in math, they sometimes…Like…or last year in Language Arts, they showed us a Scooby Doo clip and we had to decide how it was a mystery, because we were reading about mystery stories, and we had to figure out stuff like that. But then In Texas History we had Old Yeller, and it was just deciding how it looked like in the Old West and how older times were instead of like right now with big, huge houses.

Jake supplied contexts outside of school viewing to describe how he makes meaning while

watching media.

I'll just be thinking through my head about how the situation is going, and I'll usually take what's going on from past experiences or something
Like whenever I'm watching some show, and it's like a mystery show and you're trying to predict what happened before. It's just something you think in your head would happen. It's just from watching past shows or something like that. You just watch… Like on the show CSI? They're going through cases and trying to figure out who might have done it. You're just watching the people through the case to figure out who looks suspicious because they're like jittery and can't stand still when they're talking to a police officer.

Taylor.

Taylor seemed to associate media literacy education with the Film and Media course

offered at the middle school, and mentioned that she had not been able to take it as an

elective. She eventually came up with school experiences that may have contributed to her

media literacy competency.

[In Language Arts] Last year…let's see. We did a lot of writing. We did a play last year, so…and I can't exactly remember what it was about, because I don't have a good memory, but I remember that she did have us do a play and she tried explaining to us what the play meant and how it was connected to what we were learning about and how it can help you in the long run and stuff like that.

 [The LA teacher] uses a lot of things. She didn't just use the books, because she knows that was boring. She needs to reach out and, you know, kind of help. She did a lot of different things. She didn't just do, you know, "Well here's movies, watch 'em and get it over with" or "Here's a book. Be bored."

Well, we watched the Little Rascals. She showed us that one, and she was telling us about the guy who wrote Little Rascals.

Actually she had us watching I think like a couple episodes a week, because we had to write about what happened in this episode and then you know then she had us…oh,

that was [Mrs. Hall]. I was thinking different – thinking about all the movies I saw last year.

Taylor also talked about how teachers helped guide students' media viewing experiences in school.

> Mainly, she'll talk about it before she puts it in and it's usually something that we've been learning or, you know, something we've been trying to do and she'll let us watch it, and then she'll kind of explain part of it, but the rest we have to get, and if we don't, if we still don't understand it, we just go ask her.

> *Lucas.*

> During his interview, Lucas and I discussed how media was used in his classes at Lone

Tree Middle School.

> Well, last year I was in Mr. Smith's Film and Media class, so we would watch films and then describe all the lighting and stuff like that and then … um…We would watch movies like every Friday, and then we would like take a quiz about all the stuff like what happens [like] how the camera moved around and lighting and voice.

Lucas then talked about how those experiences in the film and media course affect how he now views media.

> It was kind of fun watching the film and then seeing all the different…After [Mr. Smith] would describe all the stuff, you would kind of like notice all the different [things] -- how they filmed it.

Then Lucas described how media was used in his Language Arts class.

> Yeah, we watched one film. It was in the middle of the year, and we really just watched it for, because we read the book, and we were discussing how they were different – the book and the film… It wasn't about how it was made, but how it was different than the book.

Finally, Lucas shared how media was used in his other coursework.

> Well, we always watched films about what we would learn, and then we would understand it more. Well, I would. Umm like in like history we would watch a film. Then we would do it in the book. We would learn about it in the book and then we would like take a test over it.

We would watch a little bit of it, and then we would discuss about it. Then we would watch a little bit more and discuss.

Some [teachers use media] just for because we learned it and just to relax after taking a test or something, and then some do it to teach more about it before taking a quiz or a test…about what we learned.

Yeah. Like I'll take notes if we're taking a quiz or a test off of it, but if we're just watching it for fun, I'll just like watch it and not take notes and just watch it for fun.

Like last year for history, we watched a movie just for fun, because it was kind of like the end of the year and we didn't have much else to do…

Sometimes, like in Language Arts, when we do our book reports sometimes, they let us make like our own commercial-type thing and describe what happened in the book and who made it and all the things about the book.

Like in film and media we would make like a little short movie—like about 5 minutes long and then we would also in film and media we made a music video. He would tell us how to make it, like to show a person singing and then show a person just walking or something like that.

Collin.

Collin talked about how he rated himself for his media literacy competency.

I think I gave myself a 4 because most of the time I can...like I understand things to where I can understand what point is supposed to be going across. A few times I can. I don't know, honestly. I think it's because I've been hanging around with my Dad a little bit and he gets messages a lot, so I guess I just picked up the trick from him.

Collin then shared school-based experiences that he believed contributed to his media literacy.

Yeah My Language Arts teachers tell us to read short passages and try and figure out the point of the passage is. And every once in awhile Mr. K would show us a film clip and tell us, well ask us, like what the point of the clip was or the message they were trying to get across.

Collin said his Language Arts experiences primarily revolved around printed text, and he cited

highlighting relevant passages as a strategy for analysis. He had developed a different analysis

strategy for viewing movies in school.

Whenever I'm watching a movie in class, I normally have a spiral with me that way I can take notes about it. If I see something I think is important in that clip, I can write it down.

Let's see. In film & media, he would show us about 45 minutes or so of a movie. He'd tell us to take notes, and he would give us specific questions the following Monday about what we saw -- Like he's trying to test us to see how well we notice things.

Like I think in Indiana Jones -- I think it was the third movie -- he asked us what color the antidote was like he was trying to figure out what color it was. A lot of people answered blue, but it was really turquoise, but...like he was trying to see if we would notice that.

I guess [the purpose was] to sharpen our focusing skills – make sure we're not falling asleep.

[In film/media] I learned how to spot things that weren't like shouldn't be normally noticed. Like in certain clips like notice some things that other people wouldn't normally see.

Like there was this movie about I can't remember the title of it. It was about this guy who got like this transmission in his brain about these aliens coming towards a certain mountain, but he didn't know what they were about, so he started sculpting this mountain and it just turned out to be Devil's Tower, and he was seeing if we could notice like specific numbers on planes and relate that kind of towards history about like disappearing planes and planes that had been missing for 60 plus years.

Before I took the class, I just saw a movie as a movie, like some entertainment. Now I see a movie as – well with his teachings – like...how am I gonna explain this -- more than just entertainment -- like sound effects, lighting. I try to look at those things: how the lighting makes things pop out more...sound effects -- how they tie into the movie...special effects like fog or a disappearing basketball.

Collin did remember an example of media usage from his middle school Language Arts class.

She would like show us a clip and um see if we could see like similarities or differences between the film clip and the book that was originally written, kind of like Tom Sawyer. Like seeing how many differences there were and how many similarities.
If we were watching Tom Sawyer, she would stop it at pivotal moments to see if we remembered the part in the book or seeing if we could predict what was going to happen next and also to ask us what do we think that the character's feeling at that particular moment.

Collin also remembered media usage in his Social Studies class.

Like in history, [the teacher] would occasionally would show us a film clip or like by using the little COW (Computer on Wheels) that the teachers would get she would show us a like a little video about what we're learning and then give us a little pop quiz afterwards to see how much we learned or how much we paid attention.

In addition, Collin injected media into his own educational experiences.

The teachers liked Power Points because everyone knew how to use them, but the people who were in Film and Media preferred to use Movie Maker because one, it's an awesome program and two, we were learning about it, so like for me, I didn't really know much about it. Mr. K showed us the basics of it and then I just started learning more and more about it the more I used it. So I would just always ask the teacher if I could instead of using Power Point if I could use Movie Maker and they were like "Sure. Sure. Go ahead." Then while other people were using Power Points, I'm showing a movie. About like a subject like what's happened in my life or something.

How do students think that their classroom experiences affect their media literacy competency?

Researcher reflection.

After transcribing the completed recorded interviews, I deconstructed the text to extract patterns about the media literacy experiences of the interviewees within the context of their general middle school classroom experiences. All the interviewees were able to provide educational examples that they believed contributed to their media literacy.

Interviews with the smaller sample of participants suggested that the students in middle school are not all presented with the same educational experiences in terms of media literacy, nor did all of the experiences they cited appear in their written media responses, which were part of the media responses analyzed in the previous section. Lucas and Collin both mentioned in their interviews that they had learned about lighting, camera angles, and attending to visual details in Film and Media. However, they did not explicitly apply their knowledge to the media responses included in this study. Lucas did not see how the information he learned in the Film and Media course applied to the media clips used in this study, because he believed the media clips were documenting events as they were happening, rather than constructed scenes like the Hollywood films he had viewed in Film and Media. Jordan, Taylor, and Jake, who had not taken the Film and Media course, did not come up with any examples in which media forms were studied as stand-alone texts or specific media forms.

95

All of the interviewees mentioned that film was used in their Language Arts as a mediated version of a novel they had studied. The comparison between book and film versions of a classic literary work was framed by the sequence of the instructional design. The printed text version was read before viewing the film adaptation, thereby framing any discussion about the film in terms of the printed novel. The LA TEKS suggest that comparisons between a novel and film adaptation are an appropriate way to integrate media into LA curriculum (TEA, 2007). Language Arts and media literacy development were not obviously related in the middle school experiences of the interviewed participants. Taylor explained her concept of her own media literacy concept:

> Okay, so mainly I wouldn't exactly say that I'm too good at some things. I'm pretty good at LA and stuff but the whole media thing I'm not too good at. Like it's kind of hard for me to take something they said in a movie and like try to figure out what they really what they're actually trying to tell you. Sometimes it's easy, because it's clear, but in other words, it's kind of – I don't know how to put this – it takes a lot of brain.

Stated confidence in her academic performance in her LA classes contradicts her insecurity about her own media literacy competency. In Taylor's middle school experience, media literacy has not been integrated with her LA class instruction.

In other classes, such as Science and Social Studies, students mentioned that media was used to deliver content. In the experience of the middle school students interviewed for this study, media was used to transmit explicit messages, or to illustrate concepts. Jake changed his self-rating for media literacy to a 3 from a 4 during the interview, because he thought he sometimes was "not really getting the true message out of it." The students did not present any examples from their school experiences that suggested media was used as a discussion starter to explore socio-cultural issues, or as a construction of socio-cultural symbols.

