Media Literacy as an Inquiry-Based Framework for Exploring Desocialization

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Abstract: *Our educational landscape is dramatically changing; youth and adults have access to more information than ever before in history. As a world we have embraced technology with open arms, but rarely have reflected on its implications or actively educated people on how to deconstruct the endless stream of messages. Media literacy or the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media, and can be used as an inquiry-based framework for exploring desocialization in the classroom, community, or workplace.*

Proposal Content

Media literacy builds an understanding on the role of media in society and develops skills of inquiry and analysis necessary for citizens to function in a democracy. Media literacy challenges the dogma perpetuated by mass media culture, such as class, race and gender bias, and over-consumption. My guiding question examines: *How can media literacy be used as an inquiry-based framework to explore concepts of desocialization?*

Media literacy has been recognized as a *best practice*. It promotes an experiential, inquiry-based approach while utilizing multi-media. As educators, we are responsible for providing adults with the skills to navigate our media saturated landscape. Media literacy is a powerful tool for promoting critical thinking and fostering *active not passive* consumers of media (Center for Media Literacy, 2008). It is a proponent of critical literacy, creating lifelong habits of analytical thinking, reading, writing, and discussing that transcend traditional clichés and searches for deeper meanings. It can generate engaged adults that use media as a tool instead of being used by media. It is a natural candidate for theme-based learning models and can be implemented in an interdisciplinary format. Media literacy can be employed in elementary schools, college classrooms, or work environments. It is an excellent way to teach children and adults to be conscientious, aware, global citizens. Finally, media literacy empowers people and gives them voice. Media can be used to create messages of hope, power, and equality-providing the disenfranchised learner with a tool for expression, and a medium with which to challenge hegemony.

While media literacy is slowly being recognized as an effective instructional framework it still has not become institutionalized in the public school system and is only sporadically taught in community settings. Technology is pervasive in public education, yet there is very little media education happening in academia (Pawan & Honeyford, 2009). Also, the research on media literacy's effects has been limited and lacking consolidation.

On a personal note I have substantial experience designing media literacy curricula across grade levels, training educators on basic concepts and application procedures, and educating community developers on issues relevant to their workplace. My goal is to broaden my colleagues' perceptions of what it means to be media literate in the 21st century and the scope of possibilities, while inviting a critique of curricula and pilot projects. Participants will reflect on media literacy theory and practice, gain implementation strategies, analyze pilot projects, and examine implications and outcomes. The populations that could benefit from media literacy

education are significant: educators, community developers, administrators, ESL instructors, graduate students, health workers, etc.

References

Pawan, F. & M. Honeyford. (2009). Academic Literacy. *In Handbook of College Reading and Study Strategy Research (*pg. 26-46). New York: Routledge.

The Center for Media Literacy. (2008). Retrieved February, 1st, 2010, from http://www.medialit.org/

[1] Quote by Roxanne Swentzell (Santa Clara Tewa), taken from the interpretative plaque displayed at the Heard Museum, describing her large clay sculpture of human figurative pieces surrounding a pottery bowl.