Finally, like undergraduates in the pilot study who had participated in a film studies course, Lucas and Collin indicated that they could more expertly view media and extract deeper meanings from media, because they had completed the Film and Media course in the middle school. Taylor also indicated that she believed she would have better media literacy skills if she had taken the Film and Media course as a seventh grade student.

What value do students place on media as part of their educational experience and learning?

Student reflection.

Jordan.

Jordan views media as an important medium she can use to see concepts or vocabulary she might not understand by simply reading a textbook, primarily in Science and Social Studies.

> Different teachers [use media] differently…Some teachers will look at it and say that this is way important and to look and listen for different things, and they kind of show you why we are watching the video…We'll talk about what happened.

She did express satisfaction with the number of opportunities she has in her classes to produce her own media content.

> I like to work on seatwork, because it helps me better than doing the scripts and stuff I like working it out in practice like in math and other classes too, but sometimes I just want to have more fun, and then it helps me also to see it. So if I do a script or I watch someone do a play or a little skit, it can help me, too.

Jordan also said that printed text materials were sometimes easier to use for research, because it was easier to review the materials, but also admitted that hearing it, seeing it and watching video could get information "locked into [her] brain."

Taylor.

Taylor suggested that media provided an easier means of learning, and that media made learning less boring.

Like if you're doing a comparison between the book and the movie, the movie will show you, but you can also watch it in your head as you're reading book…but like I said it's easier to put in words that it is to write it down so I think the movies or the TV shows or whatever -- I think that would help you a lot better. It's just so much easier.

Jake.

Jake believed that his educational experiences should include more media texts, and

associated media usage and media literacy competency with higher levels of academic

achievement.

Because things that you can see with your eyes I think you get a lot better message out of than just reading them off a piece of paper…Like whenever we were watching movies in Texas History and Language Arts, like that really helped a lot of people, and they got better grades than they would have just looking it up on paper. You could look up at this video and actually see what was happening, instead of just reading it off a piece of paper and trying to see what was happening in your head.

Lucas.

Lucas also described some of the advantages he thought he received from having taken

the Film and Media course in middle school.

Like if you're watching a movie you can see how they made it by the way they used the sound, and the lighting and the camera movement and the body language.

If I ever make a short video or something I'll know how to make it better, and how to describe more in it.

I'll be able to use it whenever I'm…Like when I'm watching a movie I'll be able to know… be able to tell like how they made it and I'll be able to…Like I'll probably know more about the movie.

Lucas also voiced why he thought media belonged in schools.

I think it's important because we use it for entertainment and we use it for learning, and I think it's important.

Collin.

Collin placed value on media for its ability to enhance his learning, as well as his ability to communicate about his learning. Collin placed such a high value on media and media-making that he taught his father, a teacher at the high school, how to use a media editing program to produce media for use in his high school classroom.

> I guess because nowadays most kids prefer watching videos over reading text, because… Well, video has sound which will keep us awake. Text really makes us want to go to sleep.

> I guess [media is also used] to get a better point out. I guess that's like really the main reason -- to get a better point out other than using text. Because Text- sure it's easy to find a point but it might not be the right point. Video normally shows the right point.

> For me, I don't mind reading, but I'll read when I need to. I'd actually rather watch a video about something than have to read about it. One, it saves me a lot of time. And two, it's just a lot easier than trying to find it in a book. You can just press play and it will start showing you what it's talking about. A book you would have to go to the Glossary and go "Okay let's see okay page 42."

> [With] Power Point you just copy, paste, "Hooray!" With Movie Maker you're like "Okay, this needs to be a little bit shorter…Okay, that part is perfect. I like that." And just the final outcome just makes you feel really good, because you just made your own movie and you think that it sounds and looks pretty good. It's constantly moving so it frees up time because some people in Power Points will get caught up in conversation and be on one slide for like 7 minutes.

> Like in my movies I always try to sync up my pictures with my music. That way if a powerful moment in the song just goes by, you can try to sync up powerful moments in the actual pictures that you're trying to show, seeing if you can sync that up to where right as that moment in the song happens, Boom! The picture's there.

> It's a little more work, but it's more fun, because like you can change the way that the text or the pictures come into the film while in PowerPoint it's limited and you can't experiment that much. Movie Maker you experiment a lot You can either make something explode – like explode really quick or like just kind of explode and the pieces are going out really slow and then it looks pretty cool.

What value do students place on media as part of their educational experience and learning?

> *Researcher reflection.*

Once again, the transcripts of the interviews were deconstructed and examined for patterns. Themes that became evident through the participant interviews were

(1) Some middle school students use media as a means to communicate what they are learning;

(2) Media literacy is not a fully integrated component of middle school curriculum;

(3) Some middle school students associate the acquisition of media literacy skills with improved academic performance; and

(4) Middle school students who have completed an elective Film and Media course in middle school believe they are more literate users of media than students who have not taken the elective Film and Media course as an elective.

Some middle school students use media as a means to communicate what they are learning. As Kist (2005) suggested, media serves as an important device through which adolescents communicate what they are learning. Collin and Jordan both shared examples of opportunities they had to produce their own films or media as a way to share what they were learning with their classmates and teachers. The opportunities for media production do not seem to be available to all students in the middle school, however. Collin and Lucas produced films as part of the Film and Media course requirements. Collin asked teachers in other classes, if he could substitute films in place of Power Point slide shows. Although Collin indicated that the films were more challenging to produce, he believed that they were more interesting and served as a more accurate reflection of his learning. Collin also taught his father, a high school teacher, how to create movies and encouraged his father to supplement classroom instruction with teacher-produced movies.

Media literacy is not a fully integrated component of middle school curriculum. Jake did not think media literacy played a large enough role in his educational experiences. Many of

Jake's examples of experiences that contributed to his media literacy were examples from watching television outside of school. Taylor associated media literacy education with the Film and Media class and suggested that she would have improved media literacy competency had she taken the elective Film and Media class in seventh grade. Literacy research has suggested that media literacy components should be fully integrated as part of a comprehensive literacy program in schools (Bianculli, 1992; Buckingham, 2001; Gallego & Hollingsworth, 2000; Haworth et al., 2004; NCTE Commission on Reading, 2004). The experiences of the interviewed participants do not indicate that media literacy has been integrated into the scope and sequence of their LA instruction.

Some middle school students associate the acquisition of media literacy skills with improved academic performance. Jordan, Jake, Lucas and Collin all believed that media and media literacy skills contributed to academic success. Studies by (Hobbs, 2007) and (Linder, 2008) have shown that implementation of media literacy education programs have a positive correlation with academic success in other content areas. Middle school students who have completed an elective Film and Media course in middle school believe they are more literate users of media than students who have not taken the elective Film and Media course as an elective. Lucas and Collin suggested that they were able to view films more deeply than other students who had not had the same educational experience. This theme also emerged during the pilot study, when undergraduates enrolled in a film studies course used language that indicated they were expert readers of film who could pinpoint visual details that "regular" viewers might miss.

How do middle grade students' responses to media correspond with theoretical

models for media literacy?

This research study included a procedural component that the pilot study did not. In an

effort to increase the rigor of this research study, I incorporated theoretical constructs from the

literature to support the analysis of the media responses as a measure of media literacy

competency. The guiding question for this analysis was:

How do media responses and students' self-ratings of their own media literacy

correspond to the following models:

- o   Deep Viewing Guide (Pailliotet et al., 2000)

- o   Keys to Interpreting Media Messages (Silverblatt, 2001)

- o   Conceptual Tenets of Multimedia Literacies (Hobbs, 2008)

- o   Assessment Principles for Media Learning (Haworth et al., 2004)?

Theoretical Analysis

Deep Viewing Guide (Pailliotet et al., 2000).

The participants did not address three of the components of Pailliotet's model. The

students' media responses reflected viewing strategies related to the "actors" or people

visually represented onscreen and the sequence of events, and the middle school participants

were able to generalize and summarize information that was presented onscreen. However,

they failed to demonstrate an understanding of how the media was constructed, visual

composition, or symbolic imagery.

Keys to Interpreting Media Messages (Silverblatt, 2001).

Many students acknowledged a purpose for the production of the clip, but they were

unable to clarify a person or entity responsible for the production. "They are trying…" Rarely

did students mention a specific audience for the media clip, and only one student offered more

than one message: a preferred reading and a personal reading "But I think…"In relation to

context, students did not suggest that the onscreen depictions were anything other than a

reflection of reality. During his interview, Lucas stated he did not use the strategies he had

learned in film and media, because the news clip "…wasn't like a movie. It's kind of like a live

thing." In terms of a framework, some students used genre-related terminology in their

responses to the television news clip, and none of the students used genre-related terms in

response to the documentary film clip. Furthermore, students used genre-related terms as

labels, rather than attributing any specific significance to the genre. Overall, in relation to

production values, students did not provide references to editing, color, lighting, shape, scale,

relative position, movement, point of view, camera angles, connotation, or performance. The

only color reference was in one student's response in which he mentioned a "blue sky" in the

television clip. The only performative reference was in another student's response to the news

clip, in which she said the candidates seemed to be "sucking up." Students did refer to sound

elements, such as background sounds of crowds cheering in the television media clip and

dialogue in both the television and film media clips.

Conceptual Tenets of Multimedia Literacies (Hobbs, 2008).

In relation to Hobbs' three components for evaluating media literacy, the students were

able to demonstrate some of the elements. The media responses did reflect that most students

recognized that the clips were produced by some entity for some purpose, which pertains the

Authors and Audiences category. Only a few students mentioned specific target audiences in

their responses. The news clip, which was political in nature, seemed to generate the most evidence that students are able to attribute ulterior motives behind media presentations. In most cases, students were not able to specifically identify the producers of the information or any of the powerbrokers responsible for the media product. The Messages and Meanings component addresses the ability of students to analyze media text. Students mentioned details of the images presented onscreen, but they failed to attribute any symbolic meaning to them. In fact, some students wrote down specific details in their notes, but they adopted general statements as their description instead. Many of the students used personal pronouns, which reflected a personal perspective, and several used information they had gathered outside the scope of the media clip to interpret the clip and develop a statement about the meaning of the clip. The middle school students' media responses were strongest in meeting the expectations for Hobbs' Representations and Reality component. The students particularly identified this component for the documentary film clip. Students often referred to Morgan Spurlock as "trying" to present a particular view of healthy eating. Relative to media using techniques that affect people's perceptions of social reality, some students did supply their own information about John McCain or Barack Obama's previous successes within the democratic presidential candidate nomination process, while noting the media clip had failed to include that information. One student stated that the clip was produced "to make Barack Obama look bad."

Assessment Principles for Media Learning (Haworth et al., 2004).

As far as the abilities of the middle school participants in demonstrating and applying key areas of knowledge and understanding, the media responses presented a varied and inconsistent mastery. Some component completely ignored or overlooked. The students did

not use any specialist language related to media. Many students did not take any notes while watching the media clips for the first time, and even fewer students took any notes during the second viewing, which seems to indicate a lack of formalized reflection. The responses did suggest that some students may have been reflecting informally. Although students provided summaries and general statements about the message of the clips; they did not provide evidence from the clip to support their statements. The media responses did not measure participants' production skills, but 3 of 5 of the interviewees had produced media as part of their classroom learning experience in middle school. A fourth interviewee said she had viewed student productions as part of her regular instruction. The student media had been produced by other students in an advanced level course. One of the students disclosed that when he was assigned a presentation project, he asked to substitute a film production instead, and his teachers readily agreed to the substitution.

Researcher Evaluations

I evaluated each participant's response using the same ratings scale as their self-rating for media literacy. In cases where the participant had completed a response for both the film and television media clips, I evaluated each response separately and then averaged the scores of each to create the media literacy rating. Overall, my ratings were lower than the students' self-ratings. The discrepancy between my rating for students and their own ratings for themselves was larger for students who had taken the Film and Media course. The mean ratings and differences are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Means and Mean Differences of Media Literacy Ratings

Construct	Average
Media Literacy Ratings	
By student	3.5
By researcher	2.4
Difference in media literacy ratings	
Researcher-Film and Media students	-1.6
Researcher-Non Film and Media students	-.8

Researcher Reflections

Media literacy did not seem to be related to students' differences in individuals' middle school media literacy experiences. The theoretical analysis of participants' media literacy experiences resulted in two emergent theme:

(1) Differences between self-ratings for media literacy competency and media literacy competency ratings based upon theoretical constructs are greater than for middle school students who have completed an elective Film and Media course than for students who have not completed an elective Film and Media course; and

(2) Middle school students' understandings of media literacy are different than theoretical constructs for media literacy.

Differences between self-ratings for media literacy competency and media literacy competency ratings based upon theoretical constructs are greater than for middle school students who have completed an elective Film and Media course than for students who have not completed an elective Film and Media course. During the interviews students who had taken

the elective Film and Media course shared a greater depth of knowledge for media analysis than they displayed in their written responses to media clips for this study. Lucas believed that the media construction techniques of lighting, camera angles, and visual framing applied to the movies that were shown in his Film and Media class, but not to the types of media used in this study. The numbers confirm a theme that emerged during the interview process: participants believed that media literacy competency was enhanced by participation in the campus Film and Media course. However, the media responses did not demonstrate a distinct difference between students who had taken the Film and Media course and students who had not.

Middle school students' understandings of media literacy are different than theoretical constructs for media literacy. Nearly all the participants' self-ratings for media literacy were higher than the media literacy ratings based upon theoretical knowledge about media literacy. This suggests that students use criteria other than those offered through theoretical models to evaluate their own media literacy skills.

Summary

This study examined media literacy in middle schools through a phenomenological inquiry of participants' experiences. The middle school students who participated in this study exhibited a diverse range of media literacy skills, but none of the participants demonstrated a full range of media literacy skills. Although students felt confident about their abilities to read media, in most cases the media responses did not exemplify the media literacy competency skills proposed through theoretical models. The participating students did not seem to have a framework to use to analyze media. Follow-up interviews with a smaller sample of participants provided more information about some of the participants' middle school experiences involving

107

media. During the interviews, the participants also discussed their perspectives of media within the scope of their educational development.

The guiding questions were:

- How is media literacy exhibited by middle school students within a formal school context?

  - What language do middle school students use to describe media they view in a classroom setting?

  - How do students explain the meaning of a media clip?

- How does an elective Film and Media class impact middle school students' media literacy?

  - How do students think that their classroom experiences affect their media literacy competency?

  - What value do students place on media as part of their educational experience and learning?

- How do middle grade students' responses to media correspond with theoretical models for media literacy? Specifically, how do media responses and students' self-ratings of their own media literacy correspond to the following models:

  - Deep Viewing Guide (Pailliotet et al., 2000)

  - Keys to Interpreting Media Messages (Silverblatt, 2001)

  - Conceptual Tenets of Multimedia Literacies (Hobbs, 2008)

  - Assessment Principles for Media Learning (Haworth, Turner, & Whitely, 2004)

One of the limitations of a phenomenological study is that the findings are not generalizable to populations outside the participant group. Therefore, the findings of this study are true of the participants of this study at the time the study was implemented. The findings present points of discussion for further study. My phenomenological reflection resulted in identifying the following emergent themes:

- How is media literacy exhibited by middle school students within a formal school context?

    (1) Middle school students may not be aware of how media construction affects their media viewing experience;

    (2) Middle school students use personal knowledge as they view media in school;

    (3) Middle school students tend to seek a "true" meaning or message;

    (4) Middle school students do not connect explicit audiovisual content with implicit meaning;

    (5) Middle school students lack specific vocabulary to effectively communicate their media literacy;

    (6) Some middle school students use media as a means to communicate what they are learning;

- How does an elective Film and Media class impact middle school students' media literacy?

    (7) Media literacy is not experienced by middle school students as a fully integrated component of middle school curriculum;

(8) Some middle school students associate the acquisition of media literacy skills with improved academic performance;

(9) Middle school students who have completed an elective Film and Media course in middle school believe they are more literate users of media than students who have not taken the elective Film and Media course as an elective;

- How do middle grade students' responses to media correspond with theoretical models for media literacy?

(10) Differences between self-ratings for media literacy competency and media literacy competency ratings based upon theoretical constructs are greater than for middle school students who have completed an elective Film and Media course than for students who have not completed an elective Film and Media course; and

(11) Middle school students' understandings of media literacy are different than theoretical constructs for media literacy.

The limitations of this study included the inability to generalize the findings to populations outside of the study sample. The findings do offer themes which can offer points for future discourse and research opportunities pertaining to media literacy and its role in middle school curriculum. In the next chapter I will provide a summary of this study, implications for educators, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATORS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR FOLLOW-UP RESEARCH

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine media literacy through the school experiences of middle school students with non-print media forms. Much of the research in the field of literacy and media literacy provide theoretical constructs or demonstrate how educational policies may limit the scope of literacy instruction in American public schools (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Braun, 2007; Considine, 2000). While media literacy has been determined to be an important aspect of literacy development for adolescents (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; James R. Squire Office of Policy Research, 2007), much of the research has focused on the experiences of high school students instead of the experiences of younger adolescents in middle school. Linder (2008) examined media literacy through the experiences of seven at-risk girls who participated in a seventh grade media literacy instructional intervention, but she used print media as the textual form for her study. While literacy has been re-conceptualized as a sociocultural construct that includes non-print forms of texts, research has suggested that educational policies and classroom instructional practices do not exemplify literacy's new conceptualization (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Brabazon, 2007; Braun, 2007; Cable in the Classroom, 2006). Reviews of literacy policies and other formal curriculum documents also revealed that literacy was often framed in terms of printed text, thereby marginalizing media literacy as outside the scope of literacy development (Braun, 2007; Conley & Hinchman, 2008;

Gallego & Hollingsworth, 2000; Harrison, 2006; Wixson & Pearson, 1998; Wixson & Yochum, 2004).

This study was also unique, because the phenomenological inquiry approach presented the participants' middle school media literacy experiences in their own voices. The literature review revealed that previous studies that dealt with media effects and children may have been contaminated by the researchers' ideologies, epistemologies or personal biases (Gauntlett, 1998). Because the phenomenological approach requires that the researcher bracket prior assumptions about the research topic, the methodology offered a more appropriate method for studying media literacy experiences of middle school students.

The research about media literacy in schools is largely made up of theoretical positions about media literacy's place within public school curriculum and suggestions for teachers about ways to incorporate media literacy as components of instruction. Research about adolescents and media often focus on content analysis of youth culture or document the role media plays in the literacies of adolescents outside of school. If middle school students are studied at all, they are included with high school students as "adolescents." This study begins to fill a gap in the literature about media literacy by concentrating on the media literacy of middle school students within the context of their school experiences, as they are experienced instead of how they are theoretically experienced.

A phenomenological research methodology was used, because it was appropriate for examining media literacy by examining the lived media literacy experiences of middle school students. The research design involved using responses on a questionnaire completed by participants, participants' written responses to media clips, interviews with a smaller sample of

participants, and theoretical media literacy models to illustrate the media literacy experiences of middle school students in order to answer the following guiding questions:

- How is media literacy exhibited by middle school students within a formal school context?
    - What language do middle school students use to describe media they view in a classroom setting?
    - How do students explain the meaning of a media clip?
- How does an elective Film and Media class impact middle school students' media literacy?
    - How do students think that their classroom experiences affect their media literacy competency?
    - What value do students place on media as part of their educational experience and learning?
- How do middle grade students' responses to media correspond with theoretical models for media literacy? Specifically, how do media responses and students' self-ratings of their own media literacy correspond to the following models:
    - Deep Viewing Guide (Pailliotet et al., 2000)
    - Keys to Interpreting Media Messages (Silverblatt, 2001)
    - Conceptual Tenets of Multimedia Literacies (Hobbs, 2008)
    - Assessment Principles for Media Learning (Haworth et al., 2004)

In answer to the guiding questions, phenomenological reflection resulted in identifying the following emergent themes:

(1) Middle school students may not be aware of how media construction affects their media viewing experience;

(2) Middle school students use personal knowledge as they view media in school;

(3) Middle school students tend to seek a "true" meaning or message;

(4) Middle school students do not connect explicit audiovisual content with implicit meaning;

(5) Middle school students lack specific vocabulary to effectively communicate their media literacy;

(6) Some middle school students use media as a means to communicate what they are learning;

(7) Media literacy is not experienced by middle school students as a fully integrated component of middle school curriculum;

(8) Some middle school students associate the acquisition of media literacy skills with improved academic performance;

(9) Middle school students who have completed an elective Film and Media course in middle school believe they are more literate users of media than students who have not taken the elective Film and Media course as an elective;

(10) Differences between self-ratings for media literacy competency and media literacy competency ratings based upon theoretical constructs are greater than for middle school students who have completed an elective Film and Media course than for students who have not completed an elective Film and Media course; and

(11) Middle school students' understandings of media literacy are different than theoretical constructs for media literacy.

The themes that emerged offer openings for further discussion about media literacy and how it fits into middle school curricular experiences. In the next section I will present implications for educators based upon themes I derived from the participants' reflections used in this study.

Implications for Educators

This study has provided information that was previously missing in the field of media literacy research, by examining the media literacy experiences of middle school students with non-print media forms, but what are the implications of the emergent themes for educators? I present the implications through patterns that emerged in this study.

(1) Middle school students may not be aware of how media construction affects their media viewing experience.

Participants failed to acknowledge any elements of construction in their written media responses. All media are constructions, and production techniques may be one instructional approach to help students to understand how messages are constructed through production elements of camera angles, camera shots, genre coding, sound and narrative text (Burn & Durran, 2006; Kist, 2005; Olsson, 2006; Silverblatt et al., 1999). Students deconstruct and reconstruct written text by learning the grammar of speech and text. Does curriculum include the grammar of media?

(2) Middle school students use personal knowledge as they view media in school.

As reading theorists like Fetterley (1978) and Rosenblatt (1994) theorized, the reading process is multidimensional and personal. Marsh and Stolle (2006) found that some young adults may resist media images that are contrary to their own personal experiences. Are middle school students given opportunities to express their personal interpretations of texts?

(3) Middle school students tend to seek a "true" meaning or message.

Educators need to be aware of how they are using media in their classrooms, or how policies and procedures may be limiting how media is being used in classrooms. Is media only being used as a content delivery system, as an attention-getter, or as a way to relax at the end of a unit of study? How is the hidden curriculum affecting students' abilities to evaluate information presented in media productions that mimic an educational production? If students use prior experiences to relate to and understand material presented in media, then how are educational practices supporting this need? The literacy of schooling is based upon the abilities to read and write literary or expository prose. Textbooks revolve around specific bodies of knowledge and content-specific vocabulary. Many of the middle school interviewees suggested that media is used in their core classes as a mediated textbook. A hidden curriculum may be perpetuating the experiences for middle school students of media as a simple content delivery system, rather than as a text to be deconstructed.

Media messages are negotiated messages between the media narrative, the viewer and the construct of the surrounding environment. Digital media allows audience members to interact with the media and manipulate its use for their own pleasures and/or purposes, in a way that traditional media did not (Olsson, 2006). By creating experiences for students to analyze, reflect upon and acknowledge their personal experiences with media, educators can

empower students to become more knowledgeable consumers of media (Thoman, 2003). Do current education policies and practices encourage a passive reading experience for middle school students or are students encouraged to develop and support critical analysis of all text forms?

(4) Middle school students do not connect explicit audiovisual content with implicit meaning.

Participants did not provide evidence from the media clips in their responses about the meaning of a media clip. In some cases, the descriptions for media clips and the messages for the media clips were expressed in the same way. One approach to media education that educators could consider to facilitate students' abilities to read media's inherent codes is through a mythical examination. A mythical examination of media involves understanding the coding and qualities of genres, and how media can perpetuate societal stereotypes or myths. The study of mythical components of media requires the study of semiotics, or the symbolic representations used to create additional meaning (Hobbs, 2007; Silverblatt et al., 1999).

(5) Middle school students lack specific vocabulary to effectively communicate their media literacy.

Middle school students should be exposed to concepts and vocabulary to help them communicate effectively about media texts. Students should understand the components of a media clip in ways similar to their understandings about print formats. Early print literacy skills include learning about parts of a book. Yet, middle school students did not use any vocabulary that reflected any similar knowledge about parts of a movie or parts of a news report. Research suggests that teaching students how to produce their own media may help them learn vocabulary specific to media, like the production elements of camera angles, camera shots,

genre coding, sound and narrative text (Burn & Durran, 2006; Kist, 2005; Olsson, 2006; Silverblatt et al., 1999).

(6) Some middle school students use media as a means to communicate what they are learning.

Media production can be overlooked by education technology proponents as a form of communication and information sharing for students. Collin and Jordan used media productions to express what they were learning in their middle school classes. Whereas Jordan's middle school experiences revealed that teachers offered her opportunities to produce her own media at least once each grading period, Collin requested that his teachers let him substitute films for Power Point presentations. Media production capabilities have become easily available as videorecording devices become cheaper and more readily available to American consumers. Media editing also has become readily available as part of common software packages. Many schools may already have the technology and equipment to meet the needs of teachers and students who would like to incorporate more media creation into the curriculum.

Taylor's experiences suggested that students enrolled in advanced or honors classes had more opportunities to produce their own media as a means of expressing their learning. All students deserve opportunities to use media production as a way of communicating what they are learning. Educators should not underestimate the media literacy capabilities of middle school students. As an old Hebrew proverb says *Do not confine your children to your own learning, for they were born in another time.*

(7) Media literacy is not experienced by middle school students as a fully integrated component of middle school curriculum.

The findings of this study suggest that students experience media literacy instruction as isolated from their regular instruction. The interviewed students had to be prompted to recall media experiences from their middle school experiences. The students who had taken the Film and Media elective readily provided examples of how media was used in that class, as opposed to examples of how media was used in their other classes. Educators may find that middle school students become more engaged in school by integrating media literacy throughout the curriculum. Adolescents who may be literate in ways outside of school opt out of school literacy, because they fail to see a connection between the "grammar of school" (O'Brien, 2006) and the grammar of their lives outside of school.

(8) Some middle school students associate the acquisition of media literacy skills with improved academic performance.

Some participants indicated that they use a variety of texts for information and entertainment, including media forms. Therefore, some middle school students suggested that being more literate readers of media would lead to higher academic achievement. This finding supports the most recent statement by NCTE about adolescent literacy for the 21st Century. "Because technology has increased the intensity and complexity of literate environments, the twenty-first century demands that a literate person possess a wide range of abilities and competencies, many literacies. These literacies—from reading online newspapers to participating in virtual classrooms—are multiple, dynamic, and malleable" (NCTE, 2008). Studies by Hobbs (2007) and Linder (2008) have demonstrated positive correlations between media literacy competency and academic success in other content areas.

(9) Middle school students who have completed an elective Film and Media course in middle school believe they are more literate users of media than students who have not taken the elective Film and Media course as an elective.

All middle school students deserve opportunities to develop their media literacy abilities. Media production should be an integral piece of core curriculum and not only an ancillary course taken by a minority of students (Burn & Durran, 2006; Morrell, 2008). Media responses failed to demonstrate a correlation between participants' media responses and their media literacy ratings. Interviews revealed that students who have taken the Film and Media class fail to transfer their knowledge about film constructions to media formats they do not experience as part of the course. Educators interested in teaching media literacy need to provide a wide array of genres and media types, so students can explore the limits of their mental media literacy frameworks.

Some participants demonstrated a willingness to question the motives behind the television news clip, but they did not question the information in the documentary film clip. Without further study, it is unclear as to why students were more skeptical of the news media clip than the documentary clip, but educators may want to provide more opportunities for students to discuss media clips in class. Social studies educators could find documentaries containing different information, so students have opportunities to compare how filmmakers and media-producers select information to include in their product. Students may also benefit by discussions about editing techniques and how those might affect interpretations of media clips.

(10) Differences between self-ratings for media literacy competency and media literacy competency ratings based upon theoretical constructs are greater than for middle school students who have completed an elective Film and Media course than for students who have not completed an elective Film and Media course.

The Film and Media course curriculum may not be informed by theoretical media literacy models, or students may need to have more classroom opportunities to apply their media literacy skills to a variety of media. The interviews indicated that participants in Film and Media were mainly exposed to mainstream Hollywood films. Educators may want to incorporate a wider variety of television and film genres and types as texts for analysis.

(11) Middle school students' understandings of media literacy are different than theoretical constructs for media literacy.

As the literature review demonstrated, literacy and media literacy policy is affected by ideological and epistemological factors which inform education policy and practice. Educators should be aware of discrepancies between theory and practice and make efforts to close the gap. If media literacy components are included in standards, then regular assessments of students' media literacy abilities should be incorporated into the evaluation process.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study added to the field of knowledge about media literacy by examining the experiences of middle school students, but it is only a piece of research that can help inform media literacy education in public schools.

The interviews presented a picture of media use in middle school classrooms that supports the findings of Hobbs (2006). Hobbs identified the ways in which teachers use media

in their classrooms, but future research should address why practice has not kept pace with theory about media literacy. What factors influence how media is used in a classroom? How do parents influence the media used in classrooms? How do school administrators influence how media is used in a classroom?

The Pecan Grove ISD Media Usage Procedures also provide avenues for further study. The teachers are supposed to provide TEKS in support of using requested media in their classrooms. It would be interesting to analyze the TEKS cited by teachers to see how many of the TEKS correspond to content delivery and how many correspond to media literacy-related TEKS. It would also be interesting to try to determine how the adoption of the procedures has affected media use in District classrooms. How do teachers' interpretations of the procedures limit their ideas about how media can be used in their classrooms?

The literature review suggested that teacher preparation programs have not revised their curriculum to include media literacy components as part of literacy training. It may also be beneficial to analyze teacher certification requirements in terms of media literacy education. I recently took two practice certification tests for Texas Language Arts, Grades 4-8 and Grades 8-12. The sample exams had more than 60 test questions. Three questions on each exam pertained to media literacy education. Two of the three questions were identical on both practice tests, suggesting that the state of Texas sees little difference in the media literacy education requirements of middle and high school Language Arts educators. Further research is necessary to evaluate how teacher preparation and professional development programs address media literacy instruction. What are new teachers' perceptions about the purpose of media in instructional settings?

The studies on media literacy in middle schools are predicated on small sample sizes. Therefore, the findings can only be supported by replication studies or similar studies with larger numbers of participants.

Initial empirical studies have suggested that media literacy instruction can improve achievement in other content areas, but the studies have measured immediate effects of media literacy instruction. Longitudinal studies could examine whether or not media literacy education can be correlated with long-term effects upon academic achievement.

APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT AND ASSENT FORM

University of North Texas Institutional Review Board
Informed Consent Form

Before agreeing to your child's participation in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the purpose and benefits of the study and how it will be conducted.

Title of Study: *Examining the Phenomenon of Media Literacy in a Texas Middle School: Discourse Analysis of 7th and 8th Grade Student Responses to Clips from Mass Media*

Principal Investigator: Sara M. Payne, a graduate student in the University of North Texas (UNT) Department of Teacher Education and Administration (Curriculum and Instruction).

Purpose of the Study: You are being asked to allow your child to participate in a research study which involves the media literacy of middle school students. With technology quickly changing the ways in which we communicate and find information, literacy has grown to include reading more than just printed text. This study will look at how middle school students "read," or view and get meaning from, media.

Study Procedures: As part of his/her regular class instruction, your child will be asked to watch 2 clips from 2 different media sources. After your child watches each media clip, he/she will write a description of the media clip and then address any significant meaning he/she saw presented in the media clip. The clip will be repeated and your child will be allowed to add any further information he/she gained from the second viewing. The written media responses will take place as regular class instruction for 2 class periods. Students will also complete a short survey to provide information about their educational experiences with media and a self-rating for media literacy competency. Additionally, 5 students will be selected at random to participate in a follow-up interview with the researcher in order to discuss the written responses in further detail. If your child is selected, the follow-up interview will take about 45 minutes of your child's time.

Foreseeable Risks:
There are no foreseeable risks.

Benefits to the Subjects or Others: The results of this study may further educational research about media literacy and provide insights about how teenagers view media and how current educational practices affect media literacy for middle school students.

Compensation for Participants: Your child will be entered into a random drawing for a $50 Target gift card as compensation for his/her participation upon on completing the survey and all written responses to the media clips. If your child is selected for a follow-up interview, he/she will receive 1 movie voucher upon completion of the interview.

Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality of Research Records: All efforts will be made to protect the confidentiality of student information. Personal names and information will be removed from the media responses and surveys. If your child is selected for a follow-up interview, the audio recording will be destroyed when a transcript of the interview is complete, and the transcript will be numbered to match the corresponding media response and survey. Once transcripts are completed, original recordings will be destroyed. Transcripts resulting from follow-up interviews will be coded and kept with essays and questionnaires.
In accordance with federal IRB regulations, records will be kept for 3 years, after which time they will be destroyed. No personal or identifying information will be used in any published reports or professional presentations.

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the study, you may contact <u>Sara M. Payne</u> at telephone number _____, or the faculty advisor, <u>Dr. Gloria Contreras</u>, UNT Department of Teacher Education and Administration, at telephone number _____.

Review for the Protection of Participants: This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UNT IRB can be contacted at (940) 565-3940 with any questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

Research Participants' Rights: Your signature below indicates that you have read or have had read to you all of the above and that you confirm all of the following:

- You understand the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study.
- You understand that you do not have to allow your child to take part in this study, and your refusal to allow your child to participate or your decision to withdraw him/her from the study will involve no penalty or loss of rights or benefits. The study personnel may choose to stop your child's participation at any time.
- You understand why the study is being conducted and how it will be performed.
- You understand your rights as the parent/guardian of a research participant and you voluntarily consent to your child's participation in this study.
- You have been told you will receive a copy of this form.

_____
Printed Name of Parent or Guardian

_____   _____
Signature of Parent or Guardian   Date

Child Assent Form

You are being asked to be part of a research project being done by the University of North Texas Department of Teacher Education and Administration (Curriculum and Instruction).

This research study will look at media literacy through the eyes of middle school students. You are part of a generation that has grown up with more media (television, film, internet, IM, texting…) than any other. This study looks at how middle school students understand things in the media.

As part of your regular class instruction, you will be asked to watch media clips and then write about what you have seen. You will then watch the clip again and add more information about what you have seen. The media and writing response portion of this study will take about 2 class periods (90 minutes total) of your time. You may also be asked to answer some questions in a follow-up interview with the researcher. If you are selected for a follow-up interview, you will be asked about your written responses. The interview would take about 45 minutes.

If you decide to be part of this study, please remember you can stop participating any time you want to.

If you would like to be part of this study, please sign your name below.

_____
 Printed Name of Child

_____   _____
Signature of Child   Date

_____   _____
Signature of Principal Investigator   Date

APPENDIX B

MEDIA RESPONSE PROTOCOLS

Media Response

Film Media Clip

Student Name: _____

Teacher's Name: _____

You will be watching a media clip taken from a television program. After you have finished watching the clip, you will be asked to describe what you have seen. Feel free to use the blank space below or on the back of this sheet to make notes as you are watching the clip.

Now that you have watched the television media clip, please write a description of the clip.

(You will have about 10 minutes to do this.)

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You will now watch the same television media clip a second time. After you have finished watching the clip a second time, you will be asked to write about the meaning of the television clip. (What message are you getting from the media clip? What do you see as the point of the segment?) Once again, use the space below or the back of the page to make any notes about what you are watching.

Now that you have watched the television clip, please write about the message of the television clip. Feel free to use your notes and the previous description to support your point of view. (You will have about 15 minutes to do this.)

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Media Response

Film Media Clip

Super Size Me (2004)

Student Name: _____

Teacher's Name: _____

You will be watching a media clip taken from a documentary film. After you have finished watching the film clip, you will be asked to describe what you have seen. Feel free to use the blank space below or on the back of this sheet to make notes as you are watching the clip.

Now that you have watched the film clip, please write a description of it. (You will have about 10 minutes to do this.)

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You will now watch the same film media clip a second time. After you have finished watching the clip a second time, you will be asked to write about the meaning of it. (What message are you getting from the media clip? What is the point of this portion of the film?) Once again, use the space below or the back of the page to make any notes about what you are watching.

Now that you have watched the film clip again, please write about its message. Feel free to use your notes and your previous description to support your point of view. (You will have about 20 minutes to do this.)

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APPENDIX C

STUDENT SURVEY INSTRUMENT

<u>Media Response Student Survey</u>

Thank you for agreeing to participate in *Examining the Phenomenon of Media Literacy in a Texas Middle School: Discourse Analysis of 7th and 8th Grade Student Responses to Clips from Mass Media*. I will use your answers on this survey and your media essays to better understand the phenomenon of media literacy as it relates to middle school students. All information will be kept private and confidential.

<u>Student Information</u> (Please print the following information.)

Name: _____

Contact Information:

      Phone _____

      Email   _____

      Home address   _____

                                _____

                                _____

<u>Demographic Information</u>

1. Gender

      ___   Female

      ___   Male

2. Ethnicity (Please check all that apply.)

      ___   European American/White

      ___   African American

      ___   Hispanic/Latino

      ___   Asian American

      ___   Native American

      ___   Other   Please specify: _____

3. Date of Birth (Month/Day/Year): _____

Please turn the page to complete this survey.

Education/Experience

4. I have taken middle school or extracurricular workshops in the following areas… (Please check all that apply. Then indicate when you took the course by circling 6, 7, 8 and/or Workshop.)

___	Technology		6	7	8	Workshop
___	Film/ Media	6	7	8	Workshop
___	Journalism		6	7	8	Workshop
___	Photojournalism/Photography		6	7	8	Workshop

5. To analyze materials means that you not only read or watch something, but that you have talked or written about the messages and meanings that can be found by reading and/or watching it. In my middle school <u>Language Arts</u> classes (grades 6-8) I have been asked to analyze… (Please check all that apply.)

     ___ Written text (books, magazine articles, etc.)

     ___ Television programming (commercials, music videos, programs, etc.)

     ___ Internet web sites

     ___ Films

Media Literacy

Media literacy can be defined as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate messages.

6. Based upon the definition for media literacy stated in the above sentence, please rate your sense of your own media literacy. Rate your sense of media literacy on a scale between 1 and 5.

1 = not at all media literate; 5 = very media literate

Please circle your rating:

1   2   3   4   5

Additional Comments

If you want to add any other information about Media Literacy and your middle school experience, please use the following space:

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Follow-Up Interview Protocol

The Principal Researcher will contact selected participants to be interviewed. The follow-up interviews will be open-ended, and many of the questions will be dependent upon each student's media response. This research perspective is typical of a phenomenological approach in which the researcher hopes to create a greater understanding of an experience, such as media literacy, by exploring the perspectives of the research study participants.

The interviews will:

- Provide more contextual depth about students' media literacy practices and experiences in school;
- Clarify the researcher's interpretations of student perspectives in their media responses.

Sample Interview Questions

In your essay, you wrote: _____ . Tell me about that.

Tell me about how media is used in your classes at school.

How do you view media in school?

What factors shape how you view media at school?

Media literacy is defined by experts in the field as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate messages. You rated your media literacy level as _____ . Tell me how you came to that rating.

Describe any school experiences from middle or elementary school that you believe related to developing your media literacy capabilities.

What value would you say you place on the importance of media literacy? Why?

In your opinion, why do your teachers use media in the classroom?

APPENDIX E

PILOT STUDY

Edmund Feldman proposed that students can only be literate when they can speak through the language of images and the language of words (Feldman, 1978). If Feldman is correct, then one way of examining media literacy is through the language used by students to describe media and its meaning. Experts in the field of education agree that media literacy skills are important in contemporary society, but there is little research available about how young adults examine media and recognize ways in which media messages are constructed. This pilot study involves an analysis of undergraduate media response essays to discover potential patterns of language used to explain how meaning is derived from media. In addition to the written media responses, the researcher collected information on demographics and prior media studies coursework, as well as a self-rating for media literacy competency through a survey instrument. Specifically, the guiding questions for this research were:

Will young adults recognize how media is constructed?

How do young adults explain the construction of a media clip (selection from movie)?

How does perceived media construction create meaning for young adults?

How do young adults view themselves as "readers" of media?

Participants

Participants were 15 undergraduate students enrolled at a north Texas university. Of the 15 students that submitted essays, 6 were female and 9 were male. Their ages ranged from 18 to 24 years, and their mean age was 19.7 years. Nearly half (n=7) of the students that submitted essays were sophomores and one-third (n = 5) were freshmen. Eighty percent (n = 12) of the 15 essay respondents identified themselves as European Americans. Nearly all respondents reported having taken prior coursework related to media studies. Only 1 student

had not had any prior coursework pertaining to film editing, media production, journalism and/or photojournalism.

Participants were asked to rate their own level of media literacy on a 5-point scale, with 1 being the least media literate and 5 being the most media literate. The ratings ranged from 3 to 5 for all participants; the overall mean rating for media literacy was 3.87. Males rated themselves higher in terms of media literacy (m = 4.11) than did females (m = 3.83).

<div align="center">Measures</div>

The essay used as data for this analysis was assigned as part of the course requirements and represented 25 percent of the student's final grade for the course. According to a course handout regarding the written assignment, students were to write a 4 to 5 page essay discussing how specific formal properties of a film sequence contributed to overall thematic meaning(s) of a film. The film sequences were determined by the course instructor. A guiding question provided for students further specified formal elements for the purposes of the assignment: *How do the formal elements of literary design (narrative), visual design (mise en scene), cinematography, editing, and sound contribute to the overall theme selected?* Further guidance included a directive to students to demonstrate a mastery of terminology with a reference for them to consult the glossary of *Film Art: An Introduction* (2004), a course textbook.

<div align="center">Data Collection</div>

Participants were solicited from an introductory Radio, TV, and Film course at a north Texas university. According to the course syllabus:

<div align="center">153</div>

This class is designed to introduce students to the study of film form and culture.

Film in America can be understood from a number of perspectives: as a

technology, as a business, as art, and perhaps most importantly as a socio-

cultural artifact which to some extent reflects the cultural conditions under

which it is produced and received. Towards that end, the class will introduce and

explore a wide variety of issues related to the study of film: production,

distribution, reception, aspects of film form and style, genre, auteur theory,

realism, and formalism. The class will also introduce broader concepts of

ideology and representation as theorized within cultural studies, and provide an

overview of American film history in relation to issues of human diversity.

Ultimately, students will begin to develop critical methodologies for analyzing

film form and meaning in relation to the larger spheres of culture and ideology.

Participation was voluntary. The researcher attended the class and presented an overview of

the research project, which included the procedures for maintaining confidentiality of student

information and an assurance that all identifying information would be removed in all published

reports. The students were also reminded that participation was voluntary and told that there

were not any incentives or rewards for participation in the study. Twenty-nine students agreed

to participate by signing IRB-sanctioned Informed Consent Forms in accordance with ethical

standards for research involving human subjects. The 29 students also completed surveys to

provide the researcher with contact, basic demographic and prior educational experiences, as

well as a self-rating for media literacy. The researcher then contacted all volunteers through

email and followed up with non-respondents through a second email. Once again, the students

were reminded that they had signed forms to participate but that their participation was voluntary.

Of the 29 original volunteer participants, 15 students submitted essays to the researcher for analysis, resulting in a response rate of 51.7 percent. Word counts for the essays ranged from 462 to 1,699 words with the overall mean being 1,339 words. Female used more words in their essays (m = 1,474 words) than did males (m = 1,248 words), a difference of 18.1 percent. Forty percent of essays (n = 6) were based on *The Color Purple* (1985); 27 percent of essays (n = 4) were based on *Billy Elliot* (2000); 20 percent of essays (n = 3) were based on *Raging Bull* (1980); and the remaining 13 percent of essays (n = 2) were based on *Citizen Kane* (1941).

Data Analysis

The researcher read and reread essays, highlighting themes related to formal elements of film. The codes that emerged from these readings were sorted into categories and removed from context for further categorization through a process of memo writing. The codes were then recontextualized by examining how they were used in the essay and a determination was made about the extent to which codes corresponded with theoretical constructs of media literacy. Finally, the codes were sorted by film clip.

Results

Will young adults recognize how media is constructed?

All of the essays reflected the knowledge that film was a construction. Most essays attributed the construction of film to a director. However, the director references across essays varied from zero to 14 times. The more times students referenced the director, the more likely they were to place the director as an active meaning maker through stylistic choices made

during the filmmaking process. One essay referred to a cinematographer but not a director. Furthermore, none of the essays collected for this analysis mentioned any collaborators other than the director and cinematographer as constructors of the media.

How do young adults explain the construction of a media clip (selection from movie)?

The students participating in this pilot study were more likely to explain the construction in visual terms. The visual elements of lighting, movement, color, and frame composition outnumbered audio elements. Every student referred to the camera position in some form or fashion. Essays 8, 11, 14 and 15 contained more technical terms in relation to cinematography such as tilts and pans. The student who wrote essay 11 stated "Cinematography is the most important element." These essays also contained more specific references to types of camera shots used to film scenes within the sequence. The most common way to reference the image presented to the viewer across all essays was "shot." The editing process was rarely stated in explicit terms, but students frequently used the term "cut" to refer to breaks between visual images. Interestingly, this term can be applied to the cinematography during which a director calls "Cut" to indicate to the film crew to suspend filming or to the editing process, during which film is "cut" and spliced together to create a continuous sequence. In essay 5, the undergraduate writes that the cuts back and forth during an argument relay an "illusion of camera movement." Students also were able to describe the use of mise en scene within the film clip.

How does perceived media construction create meaning for young adults?

The students who participated in this pilot study used language that more often tied media construction to affective meaning, rather than ideological or socio-cultural meaning.

Several students mentioned the use of editing techniques, such as the speed between

transitions of camera angles or points of view to build intensity or to reinforce audience

perceptions of emotional distance with onscreen characters. Nondiegetic sound was also used

to support emotional response to the film. Most students perceived the audience as being

relatively passive as makers of meaning. Only essays 5, 7, 9 and 13 placed viewers in more

active stances as makers of meaning. Most students participating in this study were more likely

to associate the viewer as a passive receiver of media.

How do young adults view themselves as "readers" of media?

Despite their likelihood to present the viewer as a passive entity as a maker of meaning,

the undergraduates largely presented themselves as more expert than a general audience in

recognizing the construction of the film sequence. However, they also presented the

experience of analysis as being outside the normal film-watching experience and positioned

themselves as being more expert than the average viewer in being able to see the

manipulations behind the seamless images presented on a movie screen. This also corresponds

to their self-ratings of their media literacy competence.

Discussion

Media literacy is a complicated concept that involves many pieces. The essays used as

data sources are affected by the nature of the assignment. Furthermore, the experiences of

participating in the class and in prior coursework affect the nature of the language used in the

essays. Students seemed more likely to use technical terminology in the areas of

cinematography and lighting, which suggests that students have stronger foundations in the

productions aspects of media literacy. In fact, the surveys revealed that most students had prior

coursework in film editing and/or media production.

In prior studies, television viewing response was found to be correlated with feelings of

drowsiness, passivity and relaxation, which supports views that media consumption, serves as

an escape for the majority of its audience members (Csikszentmihalyi & Kubey, 1981), which

seems to correspond to the undergraduates' likelihood of attributing passive status to media

viewers and the idea that analysis and evaluation of film is an expert position, rather than one

of a normal viewer. The undergraduates in this study support their self-ratings of media literacy

as being higher than average by placing themselves outside of the experience of a normal

viewer and into a more media literate perspective.

Although more study is needed, the fact that students are more likely to use specific

terminology and technical language in terms of production elements and their relation to

affective meaning seems to suggest that ideological and mythical approaches in media literacy

pedagogies are less likely to be used with young adults. Professional development for literacy

educators needs to include multiple critical media literacy approaches as part of a

comprehensive literacy program. Educators can use critical media literacy approaches to

engage their students in literacy development and to bridge the gap between their students'

personal literacies and the school literacies their students will need to navigate successfully

through higher education, work and their adult lives.

APPENDIX F

PECAN GROVE ISD MEDIA USAGE PROCEDURES

On October 3, 2002, Congress enacted the "Technology, Education and Copyright Harmonization Act," commonly known as the TEACH Act. This act completely revises the current Section 110(2) of the U.S. Copyright Act in an effort to strike a balance between protecting copyrighted works, while permitting educators to use those materials in distance education. While remaining within the law, educators may use certain copyrighted works without permission from, or payment of royalties to, the copyright owner without copyright infringement. The new law permits the display and performance of nearly all types of works (*some works are excluded and may be subject to quantity limitations, such as only the amount that is necessary for the lesson*). Educational institutions may now reach students through distance education at any location. The law permits digitization of some analog works, but only if the work is not already available in digital form. (See the attached Chart – Exhibit E)

- o Performances of any other work, including dramatic works and audiovisual works, but only in "reasonable and limited portions" as appropriate to the lesson.
- o Displays of work "in an amount comparable to that which is typically displayed in the course of a live classroom session."

Ownership of Copyright § 201(b) WORKS MADE FOR HIRE. — In the case of a work made for hire, the employer or other person for whom the work was prepared is considered the author for purposes of this title, and, unless the parties have expressly agreed otherwise in a written instrument signed by them, owns all of the rights comprised in the copyright.

- Internet Resources for Copyright Laws
    - o See www.copyright.gov
    - o See www.copyright.iupui.edu

Pecan Grove ISD Media Usage Procedures

• Works explicitly <u>allowed</u> by the new law are:

  ○ Performances of nondramatic musical works.

  ○ Performances of nondramatic literary works.

• Works explicitly <u>excluded</u> by the new law are:

  ○ Works that are marketed commercially ("primarily for performance or display as part of mediated instructional activities transmitted via digital networks").

  ○ Performances or displays given by means of copies "not lawfully made and acquired" under the U.S. Copyright Act, if the educational institution "knew or had reason to believe" that they were not lawfully made and acquired.

• Existing teacher created documents and media and other works (If the work is created entirely on District equipment as part of employment, the work is the property of the District).

Campus Procedures for Media Usage in Instructional Settings

The use of videotapes, DVD's, Streaming Video, or any other media chosen for use in the classroom will adhere to the following guidelines:

- Follow all laws, district policies, procedures, and guidelines for the use of media in the instructional setting. Transmissions of media must be made "by or at the direction of an instructor as an integral part of a class session" in a face to face teaching environment, "rather than as supplemental or background information to be experienced independently." (U.S. Copyright Office: TEACH Act (Senate) http://www.copyright.gov/docs/regstat031301.html). All media will tie to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and media will have curricular relevance to the course.

- Limit the use of full feature films. Skip all extraneous material. In those rare cases in which the film must be presented in its entirety, pause the film periodically and use questioning and/or discussion strategies to ensure that students analyze, interpret, and recognize pertinent details and concepts, or have students complete a questionnaire or response sheet during the viewing.

- Media usage will be proportionate to other instructional strategies and devices. For example, daily media use will not take up the majority of each day's lesson plan and will be only one of several instructional methods or strategies employed to present the TEKS of the course curriculum.

- Be cautious in the use of media when a substitute teacher presents lessons. The lesson plans will need to be clear and will not cause undue burden on the substitute to correlate the media.

- Utilization of instructional media requires the development of an approved media list for each department or grade level depending upon campus configuration. All media will be on the approved media list developed by the campus administrator or designee(s). A copy of this document will be on file with the campus librarian. This copy could be in the form of a file of Instructional Media Request Forms that have been printed and filed, or in the form of an actual list which includes dates of approval for each title. In order to add media to the approved list for use in the classroom or for encoding, staff must complete a media request form (Exhibit A) and submit it to the staff member designated by the campus principal. For United Streaming and Power Media Plus, all media intended for use in the classroom must be previewed by the instructor. Completion of the Media Approval Form (Exhibit A) should be considered if the United Streaming or Power Media Plus media will be used repeatedly. The campus librarian should be consulted.

- Librarians should be utilized as a good resource in developing appropriate media lists and related curriculum.

- A copy of a TV program may be shown <u>one time per class during the first ten consecutive school days after broadcast</u>. The program may not be retained beyond forty-five calendar days. There are some media that may be kept beyond forty-five days, but this requires approval from the producer. Use "Off-Air Verification" form (Exhibit B) in order to use this media.

- All media must be carefully previewed by the teacher intending to use it in the classroom. The fact that media is on the approved list, on Mediacast, or is used by other staff does not negate the responsibility of the teacher to preview this media for curricular relevance and to facilitate instructional planning.

- All media will be purchased by the district/campus for educational use or be donated for the same purpose. In the case of media that is not available in the library, an exception may be allowed, as long as it is on the approved media list and the copyright verification form has been completed (Exhibit B).

- Librarians will post the approved media list on the shared drive in order to provide access to all campus staff. This list will be forwarded to the district staff person responsible for library services on a monthly basis.

- Media to be used in the classroom will be made available for review by parents/guardians in the same manner as other instructional materials, in accordance with State law. [See EF (LEGAL) and FNG (LEGAL)].

- If media in the library collection are not used within 24 months, the media may be removed from the approved media list and weeded from the collection.

- The campus supervisors will address allegations of misuse or abuse of classroom media.

Media Ratings Issues

Media that is above the approved rating for student grade levels (Elementary – G, Middle School – PG, High School – PG13) will meet the following requirements:

- The teacher will submit a request to the campus principal or designee to use the media at least ten (10) school days prior to use. The request includes the lesson plan objective, the purpose of the video, associated activities, and evaluation (Exhibit A). Media that is above the approved rating must show significant curricular significance and will be coordinated closely with the campus administration.

o To elementary school students any commercial media recording that is rated PG will require a permission slip to be signed by the parent (Exhibit C). Nothing above PG may be shown. Students not participating will be provided with an alternate assignment with no grade penalty. Such notice to parents/guardians will include a brief description of the contents of the media recording and the instructional objectives to be achieved.

o To middle school students any commercial media recording that is rated PG-13 will require a permission slip to be signed by the parent (Exhibit C). Nothing above PG-13 may be shown. Students not participating will be provided with an alternate assignment with no grade penalty. Such notice to parents/guardians will include a brief description of the contents of the media recording and the instructional objectives to be achieved.

o To high school students any commercial media recording that is rated R will require a permission slip to be signed by the parent (Exhibit C). In addition, rated R movies will not be shown in their entirety and will not be left for substitutes to show. Students not participating will be provided with an alternate assignment with no grade penalty. Such notice to parents/guardians will include a brief description of the contents of the media recording and the instructional objectives to be achieved.

• Parents/guardians will receive one-week notice of the intended showing:

• Media that is rated above the limit for a specific grade level will be physically secured by the campus librarian with a notation made on the media itself. Mediacast passwords to allow access to approved staff only may be used, if approved by the campus administration.

• A parent/guardian will be allowed to request that his or her child be given an alternative activity with the same instructional objectives, in lieu of the student viewing the media.

• Media having a rating of X or NC-17 will not be shown to students in District schools at any time.

• Careful attention must be given to unrated media (i.e. public/cable TV programs/Internet sources) in order to check for potential inappropriate content and to assure curricular relevance. Pre-editing media is essential in this process. Live media (i.e. live news programs or other live broadcasts) will not be allowed without prior approval by campus administration.

• Student-generated media (i.e. videos, portable transmission devices, Power Point presentations, etc.) may be presented in class following prior review by the teacher. This will require specific guidelines to be provided by the teacher to the student regarding appropriate content, a project due date for review, and a project due date for presentation as components of any assignment that is given to a student that results in student-generated media. Students are held accountable for this content and teachers will be held accountable to communicate these expectations effectively to their students.

Media Cast and Procedures for Authorization for Digitization of Media

Pecan Grove ISD utilizes the Media Cast system that provides the capability to digitally cache audiovisual media typically housed in the District's campus libraries. This system is also available for broadcasting live presentations. Live presentations can utilize recorded media and/or documents, and therefore must also meet legal and District criteria to be utilized for educational purposes. Legal criteria include Copyright laws and Fair Use Guidelines, while District requirements are included in the following – [See CQ (LOCAL) and CQ (EXHIBIT)]. Any attempt to override pre-coded copyright protection of media is illegal. Refer to your Acceptable Use Agreement document.

Once all curricular and legal criteria have been met in order for digitization to be completed, the original copy of the media must be archived in <u>locked</u> storage where it will no longer be checked out from the library. If there should be a need for the physical media to be used at anytime, the digitized copy on the Media Cast system must be disabled for the period of time the media is checked out from the library.
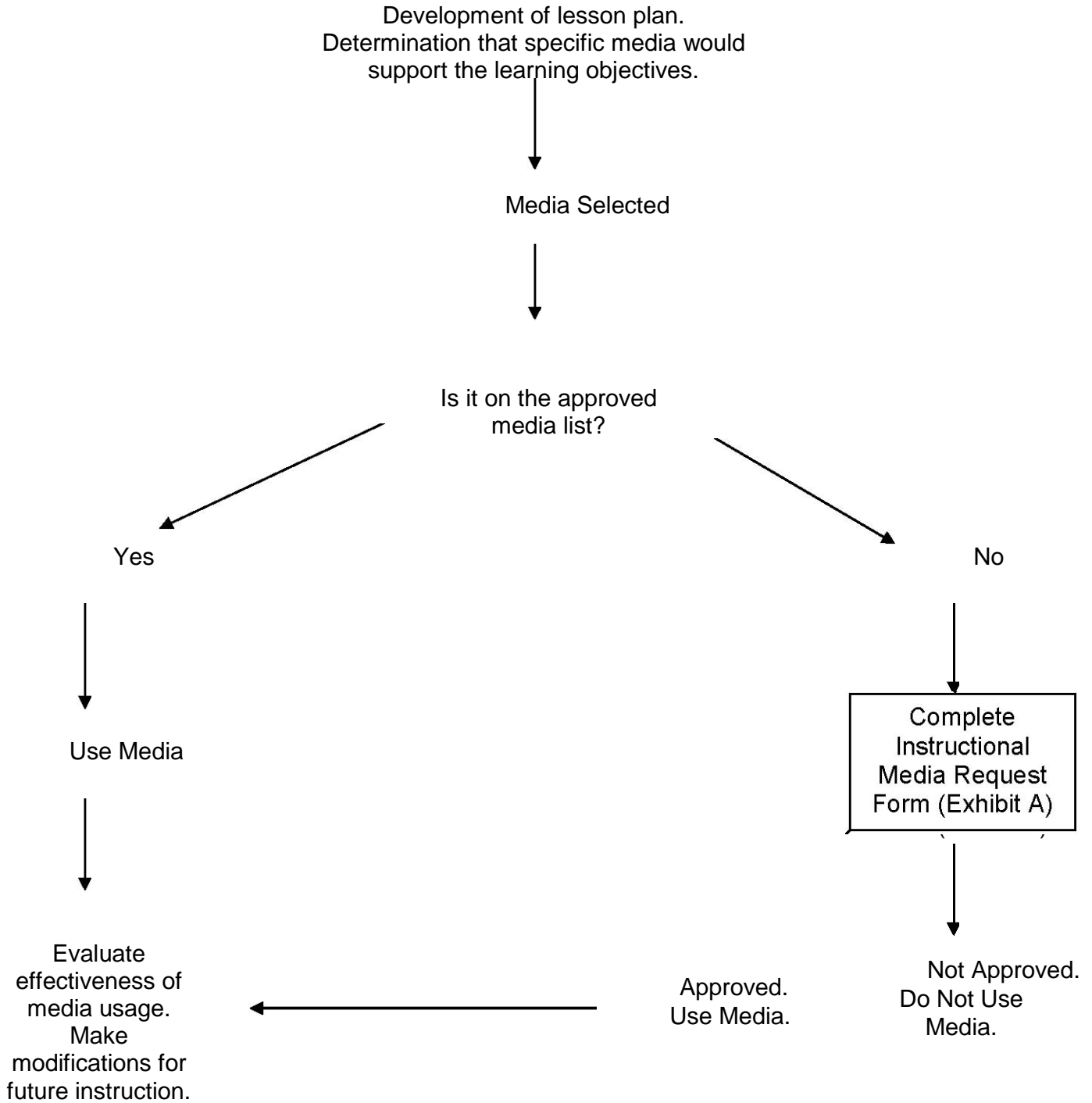
- The librarian will approve and submit current media inventory to the district's Coordinator for Instructional Technology.

- The Coordinator for IT will analyze the inventories from each campus to tally duplicates. This will prevent duplication of effort. Single copies will be digitized on the home campus <u>after authorization from the Coordinator for Instructional Technology</u>.

- The Coordinator for Instructional Technology will request a weekly campus report of newly acquired media that needs to be digitally encoded. This will prevent duplicate encodings.

Streaming Video Provided by the District

At the time of publication, Pecan Grove ISD has access to the following streamed resources. Additional resources will be added as they become available. Although these resources are provided by the district, teachers still must follow the aforementioned preview and content relevance procedures.

- United Streaming videos are accessible at http://esc11.unitedstreaming.com. These are already available to you catalogued by subject and grade level. The District pass code is available from the campus librarian.

- Power Media Plus is an extension of United Streaming. It allows access to all media types: more than 2000 videos, 14,000 + core concept clips, 4000 curriculum-oriented audio files, 5000 print resources, and an unsurpassed collection of 25,000 photographs, illustrations, and clip art images. Log in at www.powermediaplus.com. The District pass code is available from the campus librarian.

Media Approval & Usage Flowchart

Development of lesson plan.
Determination that specific media would
support the learning objectives.

Media Selected

Is it on the approved
media list?

Yes

No

Use Media

Complete
Instructional
Media Request
Form (Exhibit A)

Evaluate
effectiveness of
media usage.
Make
modifications for
future instruction.

Approved.
Use Media.

Not Approved.
Do Not Use
Media.

Exhibit A

Instructional Media
Request Form

This information is to be provided to the principal and the library media staff for approval ten (10) school days before the intended use. Media rated above grade level specifications requires a permission slip to be signed by parents prior to use (Exhibit C). The use of any instructional media in your classroom must be in your lesson plan.

Fair use guidelines for audio-visual media must meet these four criteria in order to be considered acceptable. These include:
1. The performance must be presented by instructor or pupils,
2. The performance must occur in the course of face-to-face teaching activities, and
3. The performance must take place in a classroom or similar place of instruction in a nonprofit educational institution; and
4. The performance must be of a legally acquired (or legally copied) copy of the work.

(Copyright for Schools, Third Edition, by Dr. Carol Simpson)

Teacher's Name: _____ Course: _____

Title of video: _____ School year: _____

Date(s) to be shown: _____

Place where video will be shown **(Guideline 3)**: _____

Length of video to be shown (excerpts preferred): _____

* Rating: _____ Grade Level(s) _____

{*Include Exhibit C if the rating is above grade level specifications.}

Where did you obtain the videotape? **(Guideline 4)**:

_____

Have you previewed the entire videotape? _____

TEKS supported **(Guideline 1)**:

_____

_____

_____

Purpose of showing the video **(Guideline 2)**:

- _____

169

Evaluation activities:

_____

_____

_____

_____ **APPROVED**   _____ **NOT APPROVED**

_____   _____
    Date   Lead Teacher/Department Head's Signature

_____   _____
    Date   Principal's Signature

Exhibit B

PECAN GROVE ISD
COPYRIGHT VERIFICATION FOR PERSONAL MEDIA

Date: _____

I, _____, certify that this media, entitled
_____ is a personal effect of mine/my
household. This media is a legally acquired purchase by/for me, and I am
lending this to _____
to be used for instructional purposes only. I release all staff and students of
_____ for any damages
or liability that may incur with or to this media.

Teacher Signature: _____

Dated: _____

PECAN GROVE ISD
OFF-AIR RECORDING RECEIPT OF VERIFICATION

This media, entitled _____
was recorded by me on channel (name) _____
on (this date) _____. The 10th consecutive
school day from the recording date is _____. I may use this
recording *only once* in direct face-to-face teaching. I may repeat the recording *only once* for
re-teaching/reinforcement. The 45th day after the recording date is
_____. Between the 11th and 45th day, this recording will not be
shown to students unless permission is granted from the copyright owner, but may be used
for teacher evaluation only. I made _____ copy(ies) of this recording, which will be
accompanied by this statement and erased/destroyed no later than the 45th day indicated in
this form. I have read and understood this form.
Teacher's Signature: _____

Administrator's Signature: _____

Exhibit C

Parent Permission Form

To the Parents of Students in _____'s_ class:

<center>Teacher's Name</center>

Our class will be viewing a media source in class on _____.

<center>Date</center>

This media is rated _____ and supports the curriculum in the following subject(s) _____. The content of the media is described below.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

_____

I am requesting that you allow your child to participate in the viewing of this media during the class period on the above date. Please contact me at _____ if you prefer to view the media

<center>Phone</center>

before making a decision about allowing your child to participate or if you have any questions.

Students not participating in the viewing of the media will have an alternate assignment with no grade penalty.

I grant permission for my child _____ to participate in the viewing of the media described above.

<center>Student's Name</center>

_____

<center>Parent's Signature</center>

PECAN GROVE ISD
COPYRIGHT COMPLIANCE AGREEMENT

I have been educated in the appropriate uses of instructional media, Fair Use Guidelines, the TEACH Act, and the copyright policy of Northwest Independent School District. I understand these policies and guidelines. Any uses I may make of instructional media in the classroom will be in accordance with federal and local policies and guidelines.

Teacher Signature:_____

Date: _____

Campus: _____

Exhibit E

PGISD Media Copyright Chart			
Media	**What is Allowed**	**Resource**	**Text**
Video Tapes (purchased or donated)	For purposes of teaching, copying is not an infringement of copyright.	US Code: Title 17, 1.108 from http://www.law.cornell.edu and http://www.hfhslaw.com Henslee Fowler Hepworth & Schwartz LLP	"(a) It is not an infringement of copyright for a library or archives, or any of its employees acting within the scope of their employment, to reproduce no more than one copy or phonorecord a work, under the conditions specified by this section, if (1) the reproduction or distribution is made without any purpose of direct or indirect commercial advantage; (2) the collections of the library are open to the public, (3) the reproduction or distribution of the work includes a notice of copyright that appears on the copy or phonorecord that is reproduced under the provisions of this section, or includes a legend stating that the work may be protected by copyright if no such notice can be found on the copy or phonorecord that is reproduced under the provisions of this section. (c.2) Any such [media] that is reproduced in digital format is not made available to the public in that format outside the premises of the library in lawful possession of such copy. Nothing in section F(1) should be construed to impose liability for copyright infringement upon a library or archives or its employees for the unsupervised use of reproducing equipment located on its premises: Provided, That such equipment displays a notice that the making of a copy may be subject to the copyright law. Section G(2) Nothing in this clause prevents a library or archives from participating in interlibrary arrangements that do not have, as their purpose or effect, that the library or archives receiving such copies or phonorecords for distribution does so in such aggregate quantities as to substitute for a subscription to or purchase of the work. The following are not infringements of copyright: (1) performance or display of a work by instructors or pupils in the course of face-to-face teaching activities of a nonprofit education institution, in a classroom or similar place devoted to instruction, **unless**, in the case of a motion picture or other audiovisual work, the performance, or the display of individual images, is given by means of a copy that was not lawfully made under this title, and that the person responsible for the performance knew or had reason to believe was not lawfully made; (2) except with respect to a work produced or marketed primarily for a performance or display as part of mediated instructional activities transmitted via digital networks, or a performance or display that is given by means of a copy or phonorecord that is not lawfully made and acquired, the performance of a nondramatic literary or musical work or reasonable and limited portions of any other work, or display of a work in an amount comparable to that which is typically displayed in the course of a live classroom session, by or in the course of a transmission, if (A) the performance or display is made by, at the direction of, or under the actual supervision of an instructor as an integral part of a class session offered as a regular part of the systematic mediated instructional activities of…and accredited nonprofit educational institution. (B) the performance or display is directly related and of material assistance to the teaching content of the transmission; (C) the transmission is made solely for, and, to the extent technologically feasible, the reception of such transmission is limited to – (i) students officially enrolled in the course for which the transmission is made; or (ii) officer or employees of governmental bodies as a part of their official duties of employment; and (D) the transmitting body or institution – (i) institutes policies regarding copyright, provides informational materials to faculty, students, and relevant staff members that accurately describe, and promote compliance with, the laws of the United States relating to copyright, and provides notice to students that materials used in connection with the course may be subject to copyright protection, and (ii) in the case of digital transmissions – (1) applies technological measures that reasonably prevent – (aa) retention of the work in accessible form by recipients of the transmission from the transmitting body or institution for longer than the class session: and (bb) does not engage in conduct that could reasonably be expected to interfere with technological measures used by copyright owners to prevent such retention or unauthorized further dissemination. / Per Henslee et. al. 17 USC§ 107 makes clear that uses of copyrighted works in connection with "nonprofit educational purposes" will be viewed as fair use.
DVD's (purchased or donated)			
Laser Discs (purchased or donated			

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